

Honourable Chairman Sir,

With your kind permission, as per Section 69 of the West Bengal Municipal Corporation Act, 2006, I would like to present the Budget of the Siliguri Municipal Corporation for the Financial Year 2017-18 and the Revised Budget for the Financial Year 2016-17 for approval.

Last year, on the 28th June, when I had presented the annual financial statement for the year 2016-17, the present board of the Corporation was still in a nascent stage. The present State Government also just came into power for the second consecutive term. With much hopes and aspirations the annual financial statement was presented and was duly approved. In the present statement, I have endeavored to reflect our success as well as certain failures within this period. Moreover certain limitations and constrains have also been highlighted. Further, I have tried to present our vision for a better and more developed metropolitan city amidst such challenges and constrains. It may be noted that just within a few months of the approval of the annual financial statement of the last year, we have lost Sri Aurobinda Ghosh (Amu), a source of inspiration for all of us. He was an iconic figure in Siliguri and his absence is being felt every moment. We have also lost eminent ex-councillors Shri Manindra Nath Chakraborty and Shri Chiranjib Das. We have lost prominent figures like Shri. Prasanta Nandy and Smt. Aruna Bhattacharjee. All of them took active participation in the development of Siliguri. We express our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families of the departed soles.

Urbanization and Local Self Government

As per Census 2011, 31% of the total population of the State lives in the urban areas which comprise of only 3 % of the total geographical area of the State.

Siliguri is one of the most growing cities of the State. Apart from a population of over seven lakhs, Siliguri witnesses the influx of numerous people coming from other areas of the State for business, employment, tourism and other activities. Nearly 10 lakh people depend on the services and infrastructure of the City. Siliguri Municipal Corporation plays a very crucial role in delivering such services.

Urbanization is the central theme of the present century. It is one of the most transformative trends of the present generation as well. The cities provide opportunities and pose threats too. Balancing between the two is the need of the hour. Recently Habitat-III, was ceremoniously organized in Quito, Ecuador. In the conference, emphasis was given on transforming the developed cities into sustainable and inclusive ones. And thorough discussions were held for upholding the 'Rights to the cities and cities for all'.

In the era of Urbanization, problems and complexities of the towns are also growing in reasonable proportion. Local Self Governance and administrative bodies with elective representative can play a dynamic role in diluting such problems and finding sustainable solutions to those. Development of the cities thus calls for democracy and decentralization. For a developing nation like India, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment are very much important in such perspective. The 74th Amendment talks in length about devolution of administrative and financial powers to the local bodies. For this, the roles of the National and State Government are very important. Under such amendment, it is mandatory for the Governments at the Centre or the State to constitute the Finance Commissions and undertake various development projects for uplifting the status of the local self-government. Under this, there are established parameters for sanctions and grants to the local bodies. This is not to be seen as mere sympathy or

mercy. Article 243(W) talks elaborately about the role of the State Government to enable the local bodies to function as institutes of local self-government with both administrative and financial powers.

Regarding certain Central and State projects related to urbanization

As per the report of the 14th Finance Commission of the Central Government, all the three tier Panchayati Raj institutions are supposed to get a cumulative sum of Rupees two lakh two-ninety-two Crores in a span of 5 years (2015-2020). The Municipalities are supposed to receive a sum of 87.143 Crore Rupees. In the previous Finance Commission, the sum was Rupees 63.5 thousand Crores and in the 12th Finance Commission the sum was Rupees 20 thousand Crores. As per the 14th Finance Commission report, the State of West Bengal is eligible to receive Rupees 14,191 Crores for the PRIs and Rupees 6639 Crores for the Municipalities.

During the tenure of the previous government at the Centre various development projects like JNNURM, SJSRY, various housing schemes, NULM, NUHM etc. were started. The present Central Government has initiated projects like AMRUT, Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan, Housing for All, Smart Cities etc. Following the footprints, the State of West Bengal has also initiated Nirmal Bangla and NijaGriha in the line of similar Central Government Schemes. Moreover the Government recently started schemes like Samabyathi, Baitorani, Green City Mission etc. It is heartening that Siliguri Municipal Corporation has also initiated several socio-economic projects for the upliftment of the poor people residing in the urban slums, a detailed discussion on which is given in the following pages.

I would like to give an overview of how Siliguri has been deprived in the past two financial years. We have received only Rs.2.61 Crores for urban employment and Rs.29 lakhs for AMRUT during this period. Recently, we have received

administrative approval for construction of 2000 houses under Housing for All. However no financial support has yet been received for the same. Out of non-plan head and 14th Finance Commission, the fund flow has been more or less regular. On this 20th March we have received a grant of Rs.3.47 Crores out of outstanding dues for the year 2014-15 for the 3rd State Finance Commission. However, approximately an amount of Rs.20 Crores is still to be received for the last two financial years on account of the above head.

It is heartening that the revenue collection in the own fund has seen a positive growth. The total collection during 2015-16 was Rs. 26.41 crores, whereas in the present financial year this figure stands at Rs.35.21 Crores. It is 92% of the target proposed in the previous annual financial statement, which is a record in itself. Even with such record breaking achievements, we are not complacent. We are thankful to the people of Siliguri for the little achievements during this period. We are hopeful that the graph of progress will continue to show upward movement.

For various development works, we have received financial assistance from MPLAD and BEUP. Apart from this, various development projects have been undertaken from our own resources. Unfortunately, we are yet to receive the approval for a loan of Rs.10 Crores from the Municipal Development Fund for which we had applied long back. Further, we have not received a committed grant of Rs.38 Crores for overall road network development. Moreover, outstanding dues of Rs.6 Crores and 2 Crores respectively from SJDA and NBBD are yet to be received.

Initiatives to enhance own revenue collection

Urbanization is a continuous process. It reflects the tone of the policy of the Government. Holistic and sustainable urbanization is only possible with devolution

of democratic and financial rights to the local authorities. We are proceeding towards an equitable growth of the city with a specific plan and vision encompassing devolution of democratic as well as socio economic rights to the citizens. Even though we have numerous constrains, we are continuing uninterrupted services like social assistance programme, slum development, employment generation for the poor people, Self Help Group formation and their credit linkage, street light, safe drinking water, development of roads. Monthly salary of municipal workers, E.P.E. etc have also been paid without any interruption.

One of the key areas of Development for us is empowerment of Women of the cities and ensuring their safety and security with constant liaison with the Police Department.

We have been regular in conducting meetings of the Board of Councillors, Mayor-in-Council, Borough Committees, Ward Committees, and Solid Waste Management Committees etc. Due importance is given to the opinion of the opposition members. We have taken enough care to establish the rule of law. Necessary steps have been taken to curb corruption. Awareness camps have been organized to make people aware of the menace of Dengue, usage of plastic etc. Steps have been taken for the removal of Khatal on the banks of river Mahananda. These collectively reflect our endeavor to establish good administration and rule of law within the Siliguri Municipal Corporation.

We have started installing GPS in the vehicles of Siliguri Municipal Corporation. Steps have been taken to install biometric machine in the office. We have already enhanced remuneration and wages of nearly 2000 contractual and daily rated workers. Payment of salary through bank accounts has been started. Maternity

leave of 30 days has been started for all the female casual employees. Nearly 500 new beneficiaries have been added in the social package given by the Corporation. We have started disbursing allowances for the 100 elderly unmarried women. Nearly 17,000 people including the SHG members, health workers and casual employees have been brought under the Sasthya-sathi project. We have even started regularizing casual workers working more than 10 or 15 years. Not only a gradation system has been started in their pay packages, they have also been allowed to enjoy 15 days leave in a year. We are even contemplating to allow leave for the contractual drivers of the Corporation.

Regarding various acts, laws, rules etc.

Government of West Bengal has already enacted the West Bengal Building Rules (Amendment 2016). We are in the process of implementing the same in our Corporation. Necessary steps have been taken to reorganize Municipal Building Committee, Municipal Building Tribunal, and First Track Settlement Committee. We shall send a proposal to the Government for making certain Amendments in the existing Municipal Act. Naming of the Street Committee shall also be made effective. Proposal will be sent for increasing the number of members in the Mayor-in-Council.

Regarding certain Development Projects

It may be noted that the Wards under Jalpaiguri District under Siliguri Municipal Corporation are vast and comprise of a lion's share of the total population of the Corporation. The socio economic fabric in these areas is continuously undergoing metamorphosis. In this respect, it is our request to the 4th State Finance Commission to incorporate such diversity of the added areas in their reports. It shall also be our proposal to include these areas under BRGF. The added areas are

contiguous to the Bangladesh border. With the Fulbari border in operation, this region is in dire need of special financial assistance.

The drinking water scheme of Siliguri Municipal Corporation needs to be implemented at the earliest. We earnestly solicit the kind intervention of the Hon'ble Minister, Public Health Engineering for immediate implementation of the same. We also expect the road and bridge projects under Asian Highway and National Highway of India to be completed soon. To lessen the pressure on Siliguri Municipal Corporation, considering its neo-urban characteristics, the Atharokhai-Medical area should be converted to a Municipality at the earliest. In the north, Salbari and Dabgram-II should also be converted to Municipalities. Already the Environment Department of the Central Government has recognized the Mahananda river as tributary of river Ganga. We expect the National Ganga Basin Authority to undertake the transformation works of river Mahananda, too. Further, the overall sewerage and drainage works of Siliguri should also be approved at the earliest by the Central Government. The State Government should at once undertake certain short term and long term projects for the up gradation of the traffic system of Siliguri which has presently become a nightmare for the citizens.

In the present scenario, the ideals and aspirations of the people are continuously on a change. To accommodate such changing dynamics in the development process of the State, formation of District Planning Committee is essential. It is also regretted that Staff Pattern of the Corporation is yet to be approved by the State Government. Almost, three hundred posts are lying vacant. Even after repeated requests the State Government is yet to post a full time Executive Engineer, Medical Officer or even an architect at SMC. Presently the total expenditure for Salary, E.P.F. and other benefits of the casual, contractual, daily rated workers stands at a staggering value of Rs.24 Crores. This is solely borne by the

Corporation. Unfortunately, we have not received a single penny from the State Government for the welfare of these 2000 workers. This was brought to the notice of the 4th State Finance Commission. We hope, the same will be reflected in their report. More recruitment is required at the earliest under NUHM and NULM as well for better implementation of the projects.

Regarding Planned Development

Few years back, the SJDA undertook the task of comprehensive planning for overall development of the City, Traffic Control, Change of Land Usage, river conservation plan for Mahananda and other rivers etc. Unfortunately, all these works have been stalled for some unknown reasons. The qualitative performance of SJDA has also deteriorated to an extent. Even though, this Development Authority is supposed to play a very crucial role for holistic development of both Siliguri and Jalpaiguri, unfortunately there is no elected representative from Siliguri in the Authority. This has resulted in disruption of development activities in around Siliguri. We want vision 2025 of the Authority to be implemented wholeheartedly. It must be remembered that Development Authorities like SJDA, NBDD etc. should function as supplementary to each other, not as parallel forces.

We are aware of the expectation of the people of Siliguri on us. Amidst several challenges and constrains on political, financial and others fronts, we are marching ahead towards a better and prosperous Siliguri. The best wishes and cooperation from the citizens of Siliguri are our guiding forces towards achieving our objectives.

The total outstanding dues from the State Government presently stand at staggering Rs.280 Crores. We are yet to receive any grant for the 3rd State Finance Commission for the previous and current years. The parameters which are used for

formulating principals for distribution of the funds from the 14th Finance Commission have not been followed for this Corporation. Corporation or Municipalities with less population than Siliguri have ended up receiving more financial grants (source: plan no.25 of the State Budget -2017).

In the coming financial year we expect to receive better cooperation from the Central and State Governments. We are hopeful to receive loan of Rs.10 Crores from Municipal Development Funds. From MPLAD, we expect to receive Rs.5 to 7 Crores. We are certain that we will continue to receive funds from BEUP as well. Further, it is also expected that there will be a considerable jump in the collection of tax and non-tax revenues and augmentation of overall own revenue collection.

Considering all this aspects I am proposing a Budget of Rs. 235.69 Crores for the financial year 2017-18. However, to a large extent this depends on how much financial grant and assistance we receive from the State Government.

Initiatives to enhance tax and non-tax revenue

Considering the irregularity of financial assistance from external sources, our main thrust will be on enhancing own revenue collection. Stern punitive measures will be taken against those found to be defaulters of Property Tax, Water Charges, Advertisement charges, Conservancy Charges, Parking fees etc. Thorough assessment will be done for the un-assessed buildings. We are already in the process of introducing modern software for more transparency and better control on the taxation system. It is seen that the outstanding taxes from different State and Central Government properties amount to several Crores of rupees. It is imperative that stringent measures need to be taken to realize such outstanding dues. I propose to enhance conservancy charges for the apartments with more than 25 flats. As per Building Act, for conversation of usages of a Building, necessary approval will be

accorded on payment of certain charges or fees. As per existing Municipal Corporations Act and 12th Schedule of the Constitution, Municipality or Corporation is empowered to collect LUCC charges for the change of usage of land. This is will be implemented soon for Siliguri Municipal Corporation as well. For this necessary guidelines will be prepared soon.

Special Conservancy charge of Rs.500/- shall be imposed on each Bus of private schools and colleges every month. Service charges will be imposed on NJP, Siliguri Junction Rail Station and other properties of Central Government. As per the existing guidelines of the Central Government, taxes shall be imposed on different Banks, Life Insurance Companies, BSNL, Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum, Food Corporation of India etc. Toll taxes shall be collected from loaded vehicle within the Corporation. Strict measures shall be taken against the defaulters of rents of shops or stalls of various Corporation run markets. Stay tax for different hotel and lodges shall be enhanced to Rs.5/- per day. Special emphasis will be given on the collection of display taxes. Stringent action will be taken against those advertising without consent of the Corporation. 25% enhancement shall be made on hiring charges of Water Tanks and Cesspool vehicles. After through renovation the rents of various guest houses under the Corporation shall also be enhanced. As per the West Bengal Municipal Corporation Act, exemption or rebate shall be given on the Property Taxes of Government sponsored schools, religious places, charitable trusts, ex-service men etc. upon through scrutiny of their applications. If the quarterly tax is less than Rs.25/-, exemption shall be allowed for those dwelling in the Kachha houses of the slums areas. This will benefit a minimum number of 10,000 people. For this the applicant shall have to clear the current dues.

Special care shall be taken to overthrow the system of red-tapism and introduce more transparency in the administrative mechanism of the Corporation. Quality

control shall be ensured in different development works as well as public service delivery methods. This will ensure better governance and effective public service delivery.

If the government considers complete or partial payment of salary, remuneration, wages of the contractual, casual, daily rated workers from the 4th State Finance Commission and also take necessary steps to fill-up the vacant posts of the Corporation, the Corporation shall not only be able to undertake more development works but also can provide hassle free public service.

Regarding certain development works

Nearly three decades back, initiatives were first taken to convert Siliguri into a planned city. At that period of time, SJDA played a vibrant role in transformation of the small town into a modern city. Soon, the then Municipality was converted to a Corporation. Most of the important roads, bridges, culverts of the city were constructed during that period in a phased and planned manner. Even the four bridges on river Mahananda, bridges over river Fuleswari and Jorapani, Kanchenjunga Stadium, Siliguri Indoor Stadium, Swimming Pool, many important markets were conceptualized and constructed during that period. Development of 154 notified slums, lease of land benefitting nearly 10000 slum dwellers were also started. Dwelling houses were constructed under IHSDP. For this Rs.106 Crores were sanctioned in three phases. Project for supply of safe drinking water to the households was started. Several schemes were undertaken for improvement of public health. A sum of Rs.180 Crores was sanctioned for implementation of all these projects. For sewerage and safe drinking water Rs.65 Crores were spent in two phases under UIDSSMT. The conservation works

Mahananda River was also started during that period by SJDA. You are all are aware of the fate of the project!

Several initiatives were taken to make Siliguri a hub of commercial activities in the region. Works were started for two bypass roads, satellite city, Food Park, IT Park, Pineapple Park, Dry Port, Indo-Bangladesh trade route through Fulbari etc. Even the dental college, polytechnic college were constructed during this period.

The unfinished works of the Vision-2025 must get fresh impetus. Short, medium and long term plans must be adopted for traffic control mechanism which is in complete disarray presently. Proposals should be sent for commencing Metro Rail services within the Corporation and adjoining areas. Lease or patta may be provided on payment of nominal fees to the people residing on the Government lands for more than 20 years. A memorandum regarding this was submitted to the Hon'ble Railway Minister, Government of India by our Councillors.

We want initiatives from the State Government to develop infrastructure for sports in Siliguri. Recently, there have been initiatives to shut down the Siliguri center of Sports Authority of India. We have vehemently opposed this. Moreover, we want a modern cricket stadium to be built in Siliguri.

We have received commitment from one Hon'ble Member of Parliament to receive fund for construction of Peace Heaven in Siliguri. Also, works of a small auditorium will be started very soon. Central Government has recently accorded administrative approval for construction of two hundred houses under Housing for All. We are eligible to receive nearly Rs.80 Crores under this project including Central and State share. We are hopeful that the works for this will be started very soon. The list of the beneficiaries under the second phase is also being finalized.

We have already sent a few proposals under Swachh Bharat Mission and Green City Mission to the state. The administrative approval for the same is awaited.

It is rather alarming that in the recent years the incidents of violence in the cities are on the rise. The safety and security of women are at stake. Incidents of crime against women have also increased in an unprecedented manner. All these were thoroughly discussed in the Habitat-III. While planning for development of Siliguri, these issues are also being kept in mind by us.

Very soon we are going to start construction and renovation works of large high drains all over the Corporation. An expenditure of Rs.3 Crores will be made for this. With an expenditure of Rs.6 Crores, the augmentation works of existing water supply system will be commenced. Various works have already been undertaken for the dumping ground. We have already purchased modernized conservancy vehicles and equipments worth more than Rs.2 Crores. LED lights are being installed across the important streets of the city. An expenditure of Rs.1 crore has been incurred for this purpose. We have undertaken the works to construct two bridges over Mahismari and Panchanai rivers under MP LAD fund of two Hon'ble Members of Parliament. Similarly small bridges will be constructed over Fuleswari and Jorapani rivers. Other notable works include renovation of the Kiranchandra Burning Ghat, development of Karbala etc. Some public lavatories will be constructed at certain crucial points of the city. Alternate sewerage system will be developed to mitigate the problems of Ward No.4, 6 and 7.

Regarding Councillors LAD

In the present financial year a sum of more than Rupees 2 Crores has been disbursed to 47 Councillors under Councillor-LAD fund. In every ward, Ward Utsav has been successfully organized. In the coming year also, the total grant

under Councillor- LAD shall be Rs.6 lakh. We shall request the Councillors to present an Annual Action Plan as early as possible. We shall also simplify the procedure of disbursement under Councillor-Lad to avoid unnecessary complexities. It is informed that the CAG audit for the year 2014-15 has already been completed. The same for the year 2015-16 is about to be completed. Soon the related reports shall be made public as per the Public Disclosure Act.

Budget at a Glance

If we evaluate the financial status of the Siliguri Municipal Corporation of the past financial year, it is evident that our own revenue collection has been 92% of the target proposed in the budget of 2016-17. The revenue receipt from the State Government for non-plan head stands at 70% of the target. On the other hand Capital Receipt or receipt from Plan Head from the State Government is a meager 43%. The total revenue collection from own sources and receipts from the Government stands at 77% of the target proposed in the previous budget.

Total budget stipulated in the financial year 2016-17 was Rupees 194 Crores. However, expenditure could be made of an amount of Rs.131 Crores, which is 67% of the targeted amount. The shortfall is mainly due to non-receipt of Plan-head funds from the State Government in the consecutive years, detailed analysis of which has been annexed. It may also be noted that in consonance with the commitment of the Board more than 25% of the Budget has been reserved for the current year for the poorest of the poor of the society.

The proposed target of income for the Budget for the upcoming financial year is Rs 233.47 Crores. The proposed expenditure is Rs. 235.69 Crores, which makes a deficit of Rs. 2.22 Crores. However, it may be noted that without continuous financial assistance from the Government, the said target can never be achieved. A

thorough analysis of budget statements of previous years will reveal that our own income generation in 2016-17 was considerably higher than any previous year. The same can be said about the expenditure incurred as well. However, the total outstanding due from the State Government for the year 2015-16 and 2016-17 stands at Rs.280 Crores. With receipt of such outstanding dues, continuous financial assistance from the Government and our sincere effort of enhancement of own revenue generation, I am hopeful that we can easily achieve the benchmarks set for the financial year 2017-18.

25% of the total budget consists of pro-poor components. I have tried to give special emphasis on the upliftment of the living conditions of the poor people residing in the slums, others areas of the cities. Women empowerment shall remain one of our key focus areas. This budget also reflects our commitment towards a clean and green city as well as our honest endeavours to mitigate the ill effects of climate change. I have also talked about participatory democracy and the role of the Ward Committees in the development of the City.

A bird's eye view of the revised budget for the year 2016-17 and the proposed budget for the year 2017-18 is given below.

Highlights of the Budget

- 1) Enhancement of Tax and non-tax revenue. Horizontal expansion of the base of trade enlistment fees.
- 2) Curtailment of unnecessary expenditure and prevention of wastage of financial resources.
- 3) Ensuring regular and timely attendance of the employees and development of their skills.
- 4) Installation of biometric machine at the Head Office and Borough Offices.
- 5) Installation of GPS in all the vehicles.
- 6) Installation of acoustic leak detection system to prevent wastage of water.
- 7) Installation of LED lights to reduce electricity charges.
- 8) Collection of land usage conversation charges.
- 9) Enhancement of conservancy charges from Private Institutions, Nursing Homes, LIC offices, ATMs etc.
- 10) Imposition of conservancy fees of Rs.500/- on every bus of private schools and colleges.
- 11) Collection of toll charges from loaded vehicles.
- 12) Enhancement of 20% water charges from big apartments and commercial institutions.
- 13) The new stay tax shall be Rs. 5/- per head per day.
- 14) Regular collection of display and advertisement taxes.
- 15) Collection of special charges from the e-rickshaws plying within the Siliguri Municipal Corporation area.
- 16) Imposition of penalty on usage of plastic carries bags.
- 17) Waiver of arrear taxes of the poor and slum dwelling tax payers whose

quarterly taxes are below Rs.20/- on payment of current taxes. This will benefit more than 40,000 tax payers.

- 18) Exemption of taxes on the basis of application and due verification for the Government sponsored schools, religious places, charitable trusts etc. as per existing Act.
- 19) For the marriage of girls belonging to BPL category one time grant of Rs.2500/- will be given. Each Councillor will be allotted a quota of 5 (five) cases per year.
- 20) 100(Hundred) more beneficiaries will be included in the existing list of Unmarried Deserted Women allowance.
- 21) Under social package provided from the own fund of the Corporation, the allowances shall be enhanced to Rs.400/- per month from existing Rs.350/-. For the beneficiaries over 75 years of age, the amount shall be Rs.450/- per month. All such allowances shall be disbursed online.
- 22) Financial Assistance shall be provided to the minority and harijan Girls on the basis of scrutiny of their applications. They will also be provided computer training.

In such a scenario, the Current Budget of Rs.235.69 Crores for the financial year 2017-18 and Revised Budget of Rs.131.38 Crores are placed herewith for your approval. The Budgetary deficit shown is Rs.2.22 Crores.

Annexing herewith the detailed draft income-expenditure proposal for the financial year 2017-18.

Thanking you,

Dated: 25-03-2017.

Asok Narayan Bhattacharya,
Mayor,
Siliguri Municipal Corporation.

