

## **1.1. Introduction**

Media and society are interlinked. What happens in the society affects us directly or indirectly. Media have revolutionized the world with its magic multiplier impacts. Mass media have come to play a major role in the daily lives of common people. Its influence is so huge that virtually the entire decision-making process is based upon the influences of media. Civic and environmental awareness is one such area in which media can play a very important role in creating awareness. The term “civic” is generally understood as a sense of cleanliness, which the citizens have. However, it is beyond the basic sense of cleanliness. The term civic includes many other things also like usage of water, drainage system and health awareness. Environment on the other hand includes pollution check, deforestation, climate changes, and health awareness. In other words, one can say civic awareness and our approach towards the environment goes hand in hand. Our present attitude towards nature or environment will decide what we will leave for our future generations. In recent years media have dominated our lives, the way we think is influenced so much so that the media guide our thinking. In such a scenario, it is very important to assess the role of media on every issue. Civic and environment awareness are one such area in which the role of media is to be analyzed. Every country is facing serious environmental problems some are global in nature like global warming depletion of the ozone etc. Different levels of awareness concerning environmental problems and to compare the level of awareness among people is very important. Studies have found that public learns through consuming mass media news (Wilson 1995).

Since, the inception of our civilization, civic sense, and alertness towards environment has been an integral part of our civilization. The history of civics dates back to the earliest theories of civics by Confucius in ancient China and Plato in ancient Greece. The ancient civilizations in India also show the traces of civic awareness. The drainage system of Indus valley civilization is a great example of civic awareness among the people and the government. The idea of town planning was well established in the Indus Valley civilization. A striking feature of Indus Valley civilization was that the basic element of planning seems to be present in all the settlements big or small.

Civic awareness enhances the knowledge of the citizen towards the environment; it also makes him conscious of his rights and duties towards nature and society in specific. The increasing knowledge and awareness of individual citizen's rights can enhance global political and economic understanding. It makes the society responsive in nature, which leads to the development of the society.

The research therefore intended to study the impact of printed words in the aspect of civic and environment awareness as civic and environment are co-related. The study of one cannot take place without the other. The research intends to study the role played by Shillong media in creating civic and environment awareness.

The term “Agenda Setting Theory” was coined by Maxwell Mc Combs and Donald L .Shaw. (1972). An agenda is a selection of items arranged to give some items more importance than other items. Agenda theory says that the news media present the public with a picture of the world as it is happening in the world. Agenda theories try to describe and explain a) how stories are selected, packaged and represented- process known as “gate keeping”, b) the resulting agenda and c) how this agenda affects what people think about

the relative importance of issues presented. The theory also “predicts” that if a particular news item is presented prominently and frequently by the press, the public will come to believe that it is important. Thus, the press does not necessarily tell us what to think, but it does tell us what to think about. Shaw, McCombs (1972) and their associates found substantial correlation between the agendas set by the media and the public’s belief about the importance of the issues. Media’s agenda must be interpreted in long-range terms and depends on social categories, changing patterns of media use and frequency of media exposure. Generally, then, agenda –setting appears to be one of the indirect way in which the media can change society over a long period.

### **1.1.2. Communication and development of society:**

Communication is basic need of a man. For a modern man, it would be impossible to function without the media of communication, as they have become a part of the fabric of modern civilization. Communication is much larger process than mere “message transmission” it is a part of the overall development objectives and its impact is multidimensional. Media bring changes in the government that leads to a healthy growth of society. As Everett M. Rogers (1936) puts “development is a widely participatory process of social change in a society intended to bring about social and material advancement for the majority of the people through gaining greater control over the environment”.

The term “Development” has several dimensions namely social, economic, environment, political, and so on and so forth. Generally, development is seen mainly from materialistic point of view. In essence, the human aspect should be the chief focus of development.

“Development is not just a matter of having plenty of money, nor it is purely economic phenomenon, it embraces all aspects of social behavior.” (Cairncross: 1939). Development carries with not only the idea of economic betterment but also of great human dignity, security, justice, and equality. There is a difference between economic growth and development. Growth is a quantitative process involving mainly the extension of already established structure of production, whereas development suggests a qualitative change for a better human life. Development is measured in terms of the improvement in the lives of the people.

Health concerns are of prime interest to humans. The desire to seek health information is a basic urge of an individual. Presently newspaper readers are conscious of health issues and media reports related to health can improve their knowledge about disease like HIV AIDS etc. Media or communication can play a very important role in disease prevention and health promotion. The research will study the role played by the media in creating awareness regarding health issues, which is a part of civic awareness. Media the fourth estate plays a very important role in the process of development. It is observed that the developing countries are probably over-urbanized to the level of urbanization achieved by European countries in the early stages of their industrialization. People with rural orientation migrate to urban areas. The people have an improper attitude. The research proposes to know what role the media play towards the process of civic and environmental awareness, as both the issues are interconnected.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Shillong has been considered to be one of the most beautiful places in the entire Northeast. The city now faces a number of problems because of the unplanned urbanization in recent times. The perils and problems of the city has been identified and covered by the electronic media because of its visual impacts, but there has not been much work done in print media. The researcher finds it important to locate the position of the press in relation with the creation of a sense of civic and environmental awareness among the subscribers and immediate audience of Shillong Press. The media all over the world play an important role in terms of creating a sensible society with a rational approach towards its immediate environment. Located in a geo-physically fragile zone, the unplanned urbanization coupled with indifference of the Government and citizenry could spark off a much bigger crisis than what is conceivable. Media on their part are held responsible for creating awareness among the masses as well as subverting the agenda of the people in an attempt to reach out to their political masters. Whatever the scenario, the fact remains that there is no way to escape media influence in a mediated world and the question of creating civic awareness by the media can well be used as an example.

In a developing society, India being one, and the civic awareness as one of the prime factors in the formation of an urban society, it becomes increasingly important for the students of media to evaluate the role of the press in terms of creating civic and environmental awareness. The role of media in creating civic and environmental awareness in Shillong needs research at this juncture when changes are taking place due to the process of so called development. The study is relevant to see the important role played by the media in Shillong towards the changes. The study is significant to understand the changes taking place in the lives of the Shillong residents due to the

process of crass urbanization. The motive behind the research is to identify the responsibility taken by the Shillong media to spread awareness to the masses about civic awareness.

Apart from all these roles media plays a very important role in creating awareness among people. The study intends to see the role played by media in creating civic awareness in Shillong.

### **1.3. Study Objectives**

The general objective of the research is to look at how the press in Shillong reflects upon the issues concerning the sustenance of a healthy urban life pattern in Shillong for its citizens.

The specific objectives of the research are to-

- 1) Study the role and performance of press in terms of surveillance of Governments action on citizens' rights of a healthy urban life.
- 2) Look at how the press in Shillong informs its readers about the health and environmental concern
- 3) Know how the press in Shillong correlates the activities of citizens groups with demand of the public in Shillong.
- 4) Know how far the press is interested in shaping public opinion.
- 5) Find out how the press is spreading awareness on the climate changes in Shillong.

## **1.4. Research Gap**

Although a number of studies have explored media attention for climate change. However, as a result of their different analytical perspectives, research questions, analyzed time frames and media, data and methods, their results are difficult to compare. Comparative research, in turn, is missing, even though it has been described as particularly necessary in climate change communication (Anderson, 2009). An additional problem in the few existing comparative studies is the often missing “functional equivalence” of the measurements (Wirth and Kolb, 2012). Some studies compare factors that do not actually correspond with one another; limiting the comparability of their findings. Absolute numbers of newspaper articles on climate change (as used in Eskjaer, 2010), for example, not only indicate different national attention levels to the issue, but are also influenced by the size of a given newspaper and other factors. This is problematic in that newspapers around the world differ measurably in their scope, due to differences in journalistic culture or financial limitations. It is difficult, for example, to determine whether the extent of the reported differences in coverage between Asia and Europe is caused by varying newspaper sizes or by a differing relevance that is assigned to the topic by the respective media.

## **1.5. Research Questions**

In connection with the objectives the following research questions are formed:

- 1) What is the role of the press in Shillong on the issue of water wastage in the city?
- 2) What is the role of Shillong press on the issue of uranium and coal mining in the state?

- 3) What is the role of Press in Meghalaya on the issue of deforestation in Shillong and its adjoining areas?
- 4) What is the role of press to provide proper sanitation facility to the BPL category of people in Shillong?
- 5) What is the role of Shillong Press in terms of creating civic awareness among its readers?
- 6) What is the role of Press in creating awareness on alcoholism and drug menace among the youth in the city
- 7) Whether the press prefers any particular campaign taken up by any particular pressure group?
- 8) What is the role of press overall in terms of creating civic and environmental awareness?

## **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The study “The role of media in creating civic and environmental awareness in Shillong” tries reveal the truth as to what role the media play in spreading awareness. It also tries to reveal the steps taken by the government towards the changing environmental conditions. The findings of the research can be incorporated in improving the civic scenario of Shillong and the environmental problems can also be addressed with a solution. Lack of awareness is the reason behind the unplanned urbanization-taking place, which can be systematized with the revelation of the research. The findings of the research will give a new approach towards environmental problems. The research has a wide scope as very less research has been done in the area in Shillong.

## **1.7. Operational Definitions**



**Civic Awareness** -Apart from the basic knowledge of cleanliness civic here in the research includes many other things also like usage of water, drainage system and health awareness. The awareness of the citizen towards civic life will be included in the research. “A constitutional democracy is in serious trouble if its citizenry does not have a certain degree of education and civic virtue”. Phillip E. Johnson.

**Role of Media:** The part played by media in the process of development. The researcher will study the role played by Shillong press.

**Social Change:** Bringing change to the society. For the study, the researcher will consider the change.

**Agenda Setting:** There are various roles played by the media like that of an educator, opinion -maker so on and so forth. One of major roles, which media or journalist play, is that of an agenda setter. They are the decision makers in what be informed to the public and what not be informed to the public. There are certain key factors, which governs the journalist in the process of deciding, news values is one such factor. News value govern decision about the selection of events and these manifest themselves in agenda setting giving priority to some issues rather than the others, this aspect of selecting news is agenda setting. Three features are inter-connected in the production of news gate keeping, agenda setting and news values.

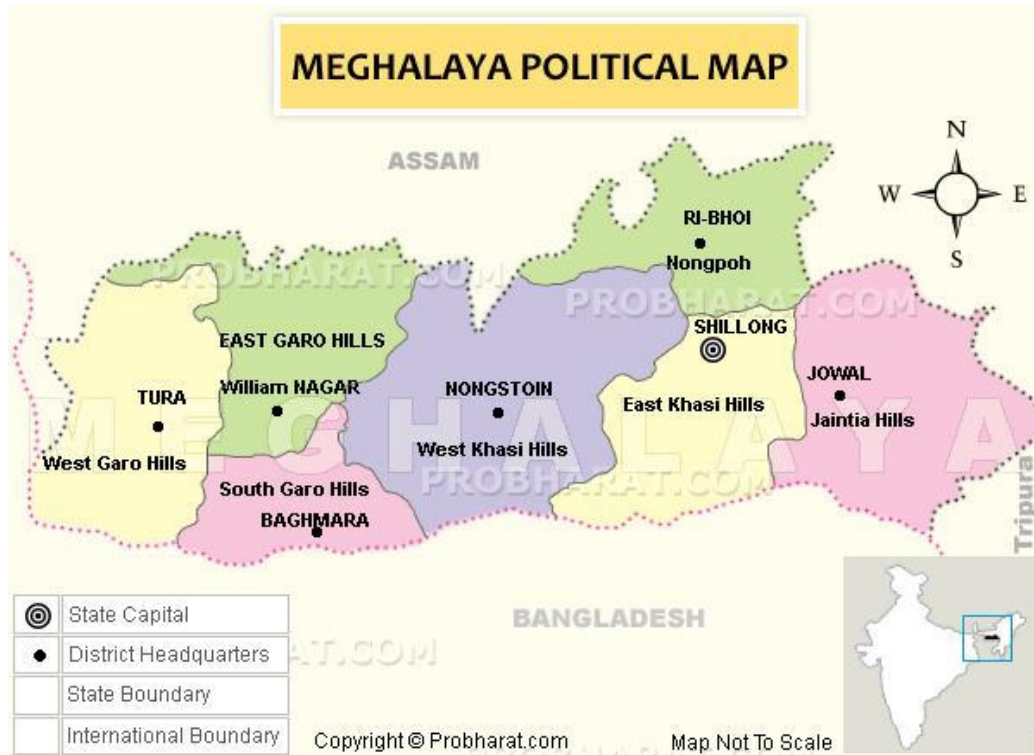
**Environmental Problems:** The environmental issues include pollution check, deforestation, climate changes. The awareness of the citizen towards the environment will be studied in the research.

**Positive story:** Positive news stories have been defined within the scope of this research work are those stories which speak positive things related to the issues identified as relevant to civic life . A story about afforestation may be considered as positive story as it is related to deforestation, an issue under the scope of the study. A story which talks about efforts to stop uranium mining may be considered as a positive story

**Neutral Story:** The stories defined as neutral are the stories which betray no direct positive or negative slant. These stories only factual reporting of events.

### **1.8. Brief Profile of the State**

The State of Meghalaya was formed on 21st January 1972 as a full-fledged State. It is situated on the north east of India. It extends for about 300 kilometres in length and about 100 kilometres in breadth. It is bounded on the north by Goalpara, Kamrup and Nowgong districts, on the east by KarbiAnglong and North Cachar Hills districts, all of Assam, and on the south and west by Bangladesh. The state has an area of 22,429 Sq. Km. with a total population of 2,318,822 (2001 census). The literacy rate is 62.7 %.



### Political Map of Meghalaya

Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya is located at an altitude of 1496 metres above sea level. Shillong, which was made Assam's capital in 1874, remained so till January 1972, following the formation of Meghalaya. The capital city derives its name from the manifestation of the creator called Shillong.

Meghalaya is the homeland mainly of the Khasis, the Jaintia and the Garos. The Garos inhabit western Meghalaya, the Khasis in central Meghalaya, and the Jaintias in eastern Meghalaya. The Khasi, Jaintia, Bhoi, War, collectively known as the Hynniewtrep people predominantly inhabit the districts East of Meghalaya, also known to be one of the earliest ethnic groups of settlers in the Indian sub-continent, belonging to the Proto Austroloid Monkhmer race. The Garo Hills is predominantly inhabited by the Garos, belonging to the

Bodo family of the Tibeto-Burman race, said to have migrated from Tibet. The Garos prefer to call themselves as Achiks and the land they inhabit, as the Achik-land.

### **1.8. 1.Profile of “*The Shillong Times*”**

“*The Shillong Times*” was born fifty years ago, but the seed of it was sown a decade earlier when sixty years ago English weekly was born under the editorship of Lala Bijoy Kumar Dey, the eminent lawyer of Shillong bar of those a days the Shillong mail was a precursor of “*The Shillong Times*” and I doubt if there would have been a Shillong times without the Mail preceding it the Mail provided congenial field for the Times to germinate in the fullness of Times and equipped the founder editor of the Times and rudimentary lessons in Journalism.

“*The Shillong Times*” first appeared as a tabloid sized weekly on 10th August 1945 under the editorship of Mr S.B Chaudhuri(1945 -1961) on a treadle machine .In 1961, Parsva Nath Chaudhuri (1961- 1978) bought “*The Shillong Times*” newspaper and the press from the founder editor –proprietor, Mr S.B Chaudhuri and took over the editorial reins With the untimely death of its second editor, Mr P.N Chaudhuri on 1st April 1978 his youngest son Mr Manas Chaudhuri already working actively for “*The Shillong Times*” took over the management of the paper.

A symbolic independence day, 15 August 1991 was chosen as the day to switch over to the modern computer typesetting and offset printing technique to keep pace with the fattest in printing technology. For the first time “*The Shillong Times*” appeared as a broadsheet daily.

Realizing that the Garo Hills comprises virtually half of Meghalaya and that there was vehicle of information and to disseminate information of events taking place in those parts,

*“The Shillong Times”* launched its Garo Hills edition giving the readers of Tura morning newspaper for the first time on 9th November 1992.

### **1.8.1. Milestones in the history of *“The Shillong Times”*:**

1) First appeared as a tabloid size weekly on 10 August 1945 under the editorship of S.B Chaudhuri on treadle machine. The ink often got frozen in the cold Shillong winter.

2) *“The Shillong Times”*, in an ambitious but ill-timed move turned into tabloid sized in June 1957.

3) Although the leadership was curving a daily newspaper to keep abreast of regional helping, there was a paucity of news on a daily basis. This coupled with financial and technical difficulties, caused *“The Shillong Times”* to revert to its previous weekly periodicity in December, 1957.

4) In 1961 P.N Chaudhuri bought *“The Shillong Times”* newspaper and pressed from the founder editor proprietor, Mr S.B Chaudhuri and took over the editorial reins

5) Despite the fact that existing constraints of regular news –feeding from agencies had not been overcome and the press still used the manual system of typesetting, *“The Shillong Times”* on 12th March 1987 reappeared as a tabloid sized daily.

6) The symbolic day, Independence Day 1991 was chosen as the day of switch over to the modern computer typesetting and offset printing technique abreast with the latest in printing technology. For the first time *“The Shillong Times”* appeared as a broadsheet daily.

7) In 1992 *“The Shillong Times”* was launched in Garo Hills.



Snapshot of “The Shillong Times”

1.8.2. Profile of “The Meghalaya Times”

“The Meghalaya Times” was born on July 27, 2009. It is Printed and Published by Donkumar Kharwanlang edited by Thomas Lim.

It’s a seven years old newspaper and much is not known about the infrastructure of the paper. The State had only “The Shillong Times” for its English readers for a long span of time and it is still the leading newspaper of the state. But with the launch of the “The Meghalaya Times” there is some amount of variety for the readers.



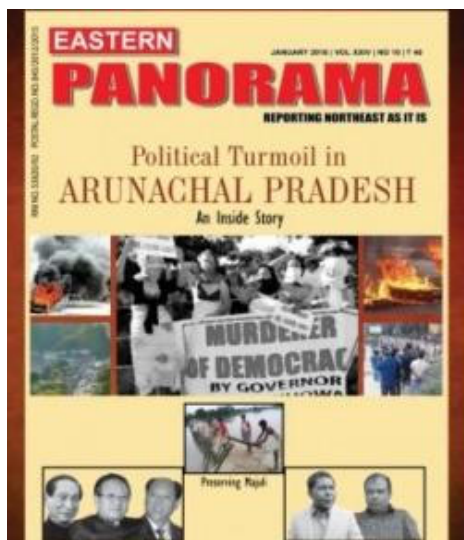
Snapshot of “*The Meghalaya Times*”

### 1.8.3 Profile of “*The Eastern Panorama*”

The News Magazine of the North East started in April 1992 by Dr. K.K. Jhunjhunwala as a first full-fledged News Magazine of the North East with an initial print turnover of 5000 copies per month. The magazine aims to cater to the needs of the people of the North Eastern region on one hand and report the issues that concern the people of North East.

In April 1995 Eastern Panorama Magazine was awarded the national award for fair, fearless and public spirited journalism by the Indian Federation of Small and Medium Newspapers (IFSMN).

The present readership of the publication is ten lakhs. The magazine has a circulation in other Northeastern the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim.



**Snapshot of “The Eastern Panorama”**

### **Profile of “The North East Today”**

The magazine TNT-The Northeast Today, was launched by Kirit Pradyot Deb Burman (also known as P.B.K.Manikya) in August 2007. The monthly estimated circulation of the magazine is 70,000. The magazine is known for its all-round coverage, and primarily covers politics, sports, cuisine, lifestyle, health, environment, science, and travel. The magazine is also one of the youngest in terms of age with the average age of 28 years in the editorial board. The magazine is for the people of northeast by the people who actually reside and live day to day.





Snapshot of “The Northeast Today”

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