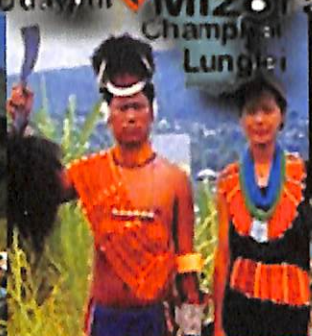
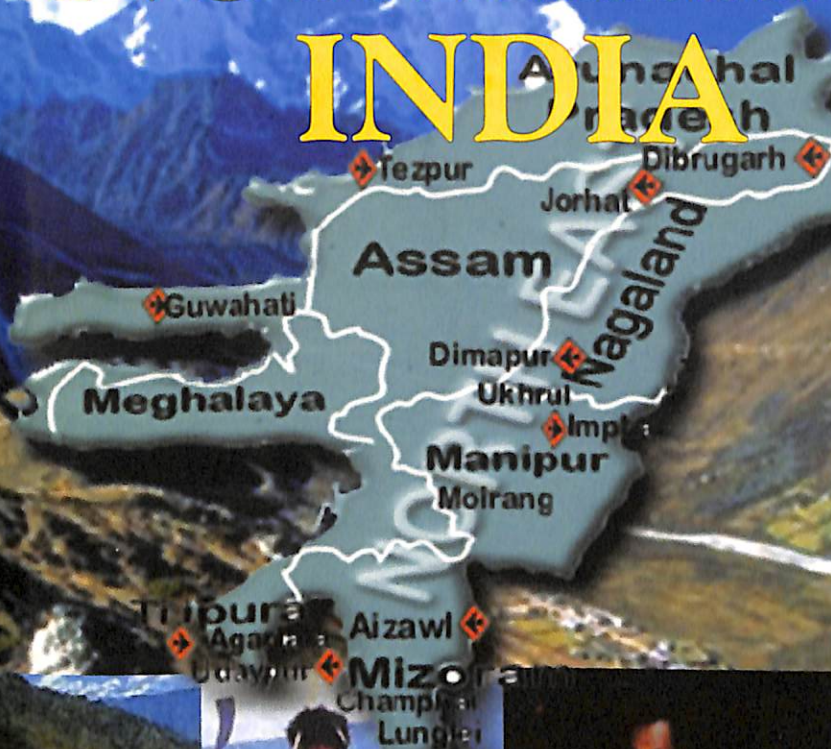


PANORAMA OF NORTHEAST INDIA



SHYAM NATH



Panorama of North-East India

Shyam Nath



AUTHORSPRESS

Preface

During my visit to North-East India in the year 2002 many people and organisations provided me much needed help and guidance. I am indebted to student leader W. Shyam Chand Sigh (Kumbi Khuga Wangma, Kumbi, Moirang, Bishnupur, Manipur), Raghumani and Krishna (Seva Bharati, Imphal), Lama Yeshi Khaw (Shasti) of Tawang Monastery, Biredndra Dwvedi (Arunachal Vikas Parishad, Hanagar), Rajendra Dwvedi (Bharatiya Majdoor Sangh, Silchar), Mani Shankar Bhaumik (a student leaders, Guwahati), H. Dattaraya (all India Organising Secretary of ABVP, saints of Rama Krishna Missions, Churches of Mizoram, Nagaland and Meghalaya. I am equally indebted to Rumtek Monastery of Sikkim, where from I collected relevant materials in 2001. Above all, I am thankful to advocate Kumar Raj Manoranjan Singh alias Manoranjan Bhagwan of Nalanda, Bihar (Convenor, All India Post Graduate Association), who encouraged me much to write this book.

I am also thankful to the Delhi-based libraries of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Indian Institute of Mass Communication and IGNOU. Museums and libraries of Guwahati, Kohima, Itanagar, Aizwal, Shillong, Agarthalla, Gangtok and Imphal have provided much help. I am indebted to them. I express my special gratitude to Sudarshan Kcherry, Director, Authorspress, who brought the book in this effective form.

Shyam Nath Mishra

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Mizoram

LOCATION

Mizoram occupies an area of great strategic importance in the north-eastern corner of India. It is bounded by Tripura state and Bangladesh to its west, and the Chin Hills of Myanmar (formerly Burma) to its east and south. To its north, Mizoram has the state of Manipur and Cachar district of Assam as its neighbours. The state is divided into three districts: (i) Aizawl (ii) Lunglei (iii) Chhimtuipui.

GEOGRAPHY AND PHYSICAL FEATURES

Mizoram is a mountainous region. It has great natural beauty and an endless variety of landscape. It is rich in fauna and flora. The climate in Mizoram is pleasant to cool in the upper reaches and humid in the plains but still tolerable. The winter temperature varies from 11 degrees Celsius to 24 degrees and in the summer the range is 18 to 29 degrees which makes the state fairly comfortable throughout the year. Naturally, the higher you go, the cooler and even colder it becomes, and the Mizos like to have their houses, and, therefore, the villages, along the hills. People everywhere in India value hill tops and mountains for locating major shrines as we know.

The average rainfall is 254 centimetres every year but in the southern part of the state it rains more. Thus, in the capital

town of Aizawl the average rainfall is 208 centimetres, but in Lunglei town, which is to the south, the rains are heavier and the average precipitation is 350 cm. With such heavy rainfall the state is endowed with rich vegetation and dense forests. Mizoram has an abundance of trees, bushes, plants, shrubs and grasses. Bamboos grow in large numbers everywhere. New plants have also been introduced and the picturesque character of the state is being built up. Whereas earlier the farmers returned to the same plot after a gap of 10 years the gap has been reduced in recent years to just four years. This naturally results in decreased output of foodgrains and other crops because, if the forest is burnt without allowing proper growth, the production would automatically become less.

Mizoram has hill ranges running from north to south. They are higher in the middle and taper off at both ends. The average height of the hills is 900 metres (about 3,000 feet) but the highest peak, the Blue Mountain, also called the Phawngpui, goes up to 2,165 metres and is located in the southern part of the territory. The hills are steep and are separated by rivers which flow either northwards or to the south, and create deep gorges between the hill ranges. There are many rivers in the state but mention may be made of the Tlawng, also known as the Dhaleswari, in the north, the Tuirail (Sonai) and the Tuiwal which start from the middle of Mizoram and then flow into the Barak river in the Cachar district of Assam. In the south the Karnafuli flows in a northerly direction and then enters Bangladesh where a major hydroelectric project has been built over it. The river Koladyne enters Mizoram from Myanmar and flowing southward it again goes back into that country. The state, which has small stretches of plain surface, has a few lakes of which the biggest is the Palak Lake in the southern part of the state. The south-west monsoon arrives early in the region sometime in May, and brings copious rains to Mizoram.

Tlawng (Daleswari) and Taivai are the two main rivers of the Aizawl district. In addition, there are a few lakes and springs, some of which are Tamdil and Rungdil.

Aizawl district is mostly hilly; hills ranging in the south-north directions very sharp at places with average height of 3,000 ft intercepted by deep ravines and *nullahs*. The types of forests in the district are of the following categories:

- i) Tropical wet evergreen forest.
- ii) Tropical semi-evergreen forest.
- iii) Montane sub-tropical forest.

The terrain of the Chhimituipui district is mostly hilly in character ranging from the south to the north direction, the ranges being very sharp at places. The average height is 3,000 ft intercepted by deep valleys. The types of forest found in the district of Chhmituipui are the tropical wet evergreen, semi evergreen and montane sub-tropical.

Conservation of forests and other development activities like construction of buildings at various places, constitution of reserve forests including wildlife sanctuary at Ngengpuitlang were also undertaken. The main river of the district is Chhimituipui (Kolodyme). Palak Lake is situated at a distance of 25 kms south-west of Tulpang.

The types of forests found in the Lunglei district are tropical, semi-evergreen forests and montane sub-tropical forests. In the earlier period, the forests were thick and valuable, but due to the traditional practice of jhuming from time immemorial, large areas of forests in the district are being gradually converted into barren lands. The forest department, however, has taken necessary steps to regenerate the forest areas. Riangte Lui is one of the very important streams in the district.

HISTORY

Mizoram became the 23rd state of the Indian Union in February 1987. The Mizos are a Mongoloid race who originally

came from the Chin Hills of neighbouring Myanmar (formerly Burma). Mizo is a generic term and means a man from the hills, and denotes that Mizoram is essentially a mountainous area. Like the rest of India, the British captured Mizoram and they finally established their rule in the region in 1898, not before some violent incidents, as the independent-minded Mizos were not easily amenable to foreign subjugation.

Afterwards the Mizo area became a district of Assam and the position continued for some time after India became independent. In 1952, a Mizo district council was created under the Indian Constitution. This was done to give the region a separate identity from the rest of Assam, as the Mizos then had a strong feeling of being different. This, however, did not succeed and did not satisfy the Mizos, or the vocal elements among them.

There was a big famine in the Mizo region in 1959. The government organised relief in a big way but the people were more impressed by the relief work under the auspices of the Mizo National Famine Front and other voluntary bodies. Laldenga, a retired subaltern of the Indian army, was the key figure in the Mizo National Famine Front, and because of his oratory and organising skill he soon won the hearts of the people. The Mizo National Famine Front was converted into the Mizo National Front and Laldenga emerged as a rebel leader.

In 1966 Laldenga led a rebellion, and unrest began to spread in the Mizo Hills. The area was now separated from the state of Assam and created into a separate union. The Mizo region was also given a separate assembly. But Laldenga was carrying on a fight against the union forces and was now getting full support from neighbouring Pakistan which was then still in the eastern region as East Pakistan. Pakistan also provided him with arms and training for his men. There was also the support of some Christian groups abroad although the Church often pulled its weight in the direction of amity and reconciliation. The situation eased somewhat with the creation

of Bangladesh in December 1971 but the killing of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of Bangladesh, by some of its army officers in August 1975, removed the main plank of friendship for India and Laldenga's men got back their sanctuary and their support. They had, of course, their sanctuaries in neighbouring Myanmar where a kind of anarchical situation prevailed in the border region. Laldenga himself shifted to Surrey in Britain and he was controlling his armed rebels from a remote control point. Now began the negotiations phase and Laldenga also began to realise that the goal of an independent Mizo land was impossible for attainment. By 1980, first a "peace accord" was reached between Laldenga and the Indian government, The accord did not hold and rebel activity continued for some more time.

But things had begun to look up and Laldenga was even permitted to visit the Mizo Hills area. He was now openly saying that he was an Indian and the Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi declared in 1984 when she visited Aizawl that the path of negotiations was open within the framework of the Indian Constitution.

Finally an accord which was to hold was reached on June 30, 1986 between Laldenga, the Home Secretary of the Indian government and the Chief Secretary of the Mizoram government. The rebellion came to an end and the problem of Mizoram was more or less finally settled within the Constitution. The Mizoram National Front (MNF), under Laldenga, had accepted to give up the path of violence and work within the four corners of the Constitution. The rebels came out of their hideouts and laid down their arms Laldenga became the Chief Minister of Mizoram with the Congress leader, Lalthanhawla, joining his cabinet as a minister along with some other Congress ministers.

Very soon, on February 2, 1987, Mizoram became a full-fledged state of India, and in the first elections to the state assembly the MNF got a good majority but lost it subsequently.

IRRIGATION AND AGRICULTURE

Mizos are basically agriculturists. About 60 per cent of them are engaged in agricultural pursuits. State farms and integrated agricultural and veterinary farms have been established to encourage the modern methods of farming, and teach the people the new practices. Maize, rice and other crops are grown while pigs and fowls are reared by many farmers. Exotic varieties and breeds of pigs and fowls have been introduced and have become popular among the villagers. The area of jhum cultivated land is being reduced, and the area under ordinary cultivation is being fully exploited so that the target of self-sufficiency in rice production is achieved by 1997-98. Rice is the staple diet of the Mizo people as in all the north-eastern states, with locally available meat. High-yielding varieties of paddy are being distributed to the farmers and they are encouraged to grow such varieties as would fetch a good return to them and fill the state's granary.

The state has considerable cultivation of fruits. Some 25,000 hectares of land are set apart for horticulture. The main horticultural crops are oranges, lemon, *kagzi* lime, passion fruits, *hatkora*, *jamir*, pineapple and papaya. Other crops are sugarcane, tapioca and cotton. With processing unit coming up such as the Ginger Dehydration Plant at Sairang and fruit juice concentration plants, people have started extensive cultivation of ginger and fruit crops.

About 85 per cent of workers in rural areas are engaged in agricultural activities. The main aim of the agricultural department is to achieve self-sufficiency in food production. With this aim in view, it was envisaged to bring the maximum area under crop production by way of land reclamation, construction of link roads, providing irrigational facilities and adoption of high yielding variety of grains.

In order to encourage and bring about permanent cultivation in Aizawl, the biggest district of Mizoram, a time-bound programme on horticulture known as Garden Colony

was taken up. The administrative areas of Aizawl district were divided into two agricultural districts called Aizawl (East) and Aizawl (West). Agricultural seed farms have also been established in each of these districts for multiplication of recommended varieties of seeds.

The highest Peak in Mizoram is Blue Mountain (Phawngpui) situated in the district of Chhimitpui with a height of 2,165 metres. The slopes of the mountain are covered with dense forests. The lower slopes of the mountain are being cleared for potato and maize cultivation which thrive very well. In this district, more than 80 per cent of the workers in the district are engaged in agricultural activities.

Land being the common property of the village, individual villagers normally have no separate holdings for the purpose of shifting cultivation. Some lands were, however, allotted to individuals for the purpose of terracing, plantation and wet rice cultivation in the district.

The cultivators are beginning to realise the wasteful character of jhuming and this being so, all the flat lands available in the district are proposed to be reclaimed for permanent cultivation. Special attention was therefore given to the flat lands of Chamdur and Palak areas. Every available facility is given to the cultivators to enable them to establish permanent farms and start cultivation.

Minor irrigation projects are being completed in different parts of the state. The surface irrigation potential of Mizoram is estimated at 7,0000 hectares of which 2,5000 hectares can be irrigated by the lift irrigation method and the balance by canals and other methods. The potential created so far is not large but that has induced the farmers to go in for double and triple cropping already. Thirty minor irrigation works have been completed and another 14 projects are under implementation.

One veterinary dispensary was established at Saiha during 1972-73 with one Veterinary Assistant Surgeon looking after the health of the livestock population scattered in the district.

Under the subsidy scheme some poultry birds and pigs were distributed to progressive and needy villagers in the Chhimituipui.

Till the end of the Fourth Plan period, the animal husbandry and veterinary department was only one wing of the agriculture department. With the launching of the Fifth Plan they started to function as an independent department.

Animal husbandry has also received considerable attention in the state where, in the old days, only the *mithuns* were known as an all purpose animal which could even be offered in lieu of cash. Now the consuming of milk has been spreading and cows and buffaloes are being reared to cater to the growing demand. Exotic varieties of pigs and fowls have also found much acceptability and have helped in improving the local breeds.

Presently, the price of milk, meat and eggs in local markets across the country is beyond the reach of the common man. Stepping up of production coupled with systematic marketing facilities alone could bring the required protective foods within reach of the common man.

In the sectors of goats, sheep and wool development, it was proposed to distribute to selected farmers on subsidised rates imported exotic sheep and goats for intensive development within the district. In order to achieve all the programmes, adequate health centres such as veterinary dispensaries, mobile dispensaries and rural animal husbandry centres were established so that even the remotest villages in the district are brought under proper coverage. Livestock and poultry were treated for various diseases and other ailments.

In the dairy development sector, the Central Dairy and Town Milk Supply Scheme for Aizawl has been expanded.

The Mizoram Khadi and Village Industries Board has done its bit to set up cottage industries and units in the area of silk spinning and weaving, cotton spinning and weaving, soap making, oil extraction, carpentry, cane and bamboo works. The has been set up by the Mizoram government in collaboration

with the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI). On the whole, there is much scope for industries in the state.

Various schemes of agricultural development were being operated in the district of Lunglei during the decade, such as irrigation, land reclamation, green manuring, subsidised supply of tools and implements, distribution of seeds, plant protection schemes, etc.

With the attainment of union territory status by Mizoram the subdivisional veterinary office at Lunglei was upgraded to that of district office with sufficient staff to run the office and to work for the development of the livestock in the district. Besides, two rural animal health centres were also established at Hnahthial and Tlabung with district poultry farm at Lunglei. From that time onwards, the department was making further progress and development in the district.

TRADE AND COMMERCE

The development in the field of industry is still in an infantile stage in Aizawl. It has not been possible to achieve much development in the field of industry due to lack of technical knowhow, shortage of skilled labour and raw materials, etc.

The government, as a matter of industrial policy laid much stress and importance on the development of cottage and small scale industries. Development in these sectors were envisaged as part of an overall programme of social and economic growth. To enable small scale industrialists to create preliminary facilities like factory buildings as well as plant and machinery required for starting their industries, the department has been extending loans to deserving entrepreneurs in Aizawl.

Mizoram Small Industries Development Corporation has also been set up at Aizawl with an authorised share capital of Rs. 60 lakhs. This corporation has been declared a refinancing institution by the IDBI. The corporation is going to introduce this scheme shortly on completion of some formalities.

The channel of trade and commerce is mainly through the district of Cachar in Assam by road communication. Other means of communication are negligible. The existing communication infrastructure hardly permits smooth trade and commerce on account of the fact that the roads are full of strains and hazards. Aizawl has to get from outside most of the consumer goods including the staple food, rice. But it produces marketable surplus like oranges, pineapples, bananas and other fruits, chillies, ginger and cotton. The district lacks the facilities of marketing, storage, processing, etc.

The entire district of Chhimituipui can be termed as an extremely backward area in the field of industry. In view of the most difficult hilly terrain of the district, it has not been possible to achieve much development in industry. The industrial development of the district is practically confined to the "Village Small" types only, e.g., handicraft, knitting, tailoring, etc. Village and small industries are the main industries producing almost all the domestic goods and materials. The department, therefore, has to play a vital role in the field of extending industrial loans and disbursing the same in cash as well as on hire purchase basis.

Besides the schemes of financial aid, the department started one craft centre at Saiha in 1974 which imparts training to 15 girls in a year. In 1979 another handicrafts centre was also established at Saiha.

There are other wings like sericulture, weaving and bee-keeping under the department of industries. But these wings could not function effectively due to the absence of skilled and efficient staff. No proper survey could be done for the development of industries in the district due to lack of communication. There is no major industry located in Chhimituipui.

In the pre-independence days, Chhimituipui used to enter into trade with the then undivided Bengal. The latter would get rubber, cane, bamboo, timber, cotton and tobacco from Chhimituiput district. After partition, the only channel of trade

and commerce was through the Cachar district in Assam. The district has to obtain much of the consumer goods, including rice, from outside. In view of the fact that the district has no marketable surpluses like orange, pineapple, bananas and others, the present deficit economy of the district can be coped up if more horticultural and cash crops are grown and produced in the district and the facilities of transport, marketing and storage for trade and commerce are provided.

After Lunglei subdivision became a district, industries office was started at Lunglei, there being only one at Aizawl prior to the birth of Union Territory in Mizoram. However, the types of industries are mainly of village and small Industries like handloom, handicraft, knitting and tailoring, etc., these being the industries in the district. Again in September 1979, district industries centre was established at Lunglei.

POPULATION

With an area of 20,987 sq km Mizoram has a population of 891,058 people according to the 2001 Census. Of these 459,783 are males and 431,275 are females. The total population of each district are given below.

<i>District</i>	<i>Area sq km</i>	<i>Population (2001)</i>	<i>Headquarters</i>
Aizawl	12,588	339,812	Aizawl
Champhai	3,185.85	101,389	Champhai
Kolasib	1,282.51	60,977	Kolasib
Lawngtlai	2,557.10	73,050	Lawngtlai
Lunglei	4,538.00	137,155	Lunglei
Mamit	3,025.75	62,313	Mamit
Chhimitipui	3,957	60,823	Chhimitipui
Serchhip	1,421.60	55,539	Serchhip

LITERACY AND EDUCATION

Mizoram is one of the highly educated states of India with high literacy levels and what is more a level of literacy among the women which hardly obtains anywhere in India. The main languages spoken in the district are Mizo and English. According to the 2001 census, the percentage of literacy in Mizoram is 88.49. It was already high in the previous decadal census when the literacy in the state was 81.23 per cent. About 90.69 per cent of males are literate and 86.13 per cent of women can read and write.

This extremely high level has been attained over years during which the Christian missions, who were allowed in by the British played a notable role in the spread of education. They not only converted the people to Christianity, with 95 per cent of the Mizos now being Christian, but set up schools in every village. Now there is a church and a school in every village in Mizoram, and the people lay great deal of stress on education without which no real progress of any kind is possible. Now there are not only schools at all levels, primary, secondary and higher secondary, but also colleges, to satisfy the urge of the Mizos to educate their children.

COMMUNICATION

As soon as Mizoram became union territory on 21 January 1972, the transport wing was converted into a directorate called "Directorate of Supply and Transport, Government of Mizoram" (S&T). The main function of General Transport wing was to operate trucks and jeeps for carrying essential commodities from Silchar to Aizawl and thence to various places within the district as well as Lunglei and Chhimtuipui district. Mizoram, being not self-sufficient in regard to foodstuffs especially in rice, transport wing was working as Task Force carrying essential commodities from outside the territory and distributing the same to the needy places.

Under the Director of Supply and Transport, the state transport was created in 1972. The main function of state transport is to run passenger, bus services to various places in and outside the district. Apart from passenger services, state transport buses are also carrying postal mails/bags to all places along the main road. Buses are also made available on hire to various parties like religious, wedding, picnic parties at the rates fixed by the government.

The bus station at Silchar in Cachar district of Assam is functioning on hire basis. Buses are plying on different routes from Aizawl within and outside the district. The bus service routes are on the increase. The operations of bus services are increasing, year by year with the construction of new roads, and there are fair weather bus service routes also which are operated mostly in winter.

The railway out-agency also started functioning since 1975 at Aizawl. This agency affords facilities to traders and government department to book their goods from various stations of Indian railways at cheaper rates.

In Chhimituipui district besides roads, all other means of transport like railways, air services and ropeways are out of question. The only available means of transport in the district, which is road transport is also in an infant stage. The existing roads are being constructed, maintained and improved by the PWD of Mizoram. The Border Road Development Board took up the construction of some crossroads. The Saiha link road 27 km long, was taken up and completed in 1979, Lunglei to Luipang road 162 km long, which was taken up in 1968 was completed in 1978. As a matter of fact there was no transport system worth the name in the district. The Government of Mizoram has since started bus services on these roads to facilitate the travelling public.

A new project of Lawngtlai to Chawngte road has also been taken up by the Border Development Board. As road communication develops and other developmental activities take place, it is essential that more emphasis is laid on better

road transport system so as to ensure greater mobility of available goods and services in the district and to give priority to this aspect of development. A good road transport system plays a vital role in bringing the people of all districts together giving them opportunities to exchange their respective views and also in the matter of stabilising the prices of goods and services uniformly in the district.

The inland water transport has not been developed as it should be. Otherwise this mode of transport could play an important part in the economy of the state.

RELIGION AND CULTURE

Not only are the people getting the best possible education but also the process of modernisation has enveloped all aspects of life in Mizo society. But it still has its traditional dances and festivals which are preserved. The dances are common to the Mizos, the Lakhers and Pawis, the main tribes in the state, along with the Chakmas who are believed to have migrated there from the neighbouring Chittagong hills of Bangladesh much before independence. Many more Chakmas, who are Buddhists, came as refugees after independence because of religious persecution by the Muslims in the Chittagong Hills and because their lands have been taken away by the land-hungry people from the plains of Bangladesh. The Government of India has been very keen to send them back from Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh where they have been living. But the Chakmas are not convinced that they would be safe from religious persecution and their lands seized by the Bangladeshis would be returned to them. They refuse to go back. These Chakmas are ethnically and culturally the same as the Chakmas in Mizoram but the latter are permanently settled although their nomadic habits and their Buddhist religion would not be given up by them.

Of the Mizo dances the most popular and attractive even to the others is the Cheraw or bamboo dance. In this, six girls

sit on the ground holding bamboo sticks which are rhythmically moved and struck against one another while six other girls move rhythmically between the bamboo sticks. Khal Lam is another popular dance of Mizos in which a group of boys wearing specially made shawls dance to the beat of drums and gongs. In another dance, called Solakia, men and women dance in a big circle to the accompaniment of drum beats. This was originally a Lakher dance which the Mizos have also adopted.

Every village in Mizoram earlier had a bachelors' dormitory called Zawlbuk. It was a notable Mizo institution which has now died following the impact of modernity. The bachelors of the village would reside there and learn wrestling, other martial arts and the Mizo way of life. The dormitory would also provide shelter to the itinerant hawker and other visitors, and would act as the guest house of the entire village. Women had to keep away from it. Mizoram has a high percentage of urbanisation and there are 22 towns in the state. Men now wear trousers and shirts even in the villages, and women sport blouses and frocks.

Mizos are well advanced and have taken up occupations and services in neighbouring states and at the Centre. They can thus be seen in sufficient numbers in places far and near their state. Wearing of hats is common and these are made of bamboo and cane. The villagers carry an artistically designed and handwoven shoulder bag in which they carry their tobacco pipe and other equipment. Both men and women smoke although the pipes for the two are different. *Zu* is an alcoholic drink brewed indigenously from rice. There were several occasions when the entire village would indulge in an orgy of drinking and *Zu* would flow like water. Now the spread of Christianity, the modern ways of living and the impact of education have all helped in curbing drinking among the people although it cannot be said to have been eliminated.

Marriages are generally arranged by parents among the Mizos. Among them there is yet another interesting custom of inheritance. The youngest son inherits all the movable and

immovable property of the father. The elder sons are supposed to move out of the parental home after marriage. The youngest son has the responsibility of looking after the parents in their old age. There was no system of making a will in the Mizo society but an Inheritance Act was passed by the Mizo District Council in 1956 under which a will could be made by any property holder.

Kut is the Mizo word for festivals. Mizos have three major festivals called Chapchar Kut, Mim Kut and Pawl Kut. The Mizos belong to a Mongolian race. Mizo means man of the hills or highlander. On the western border of the Aizawl, there are very few Chakma immigrants from Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh. An absolute majority of the population in the district are Christians. Most of the Christians are Protestants in denomination and a few are Roman Catholics. There are several denominations, the main ones being Presbyterian, United Penticostal, Salvation Army, Roman Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist and Isua Krista Kohhran. The Mizos are a distinct unit linguistically, culturally and ethnologically. Mizos are dedicated people bent on preserving and consolidating their identity and religion.

There are some very good principles of self-help and cooperation in the Mizo social customs. The Mizos are expected to contribute labour for the welfare of the community. Services are rendered to the people in distress as a social obligation.

There being three major different cultures in the district of Chhimtuipui such as Pawi, Lakher and Chakma, the three district councils had been created so that each community will be in a position to safeguard its own culture and tradition in the best manner and thus be free from the exploitation of larger communities.

The Sangau Pawi call themselves as 'Lai' which is a tribe commonly known as Chins in the Chin Hills District of Myanmar. Therefore, some Pawi speak the Lai dialect at home and amongst themselves. But they have accepted Lusei or Duhlian (Mizo) as their language in schools and for use with

outsiders. But most of the Pawi speak the Lusei or Duhlian (Mizo) language and have similar customs and ways of life with the Mizo. There are several Pawi in the Mizo community, Pawi being one of the several clans in the Mizo society.

The Lakher, however, have a distinct pattern of customs and traditions. They call themselves 'Mara' and speak Mara language which is altogether different from the Lushei or Duhlian (Mizo) language. The Pawi, and the Lakher are mostly Christians like their Mizo brothers and sisters. They have the traditional dances in common. The most popular of these dances is the 'Solakia'.

The Chakma are culturally entirely different from the Pawi and the Lakher. They are comparatively backward and a majority of them are Buddhists. They speak their own dialect (language) and use Bengali script. They worship Buddha and also some of the Hindu gods and goddesses. Like their religious rites, the social customs of the Chakma are also a mixture of Buddhist, Hindu and old tribal customs. The Chakma are semi-nomadic. They prefer to have their villages by the riverside. The most popular entertainment is the open air theatrical performance by the village drama party.

The main culture in the Lunglei district is the Mizo culture. The people of this district are fast giving up their old customs and adopting the western mode of life. Among the Mizos, the present customs are mixtures of the old traditions and the western pattern of life. The Chakmas who are living in the western part of the district, are culturally different from the Mizos.

TOURISM

Aizawl, located at nearly 4,000 feet above sealevel, is a religious and cultural centre of Mizoram. Champhai is a beautiful resort on the Myanmar border. Tamdil, a natural lake with virgin forest, is 60 km from Aizawl and 10 km from the tourist resort

of Saitual. Vantawng Falls, five km from the hill station Thenzawl, are the highest and most beautiful waterfalls in Mizoram. The department of tourism has opened tourist lodges at Aizawl, Lunglei, Champhai and wayside restaurants at Thingdawl; Hnahthial, a recreational centre at beraw Tlang and an Alpine picnic hut at District Park near Zobawk.

A brief account of important places of interest in Mizoram are given below.

Thasiama Seno Neihna: This is a steep, craggy hill rising some 6,000 ft above sea level near the village of Chawngtui, a few miles from the Myanmar border.

Twin graves of Tualvungi and Zawlpala: At phulpui village.

Lamsial Puk: This is a wide, deep cave on a steep hillside between the villages of Samthang and Farkawn. This cave is one of the biggest caves in Mizoram, and is about 75 feet wide.

Chhingpuii: A memorial has been erected at the place where Chhingpuii was killed, which can be seen at the Aizawl-Lunglei Road between the Baktawng and Chhingchhip villages.

Kungawrhi Puk: This is a cave lying between the villages of Farkawn and Vaphai.

Sibuta Lung (Lung-stone, rock or monument): Sibuta Lung is a tall stone monument erected by Sibuta, a chief who dominated over a large area in and around Tachhip village. This monument can be seen near Tachhip, about 20 kms from Aizawl.

Fiara Tui (Tui-water or spring): The villagers of Lamsial learned of the spring which came to be known as Fiara Tui or Fiara's Spring.

Tamdil: At approximate distance to the east of Aizawl, between Saitual and Tualbung villages, there exists a lake which known as Tamdil.

Rungdil: The name means the 'lake of partidges'.

Phawngpui: Phawngpui, known to the outside world as Blue Mountain, is the highest peak in Mizoram which rises to

a height of 2,165 metres above sea level. It is claimed that on a bright day, even the Bay of Bengal is visible from this peak.

Palak Lake: This lake is situated in Chhimtuipui district at a site 25 kms south-west of Tuipang. It is oval in shape with a maximum radius of 660 yards.

Chawngvungi: Mizo folklore is incomplete without the story of Chawngvungi. Today, locations associated with this tragic tale can be visited in Pangzawl village.

Thanghlianga: Thanghlianga of the Pawi Tribe was chief of the Halkha clan and of Halkha village (now in Myanmar). The death of Thanghlianga signified the end of Pawi dominance over early Mizoram.

Khawnglung Run: During the years of AD 1856 and 1859 there was a great conflict between the north and south of Mizoram. Historically, it is remembered as Khawnglung Run. 'Khawnglung' means the name of the village and 'Run' means 'raid'.

The Khawnglung village raid was one of the most famous and the greatest massacre in Mizo history.

ADMINISTRATION

The state is divided into three districts: Aizawl, Chhimtuipui and Lunglei. Aizawl district at present comprises 12 rural development blocks, i.e., Zawnuam, West Phaileng, Reiek, Tlangnuam, North Thingdawl, Darlawn, Aibawk, Serchhip, Thingsulthliah, Ngopa, Khawzawl, and East Lungdar. Aizawl district alone has 21 assembly segments, i.e., N. Vanlaiphai; Khawbung; Champhai; Khawhai; Saitual; Ngopa; Suangpuilawn; Ratu; Kawnpui; Kolasib; Kawrthah; Sairang; Phuldungsei; Sateek; Serchhip; Lungpho; Tlungvel; Aizawl North; Aizawl East; Aizawl West and Aizawl South.

Aizawl has 18 towns and 391 villages (342 inhabited villages and 49 uninhabited villages). This district is bounded

on the north by Cachar district of Assam and Manipur state, on the east by Myanmar, on the west by Bangladesh and Tripura state and on the south by Lunglei district of Mizoram. Total area of Aizawl is 12,588 sq kms. The district headquarters is at Aizawl. It is not only the district headquarters but also the state capital of Mizoram.

The village administration is headed by the village council. The village council is also elected on the basis of adult suffrage.

Chhimituipui district is situated in the southernmost part of the territory, flanked in the east by Myanmar and Bangladesh in the west. The district is named after a rather big river called Chhimituipui flowing through the district.

Chhimituipui district at present comprises of four rural development blocks, i.e., Chawngte, Lawngtlai, Sangau and Tuipang. It has one town and 214 villages (198 inhabited villages and 16 uninhabited villages). There is four assembly segments, i.e., Tuipand, Sangau, Saiha, Chawngte.

Lunglei district is situated in the middle of the territory, being sandwiched in the north by Aizawl district and by Chhimituipui district in the south. It is bordered in the east by Myanmar (Chin Hills) and by Bangladesh in to the west. The total area of the district is 4,536 sq kms. The district headquarters is located at Lunglei.

The district at present comprises four rural development blocks, i.e., West Bunghmun, Lungsen, Lunglei and Hnahthial. It has three towns and 178 villages. The village councils are also elected on the basis of adult suffrage. The elected members would then elect the President from amongst themselves. Thus the village council administration is headed by the President. There is five Assembly Segments in this district, i.e., Demagiri, Buarpu, Lunglei, Tawipul, and Hnahthial.

Sikkim

The early history of Sikkim starts in the thirteenth century with the signing of a blood-brotherhood treaty between the Lepcha Chief, Thekong Tek, and Tibetan prince, Khye-Bumsa, at Kabi Lungtsok in north Sikkim. This follows the historical visit of the three revered saints to Yuksam in 1641 in west Sikkim where they met Phutsog Namgyal, a sixth generation descendant of Khye Bumsa, and formally consecrated him as the first Chogyal of Sikkim at Yuksam in 1642, thus heralding the beginning of the Namgyal dynasty in Sikkim. Personally consecrated by Guru Padmasambhava during his sojourn to Tibet, Sikkim is a blessed land where people from all communities live in harmony.

The Namgyal dynasty which ruled Sikkim for more than 300 years was set up in 1642 by a (Bhutia) Namgyal king, named Phunstog or Penchu, and to this dynasty also belonged the last Chogyal, Namgyal Paiden Thondup. Chogyal is actually a religious title and signifies that the ruling head of state was also the religious head under the Buddhist system which the Bhutias, many Lepchas and some Nepalis follow. Most of the Nepalis are Hindus.

The Namgyal had an arrangement with the British rulers of India under which the latter had sovereignty over Sikkim and there was a British resident in Gangtok to oversee the state's administration. The myth of sovereignty was thus kept up. Sikkim was treated as somewhat higher than the other princely states of India but the ruler was known only as a

“Maharaja” like the other Indian princes (the Muslims calling themselves Nawabs), and he was even a member of the Chamber of Princes which sought to represent the interests of the ruling families in pre-independence India. Free India could have straightaway done away with the myth but the wise rulers of India, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel, allowed the *status quo* to continue, although an Indian officer was appointed straightaway as a political officer, and a Dewan was also appointed with the consent of the Chogyal. The urge for democracy was felt in the state whose people knew that their neighbours in the rest of the country had adult franchise and could elect their rulers at the centre and in the states.

The Chogyal tried to keep up with the times and gave some representation to the people and offered some elections. That could hardly satisfy the people. India went on exerting pressure on him to yield to the people's demand but the Chogyal, who was a widower, now married an American girl who had come into the state ostensibly to study Buddhism. Miss Hope Cook was allegedly a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) plant to create problems for India and make the Himalayan state as friendly to the United States as possible, if not its colony. The Chogyal had developed ambitions of becoming a sovereign ruler and making Sikkim an independent state. He was encouraged by some English media in India and the writings of some Indian “intellectuals” who always take a narrow view of such events. How could Sikkim defend itself against the might of China sitting on its chaste right across the state's frontier? First the Chogyal asked for a revision of the standstill agreement with India in 1966, although there were strong popular demands for the state's accession to India. Then, under popular pressure, the Chogyal had to instal a popular government, and on the demand of the state assembly, India made Sikkim an “associate” state, a bill for which was passed by both houses of parliament. Notably, the measure was stoutly opposed by the Communist Party of India Marxist, CPI(M), which accused the Indian government of trying to “absorb” Sikkim.

Meanwhile, the Chogyal was invited by the King of Nepal, King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah, to his coronation in March 1975, although only the heads of state and government of sovereign nations were called to grace the occasion. The Sikkim Council of Ministers advised the Chogyal not to attend the coronation as he was not the head of an independent state. The Chogyal did not listen and the Kathmandu trip seemed to have reawakened his ambitions. On return he started behaving as though he was taking up cudgels to shake off the Indian connection altogether. The people were not prepared to take this lying down. They first adopted an assembly resolution for the complete merger of the state with India and then had a popular referendum conducted to buttress the demand. The opinion poll gave the assembly's decision an overwhelming vote of support and India's parliament passed a Constitution Amendment bill making Sikkim a full-fledged state of India. On May 15, Sikkim became an Indian state and the following day B.B. Lal was sworn in as the first Governor of the state. The Namgyal dynasty passed into history.

The smallest state of India in terms of population, Sikkim has the unique distinction of being bounded by three sovereign nations, Nepal, Bhutan and China's Tibet region, on its west, north and east and only one Indian state, West Bengal, in the south. With an area of 7,096 sq km it had a population of 540,493 in 2001, consisting of the bulk of its population in the rural areas and a small number of urban residents in eight towns.

Predominantly rural, mountainous and picturesque, Sikkim has the Bagdogra airport in West Bengal as its aerial gateway to the rest of India. Bagdogra has regular Indian Airlines and Jet Airways services from Calcutta and Delhi and also the north-east. Gangtok is connected by road with Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Siliguri and also with all the district headquarters within Sikkim. The road length in the state is 2,383 km. The two closest railway stations are Siliguri (114 km) and New Jalpaiguri (125 km) connecting Kolkata, Delhi, Guwahati, Lucknow and other important cities of India. Due to its location

right on the border of India with China (in the Tibet region) Sikkim is of great strategic value to the country. Across the wide India-China frontier, from Arunachal Pradesh in the east to Ladakh in the west, it has a special position in the defence of India.

Sikkim has been inhabited by people who came to it from different places and made it their home, although the Lepchas are believed to have been in the state for much longer than the people from Tibet, the Bhutias, who settled here and called the region 'Denzong', the valley of rice. The state's economy is basically agrarian. Maize, rice, wheat, potato, large cardamon, ginger and orange are the principal crops. Sikkim has the largest area and the highest production of cardamom in India. Ginger, potato, orange and off-season vegetables are other cash crops. The area available for cultivation constitutes only 11 to 12 per cent of total land utilisation in the state. The scope of increasing production through area expansion is limited. The main thrust in agriculture development, therefore, has been to maximise productivity and net income per unit area. Emphasis is being laid on the development of commercial and horticulture crops and floriculture. Sikkim continues to cultivate rice or paddy to this day in sizeable quantities. A special kind of tea, much valued by the connoisseur for its taste and quality, is also produced in the state. The Nepali people who also migrated here and to other parts of India, all along the Himalayan belt, called it 'Sikkim' or the new place. For the Lepchas it was 'Neliang' or the land of caverns.

Over 4,000 species of different plants and shrubs, around 700 species of rare orchids and rhododendrons and flowers of myriad hues and shapes have transformed Sikkim into a nature lover's paradise. Most of the 7,096 sq km of Sikkim consists of mountainous terrain, interspersed with ravines and green valleys. The two main rivers are Tista and Rangit. Despite the snow which covers some of the mountain tops round the year, there are quite a few pastures for the animals tended by its itinerant shepherds. Tista is Sikkim's big river and divides the state into north and south. As many of the human settlements

in Sikkim are along the banks of the river, it is also called the Ganga of the state. Its tributaries are the Lachen, Lachung, Rangit and Rangpo. It goes without saying that the rivers are all mountainous and their swift flow prevents their commercial exploitation as pathways for commerce. From Sikkim the Tista flows into West Bengal. There are also forests of pine and ferns and some steep areas with little or no vegetation. But in the southern parts of the state there are dense forests with thick undergrowth. Some of these have been cleared by the farmers and cultivation is practised there but overall the state has a small population.

During the Seventh Plan period (1985-1990) many new irrigation schemes for providing assured water both for kharif and rabi cropping were taken up, and to avoid damages to open channels due to landslide, concrete hume pipes and IIDPE pipes in sinking areas, were used extensively within this period. An additional irrigation potential of 6,359 hectares was created and a corresponding 5,530 hectares of potential was utilised. The state has initiated steps to prepare a master plan for irrigation in the entire state in collaboration with the Agriculture Finance Corporation. A 200 KW microhydel scheme at Lachung in North Sikkim has been commissioned. Two more similar schemes are to be taken up in a phased manner. The total power potential of the state is about 8,000 MW.

Sikkim has mountains on its three sides and a slope towards West Bengal, and is shaped like a horseshoe. The world's third highest mountain, Kanchenjunga, is located here although many people associate it with Darjeeling from where also it is visible. There are other high mountains in the state which also has passes at altitudes of 10,000 to 15,000 feet where the mountain paths lead to the territory of neighbouring Nepal and Bhutan. The Nathu La, on the eastern side of Sikkim, has great strategic value at its commanding height of 15,512 feet. Now Indian and Chinese governments have agreed to use the Nathu La for strengthening their economic relations. The Jelep La, another strategic pass, is situated at an altitude of 13,254 feet (La means a pass). Both are located in the Chola range of

mountains and this signifies the mountainous character of the state.

The climate is extremely cold in the upper reaches and the mountain peaks are snow-covered round the year. But in the southern part of the state bordering on West Bengal the climate is somewhat humid. The average rainfall is high, about 350 centimetres, and as a result, the climate in the region of the state below 7,000 feet is temperate but often humid. The capital city of Gangtok is in the cold region and one has to be ready to face the rigours of a cold climate.

The state has a wide variety of flora and fauna. The dense forests in the south abound in valuable timber. Tall trees of fern, sal and bamboo are grown in the zone upto 7,000 feet. Forests of oak, chestnuts, fur, maple, magnolia and cherry can be seen in the region between 7,000 and 15,000 feet where the climate is cold yet bearable. More than 30 varieties of rhododendron are also found. Butterflies are thus attracted to the plants and shrubs in large numbers and Sikkim is believed to possess more than 700 species of them.

The Himalayan black bear is found in the lower region while the upper reaches have the Himalayan brown bear. Among the other animals which inhabit, the dense forests of the state are leopard, sambhar, barking deer, panda, wild bear and wild cats. Sikkim's rivers and lakes have plenty of fish for the angler to spend hours looking for trout, salmon and other varieties. There is no dearth of birds in the state as it is a good nesting place for the migrant birds. The region is considered an ornithologist's paradise as it possesses over 500 species of the flying angels. Apart from the common varieties like partridges and quails, there are also multicoloured pheasants, water birds like ducks, and the eagle and other birds of prey.

Sikkim has been declared an industrially backward state. In order to plan strategy to develop an industrial climate in the state, a new industrial policy has been formulated from 10 April 1996. The growth of industries is a recent phenomenon but the situation where no industry was almost the rule is now

yielding place to a number of industrial units. The Directorate of handloom and handicrafts at Gangtok provides training to youth in traditional arts and crafts. There are three public sector undertakings in Sikkim. Sikkim Time Corporation (SITCO) is owned by the state government. In collaboration with IIMT it assembles watches, manufactures digital watches and MIC chips. Sikkim Jewels Limited is one of the sophisticated and precision oriented industries for the manufacture of jewel bearings for electric meters, water meters and other measuring instruments like watches and clocks. Ten ancillary units have been set up to manufacture 600 lakh watch jewels per annum. Sikkim Industrial Corporation was established in March 1977 with twin functions of State Financial Corporations and Small Industries Development Corporation. It provides long-term loans for cottage, tiny, small and medium-scale industrial units, hotel, hospitals/nursing homes and taxi. The department of industries lays emphasis on the promotion and development of various small scale industries. They produce such items as fruit jams and juices, biscuits, other bakery products, beer, matches, washing soap, plastics, electric cables, barbed wires, watches, leather goods and industrial jewels. The tax-free status of the state in terms of income tax and other inducements offered by Sikkim have become good attractions for entrepreneurs from within the state and other parts of the country to set up industrial units. Hundreds of licences have been issued to the small-scale units on a permanent or temporary basis. Tiny cottage units have received incentives and other benefits from the department of industries.

Despite its small size and the comparative backwardness in terms of industrial development, the per capita income in Sikkim is larger than the national average. The per capita net state domestic product (NSDP) at constant prices (1980-81) increased in Sikkim from Rs. 2,017 in 1985-86 to Rs. 3,118 in 1989-90. During these years the national average went up from Rs. 1,841 to Rs. 2,134 which would show that the Sikkim product was consistently higher than the all-India average both

at the start and at the finishing point. The sectoral composition of the state domestic product underwent a change with the share of the primary sector declining from 56.06 to 50.43 per cent in the years between 1984-85 and 1987-88. The tertiary sector improved its contribution from 37.39 to 43.49 per cent during the period with the share of the secondary sector remaining more or less stationary.

Even before its merger with the rest of India in May 1975 Sikkim had completed three Five-Year Plans of its own with substantial Indian help. The state's progress in terms of the per capita domestic product has been better in spite of its late start in respect of a planned economy. The total plan outlay for Sikkim has been going up every year.

There has been a steady increase in agricultural production despite the limited availability of cultivated land which is only 12 per cent of the total land mass of Sikkim, the difficulties of the topography, and climatic conditions which are not conducive to the application of modern methods of production. When Sikkim merged with the rest of the country its rice production was only 10,000 tonnes. It went up to 23,800 tonnes by 1991-92. Maize output went up in the same period three and a half times. The production of pulses and oilseeds, which was not of any significant proportion at the time of the state's merger, had gone up to a high level of over 11,000 tonnes in each category by 1991-92.

Besides cattle, poultry and piggery development also holds great promise for commercial exploitation. Sikkim has got 500 kms of fresh water rivers and streams and a few lakes. There is no remarkable private fish-rearing units in villages. The fishes available in the markets are mainly imported from West Bengal. There are some inherent problems and handicaps for the growth of industries in Sikkim. These are hilly terrain and unavailability of plainlands, lack of local entrepreneurship, etc. Previously, the state was mostly engaged in cottage industries of carpet weaving and wood carving activities.

In the cottage industry sector the government is trying to revive the traditional arts of carpet weaving, local handicrafts, etc. For this purpose, a Government Cottage Industries Institute has been functioning since 1957 for training artisans in these areas. During the past few years or so the need to ensure that the ex-trainees go into production either by starting household industries or by joining the institutions in the production section has been particularly looked into and the result has been encouraging. There is ample possibility of growing forest-based industries in Sikkim. An attempt was made earlier to start a large paper factory to produce tissue paper and carbon-paper with the help of the Hindustan Paper Corporation Ltd. Although the feasibility survey indicated that the project would be worthwhile, this has not yet been cleared by the Government of India. Among the small scale industries the following industries may have prospects if started in Sikkim:

1. Manufacture of footwear (including repair) made of leather, vulcanised or moulded rubber or plastic.
2. Manufacture of drugs and medicines from herbaceous plants.
3. Manufacture of spunpipes.
4. Manufacture of bidi/chewing tobacco.
5. Production of countryliquor.
6. Manufacture of readymade garments/hosiery goods of synthetic textile.
7. Manufacture of wooden furniture and fixtures made of cheap woods.

In order to attract and encourage industries, various incentives like transport subsidy, central investment subsidy, subsidy on interest, power, concession in sales-tax and income-tax, marketing assistance and pre-operative expenses were announced by the state directorate of industries and various other central institutions.

Some important tourist centres in Sikkim are Gangtok, Bakhim, Yumthang, Dubdi, Dzungri, Varsey, Tashiding, Rumtek monastery, Permayantse monastery, Tsomgo and Phodong monastery. Gangtok, the state capital, attracts a number of tourists. Besides there are the old Buddhist temples as in Yaksam, the meeting place of three great Lamas, the monastery at Dubdi, Tashiding monastery, and the Rumtek monastery. At Bankhim there is a natural garden for the tourists to see and wander about. There is also the Changu Lake which the outside visitors can see to experience a sense of relaxation. The state has much more potential for the development of tourism and efforts are also being made in that direction. With the relaxation of the inner line restrictions the inflow of tourists from within the country, including foreigners resident in India, more tourists are making their way to Sikkim. A ropeway has also been set up at a cost of Rs. 10 crores and that has become a tourist attraction. The present day tourists love adventure and winter sports, and efforts are being made to cater to their requirements. Sports like trekking, rafting and gliding are being developed, tourist spots are being set up near water resorts with that view in mind.

Education has also made considerable headway in the state, although not to the extent of some of the other north-eastern states. Literacy has jumped from 56.94 per cent in 1991 to 69.68 per cent in 2001. More and more children are in school now. Female literacy which was as low as 46.76 per cent in 1991 has substantially increased to 61.46 per cent by 2001.

The number of primary schools is now 527 and that of middle schools 122, high schools 62, higher secondary schools 19 and there is also a college.

A number of fairs and festivals are held in Sikkim usually each year. Excepting the all-India festivals like Dussehra, Diwali etc., the description of some of the fairs and festivals which are of particular importance for Sikkimese is given below.

Ngempa Guzom: It is the festival to mark the victory over evil. It is also called the day of judgment in the world of the

deads, when Yama imparts his judgment to decide the fate of a deadman on the basis of his *karma* or deeds committed during his lifetime. The festival falls on the seventh day of the 11th month of the Northern Buddhist calendar.

Tibetan New Year's day: Tibet New Year's Day or 'Lossar' is observed from the first to 15th day of the Northern Buddha calendar. The festival marks the preachings of *Dharma* by Lord Buddha to the *asuras* or demons during first to 15th day of the first month of the Northern Buddhist calendar. In fact, the Northern Buddhist era began from the time of Lord Buddha's preaching of *Dharma* to *asuras*.

Saga Dawa: Saga Dawa falls every year on the 15th day of the fourth month of the Northern Buddhist Calendar. This religious festival is the most sacred, for on the same day and the same month in Lord Buddha's time the Lord was born, attained Enlightenment and attained Mahapuryanir or left for his heavenly abode. The occasion is also regarded as Triple Blessed Occasion.

Drukpa Tseshi: This festival is observed in commemoration of Lord Buddha's first sermon given at Sarnath on the fourth day of the sixth month of the Northern Buddhist calendar.

Pang Lhabsol: This is a pure Sikkimese festival. On the occasion the Sikkimese Bhutias and Lepchas worship their guardian deity, Mt. Khangchhen-Mzod-Gna (Khangchen-junga) for bestowing peace and prosperity for the Sikkimese people. The festival falls on the 15th day of the seventh month of the northern Buddhist calendar.

Lhabal Thuchen: Lhabal Thuchen is the festival marking the descent of Lord Buddha from the 33rd heaven after his meeting with his mother and preaching her Dharma. To facilitate his descent Lord Bishwa Karma had constructed a ladder out of rainbow. The festival falls on the 22nd day of the ninth month of the northern Buddhist Calendar.

Lossong: Lossong is also known as Sonam Lossan. This festival is celebrated to take leave from the hard work in the

agriculture field. On this day offerings of newly-harvested paddy and fruits are offered to God so that better crops may be obtained in the years to come. It also marks the end of a year and ushering in a year of peace and prosperity. There are feasts and exchange of invitations.

This festival starts from the first day of the 11th month of the northern Buddhist calendar and continues even after the 15th day. On the first day every child must be given new clothes and delicious meals. They should not be punished or scolded. Early on the first day, children and elders alike wake up and offer incense and fruits, etc., to God and shout 'Sang Solo'.

There are a few temples of Hindu gods and goddesses in Sikkim: One Thakurbari at Gangtok, and Jagatdhatri temple at Tadong, 3 kms from Gangtok, one at Rangpo, one at Singtam and a few others situated at different places of Sikkim. There are four churches at Gangtok belonging to different groups, viz., Roman Catholic, Protestant, Elshadai, etc. and many others in different districts of Sikkim. One mosque is situated at Gangtok. There are about 200 monasteries in Sikkim. Of them, a few important are Rumtek, Tsuk-la-Khang, Enchey and Chutten monastery in the East district.

Table 1: Area, Population and Headquarters of Districts

<i>District</i>	<i>Area (Sq. km)</i>	<i>Population (2001)</i>	<i>Headquarters</i>
East District	954	244,790	Gangtok
North District	4,226	41,023	Mangan
South District	750	131,506	Namchi
West District	1,166	123,174	Gyalshing

EAST DISTRICT

East district is situated on the south-eastern corners of Sikkim state with a total area of 954 sq. kms. Total population of the

district, according to 2001 census is 244,790 persons. This district is bounded on north by North district, the Chumbi valley of Tibet and the kingdom of Bhutan in the east, West Bengal in the south and the West district in the west. In the year 1963, the state of Sikkim was divided into four districts through a government notification for administrative reasons and accordingly, Gangtok was split up into Gangtok district and Mangan district, which were later known as East district and North district, respectively. The other two districts were Gyalshing and Namchi. Gangtok is the district headquarters of East Sikkim. The main languages spoken in the district are Lepcha, Bhutia, Hindi, Nepali and Limboo.

The original inhabitants of the land were known to be Lepchas, Bonpo, Shamanists. In the eighth century Guru Padma Sambhava taught Buddhism in Sikkim and with the coming of the ancestors of the present royal family to Sikkim from Tibet several centuries later, Mahayana Buddhism of the Tibetan form took root in Sikkim. Thus many of the Lepchas eventually became Buddhists. The Bhutias, the other major Buddhist community, found their way to Sikkim with the rulers and the religion. Although there are Buddhists among the Napali Sikkimese the majority of them are Hindus.

Sikkim is strategically important for India as it lies astride the shortest route from India to Tibet. The state is entirely mountainous. Covered with dense forests where sal, simal, bamboo and other trees thrive, some finest forests lie in the northern most areas. Mountains rise to 7,000 m and above, Kanchenjunga being the world's third highest peak. Sikkim had several hundred varieties of orchids and is frequently referred to as a 'botanist's paradise'. The forests here are inaccessible and remain for the most part unexploited. The district at present comprises two subdivisions. It has three towns and 134 villages (130 inhabited villages and four uninhabited villages).

The district is within a high rainfall zone. The source of irrigation in this state is spring channel. There are no canals, wells, tanks, tubewells, etc. The availability of spring water

increases with the onset of monsoon and decreases with the lapse of monsoon. In fact, the entire terrain is suitable for the purpose of drawing water to the cultivated fields during the rainy season. The irrigated area is mostly made of areas located in the small and semi-medium holdings. Irrigation in paddy is usually supplemented by rain and run, off water. Usually well-defined irrigation channels exist only in paddy fields and all paddy fields are irrigated. Irrigation in vegetables and other crops is done casually and is not specific. Cardamom is normally grown under shade which is always moist, and the water from *khola* or *kholsa* is allowed to flow from the top of the field to spread mostly by itself. No well-defined channel for carrying water exists in the cardamom field. It can be considered a semi-irrigated crop. The main livestock of East Sikkim includes cattle, buffaloes, goats, sheep and pigs, apart from poultry birds. Milching cows represent about 47 per cent of total female cattle population, but the productivity is far behind satisfaction.

A detailed list of minerals found are given below :

Base metals: Base metals constitute the main natural resource of the state. Already quite a lot of exploration of base metals has been carried out in the state. As a matter of fact, the deposits at Rangpo are being commercially mined by the Sikkim Mining Corporation. Another deposit located at Dikchu in the East district is currently being developed by the Mineral Exploitation Corporation. Apart from Rangpo and Dikchu, there are two other noteworthy base metals: sulphide occurrences, viz., (i) Jagdumb near Chakung and (ii) Pache Khani-Rorathang.

Graphite: It is formed as a result of high temperature intrusion of igneous rocks into organic carbon-bearing sedimentary rocks. An extending survey to areas of north and east Sikkim for possible localisation of graphite deposits will also be followed by the Geological Survey of India.

Thermal springs and mineral water: A number of thermal springs are known to occur all over the state. These thermal

waters may have therapeutic value. Even if it may not have chemical suitability for drinking purposes and therapeutic properties, the water being thermal alone makes it suitable for bathing and other purposes.

The state abounds in a number and variety of geological materials which can be profitably and most effectively utilised for building/construction purposes within and outside the state. These include (i) granites of the Darjeeling and Kanchenjunga groups exposed in abundance around Chungthang in the north. Rongli in the east and Geyzing Dentam area in the west (ii) basic igneous sills seen at several localities (iii) quartzites of the Buxa and Chungthang groups exposed mostly in the north (iv) Calc granites and dolomites where these are banded they present a good ornamental material. Apart from being used as ordinary building stone, some selected varieties duly polished, hold much promise for indigenous and export markets.

Rumtek monastery: A 23 kms drive from Gangtok through scenic mountain-side country leads to Rumtek. This monastery has been built with a style adhering strictly to the traditional architecture.

Tsuk-La-Khang monastery. This is situated in front of the palace of Gangtok. The royal chapel is a repository of monastic arts, rich mural paintings and lavishly decorated altars holding the images of the Buddha, Bodhisattvas and tantric deities. Beautiful wood carvings in the chapel demonstrate the markedly impressive craftsmanship of the artists.

Enchey monastery. Adjoining the Gangtok Tourist Lodge, three kms from Gangtok town is the Enchey monastery situated on spur. The 200 year, old monastery has in its premises images of gods and goddesses, religious objects, etc. Annual religious dances are performed there every December.

A drive of some 14 kms from Gangtok leads one to Orchidarium garden of exotic orchids and rich tropical plants maintained by the department of forestry. A very enjoyable spot for picnic and recreation.

Amidst the peaceful surroundings of flower gardens and ruminating deer, the image of the Buddha, a replica of the original in preaching posture at Sarnath, has been enshrined. From the spot, commanding views of the vast countryside with gently sprawling hills and lively dales and hamlets can be enjoyed. The park is situated just beside the New Secretariat building in Gangtok.

As a matter of fact, the highest number of educational institutions are available in Gangtok, the capital town of the state. But when we compare the number of institutions per 1000 population, it is evident that other towns of the state are better served by educational facilities, especially at lower levels. The medical and public health services have made significant contribution to the development of Sikkim. Out of the total inhabited villages of the district, 35.38 per cent villages have one type or another of medical facility within the village.

The urban population in the state is as a whole well served by medical facilities. There are 13 beds per 1,000 urban population in the state. However, there is a large variation in the number of beds per 1,000 urban population in various districts/towns of the state. The highest number of beds, 77 per 1000 urban population is reported in North district whereas the lowest number of beds per 1,000 urban population is reported in East district.

NORTH DISTRICT

North district is surrounded by vast stretches of Tibetan plateau in the north, the Chumbi valley of Tibet in the east, the rest of the three districts of the state in the south and the kingdom of Nepal in the west. The total area of the district is 4,226 sq kms. The district headquarters is located at Mangan.

The terrain is hilly with very little flat area. In fact, there is not even one square mile of flat land, neither a mile of straight road. As we go from south to north the altitude

becomes higher and higher. The elevation varies from 300 metres to 5,500 metres. About one-third of the total area of the state is under forest and one-half perpetually snow-bound. The district at present comprises two subdivisions. It has one town and 53 villages, all of which are inhabited. The Rangit and the Tista rivers which form the main channels of drainage run nearly north-south.

At present, the majority of the people are from the Nepalese stock. The Bhutias and Lepchas may be considered to be next in importance. Of the Nepalese stock, Kami, Damai and Sarki have been notified as Scheduled Castes, and of the Sikkim stock Bhutias, Lepchas and Sherpas have been notified as Scheduled Tribes. Plainsmen are immigrants from different states in India and are found in small numbers. The total population of the district according to 2001 census is 41,023 persons.

The main languages spoken in the district are Lepcha, Bhutia, Hindi, Nepali and, Limboo. Nepali is spoken by the majority of the population. The state religion of Sikkim was Buddhism during the princely regime but there is full freedom of worship throughout the state. Buddhism and Hinduism are two major religions followed by the majority of the population in the district.

The communication system is entirely dependent upon the availability of road transport. As a result, a number of private vehicles also ply transporting goods as well as passengers. The climate and the seasons are suitable for growing a large number of crops which include not only cereals but also commercial crops like cardamom, potato, ginger and other horticultural crops. The source of irrigation in this state is spring channel. There are no canals, wells, tanks, tubewells, etc. Animal husbandry forms an integral part of the economy. A large percentage of the rural population is engaged in it in one form or another. Although the current cattle population stands at 1.58 lakhs, the productivity in terms of milk production is low, only five litres per milch cattle. The state cattle population comprises of 40.05 per cent of females and 22.61 per cent of

young stock and 27.34 per cent of males according to the agricultural census survey reports.

North district is famous for its natural beauty. The sweeping panoramic view of the picturesque mountains and emerald lakes is indeed almost mystic. It is also mystic from the fluttering prayer flags, the stupas/ruins of palaces and the 67 old monasteries. Inside these monasteries are the fascinating Buddhist murals, images of hundreds of deities from the Tibetan Buddhists Pantheon. The gentle chant of the Lamas reciting the mantras beside a butter-lamp complete the setting. One gurudwara is situated in Chungthang in the North district. There are about 200 monasteries in Sikkim. Of them, a few important are Tholung and Phodong monastery in the North district. The form of Buddhism, known as Mahayana, which prevails in Sikkim, belongs to the Red Sect. There are three main subsets of the Red Sect and in Sikkim only the Nyingmapa and the Karma-Kahgyudpa are found. Lhatsun Chempo, regarded as the pillar of Buddhism in Sikkim and one of the three high Lamas who met at Toksam and consecrated Chogyal Phuntsong Namgyal as the first Chogyal of Sikkim in 1641, is of the Nyingmapa. The Pemayangtse monastery, the premier monastery in Sikkim, belongs to the Nyingmapa. The Lamas of Pemayangtse have the sole customary right of performing the religious ceremonies on all royal and official occasions. They take part annually in the now famous Warrior and Khagyud dances at the Tsuk-La-Khang Royal in Gangtok.

SOUTH DISTRICT

South district is geographically the smallest district of the state, bounded on the north by North district, by East district in the east, West Bengal in the south and by West district in the west. South district was known as Namchi district till the year 1963, but due to administrative reasons, it was reconstituted into two districts—Gyalshing and Namchi—on the lines of other districts of the state reconstituted. The headquarters of this district is

located at Namchi and its total area is 750 sq kms. Total population of the district according to 2001 census is 131,506 persons.

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes population of the district as per 1991 census is 5564 persons and 16,671 persons, respectively. The main languages spoken in the district are Lepcha, Bhutia, Hindi, Nepali and Limbu. Buddhism and Hinduism are two major religions which are followed by a majority of inhabitants of the district. The Christians and Muslims are also residing in the district in small numbers.

The state, being a part of inner ranges of mountains of Himalayas, has no open valleys and no plains but varied elevations ranging from 300 to 5,500 mts, above the mean sea level, consisting of lower hills, mid-hills, higher hills, alpine zones and snowbound land. The high serrated, snowcapped spurs and peaks crowned by Kanchenjunga form an attractive feature in the scenery of Sikkim. These peaks are the Kumbha Karna (7,711 mts), Narsing (5,825 mts), Pendem (6,706 mts), on the left of Kanchenjunga. Then on the right are the Simvo (2,828 mts), Nepal (7,163 mts), Tent Peak (7,315 mts.), the Pyramid (7,132 mts), Fluted Peak (6,888 mts.) and the Siniolchu (4,858 mts.). The northern portion of the state which is deeply cut into steep escarpments is not populated except in the Lachen and the Lachung valleys. The direction of the main drainage is southward. The trend of the mountain system, viewed as a whole and from a distance is in a general east-west direction. The chief ridges in Sikkim, however, run in a more or less north-south direction, e.g., the Singalela and the Chola ridges. Another north-south ridge runs through the central portion of Sikkim, separating the Rangeet from the Tista valley. The best known peaks here are Tendong (2644 mts.) and Moinam (3242 mts.).

The district at present comprises of two subdivisions. It has two towns and 145 villages (144 inhabited villages and one uninhabited village). Within the district, out of 144 villages, 61 villages are approached by *pucca* road, 62 villages by *kachcha*

road, and 21 villages by footpath; 47 villages in the district have the facility of bus stop within the village.

Lossar (Tibetan New Year's Day), Sonam Lossan (also known as Lossong), Ngempa Guzom, Saga-Dawa, Drukpa Tsehsi and Pang Lhobsol are some of the important festivals celebrated in this district.

According to the 1991 Census, the total literates (excluding the population in the age group of 0-6 years) is 43,254 persons. Of these, 26,923 are males and 16,331 are females. In the rural areas of the district 41,473 persons (25,813 males and 15,660 females) are literates and in the urban areas 1,781 persons (1,110 males and 671 females) are literates.

Out of 144 villages, 128 villages have educational facility of one type or another in the village; 128 villages have primary schools, 53 villages have middle schools, 14 villages have high schools and only one village has higher secondary/intermediate/junior college in the district. In the district, only 43 villages have medical facility of one type or another in the village out of 144 villages. The remaining rural population has to go outside the village, either in the neighbouring villages or nearby urban centres. There are three hospitals, 25 Primary Health Centres, 14 primary health sub-centres and one dispensary in the rural areas of the district.

WEST DISTRICT

West district as a separate district came into existence in 1963 comprising two subdivisions, earlier included in Namchi district. It is located in the south-west corners of the state, bounded on the north by North district, in the east by the South district and Darjeeling district of West Bengal in the south, and the Kingdom of Nepal in the west. The total area of the district is 1,166 sq kms and its district headquarters is located at Gyalshing. Total population of the district according to 2001 census is 123,174 persons. Main languages spoken in the district are Lepcha, Bhutia, Hindi, Nepali and Limbu.

The major religions followed in the district are Buddhism, Hinduism and Bonpor. There are communities in small numbers which follow Christian and Muslim religions.

The western portions of the country are constituted of hard massive gneissose rocks capable of resisting denudation to a considerable extent. The trend of the mountain system, viewed as a whole and from a distance, is in general east-west direction. The district at present comprises two sub-divisions. It has two towns and 121 villages (120 inhabited villages and one uninhabited village).

Transportation of goods and passengers in the state is dependent mainly on private vehicles transporting goods as well as passengers; 74 villages of West Sikkim district are approached by *pucca* roads, 29 villages by *kachcha* roads and 17 villages by footpath. In the district 59 villages have the facility of bus stop within the village.

Sikkim is a paradise for tourists, walkers, trekkers and mountaineers. West Sikkim has been opened for the tourists in the recent past. The view of the mountain range from Pemayangtse is perhaps one of the finest. For tourists who wish to visit this holy and ancient monastery, a 50-bed tourist lodge with basic amenities has been opened. Pemayangtse is an ideal base for those who would like to explore the unspoiled charm of neighbouring tourist spots and for trekkers who would like to visit Yuksam and Dzongri.

There are two old palace ruins, one is in the Tumlong revenue block in the North district and the other at Gyalshing revenue block in the West district. In the West district, at a distance of one hour's trek from the Pemayangtse Luxury Tourist Lodge, one can reach the ruins of Rabdentse Palace. This was the palace and the seat of the first government of Sikkim. Here one can visualise the remains of a once flourishing colony around the palace. It was constructed after the conservation of Chogyal Phuntsok Namgyal in the year A.D. 1641. On walking through the chestnut trees with the mosses dripping down, we come across a stone throne with three

standing stones known as Namphogang where the judge used to give his final judgement in those days. We then reach a Chorten Taphap Chorten, from where the horse and taking off the hats had to be observed by the visitors going to the palace. After crossing the fourth and the final courtyard wall we can see the palace ruins in the centre. It is situated in a most commanding palace from where we can clearly see the entire south-western region of Sikkim. Adjacent to the palace is 'Dab Lhagang' where the royal family used to offer incense to the deities. Here we can find a white marble slab as big as 7 ft by 5 ft on which was carved the 'Risum Gompa', the three defensorers' Fidei.

Two hours drive from the Pemayangtse Tourist Lodge in the West district and at 40 kms is situated Yoksam. It was here in A.D. 1641 where the first Chogyal Phuntsok Namgyal of Sikkim was consecrated by the three learned Lamas, viz., Lhatsun Namkha Jigme Kunxang Namgyal, Nadak Sampah Chenpo and Kathok Ringzin Chenpo. Yoksam literally means 'three Lamas' in Lepcha as these three Lamas met there. We can still find the huge stone thrones where they sat and performed the consecration ceremony.

In the district 106 villages have primary schools, 47 villages have middle schools and 15 villages have high schools. In one village higher-secondary/pre-university/junior college facility and 16 villages have adult literacy centres. In the district, 33.33 per cent of total villages have medical facility of one type or another within the village. There are one hospital, four child welfare centres, eight primary health centres, 21 primary health sub-centres and six dispensaries in the rural areas of the district.