

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH-EAST INDIA



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PREFACE

The North East is much more than a geographical concept, a track of land which is part of India. There is much more to it than is understood by most of us. There is a lack of awareness on the streak of individuality which marks the terrain. For, it has its varied culture, socio-economic problems, racial variations and ethnic diversities. Collectively, it provides a colourful spectrum of the rainbow that India is. Yet, within this spectrum, there are seven different strands—Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

It is this spectrum which is under analysis in this book. Assam has a heavy tradition, a long history, an exotic scenario. The people are, by and large, peace-loving, content to live in their native settings, eeking a living from land, letting life drift on without tension. Yet the land was under pressure from immigrants, most of them illegal. The resultant tension created a problem, the like of which Assam had never faced. Mercifully, an accord has been hammered out between the Government of India and the Assam agitation leaders and normalcy is returning to the State. The State is now getting back on the rails. There are problems in Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur where there is growing feeling that the people are yet to be drawn into the mainstream of India. There is also militants who are out to accentuate differences and to exacerbate feelings and to sow seeds of dissension. However, such elements are getting isolated.

The turmoil on the surface does not, in reality, indicate any deep fission. The people, by and large, have time only for work or play.....work in the fields, raising the crops, work in foraging for fuel, and play which includes dancing and singing and roaming around enjoying the pristine glory of nature, getting close to the flora and fauna of the area, thanking one's stars for letting the area look green and verdant and colourful all through the year,

There are developments coming to the area. Modernity is slowly but surely making its presence felt. But there is a great deal of attention to avoid modernity ruining the native grace and poise and richness. Every bridge that is erected, every factory that is set up takes note of the ecological factor. Education is being taken to remote corners where thick forests make transport highly difficult. Roads are being built, communication channels improved, contacts being maintained to remove the sense of isolation among the people of the area.

The strategy of development, which is seen in action in the North East, is indeed impressive. More funds are being pumped in to hasten the pace of progress.

It is in this context that the present book gains significance. It is the aim of the authors to throw some light on the area, to provide an arm-chair trip through the exotic land, to introduce the readers to the variety that makes the whole of the North East such an inspiring part of India, to bring to them the efforts which are being made to modernise the area without changing its basic character and to remove prevailing air of remoteness about the place. The authors hope that they have succeeded in this objective.

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2. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi with Hiteshwar Saikia, Chief Minister of Assam



3A. Mr. Giani Zail Singh with Mr. Hiteshwar Saikia



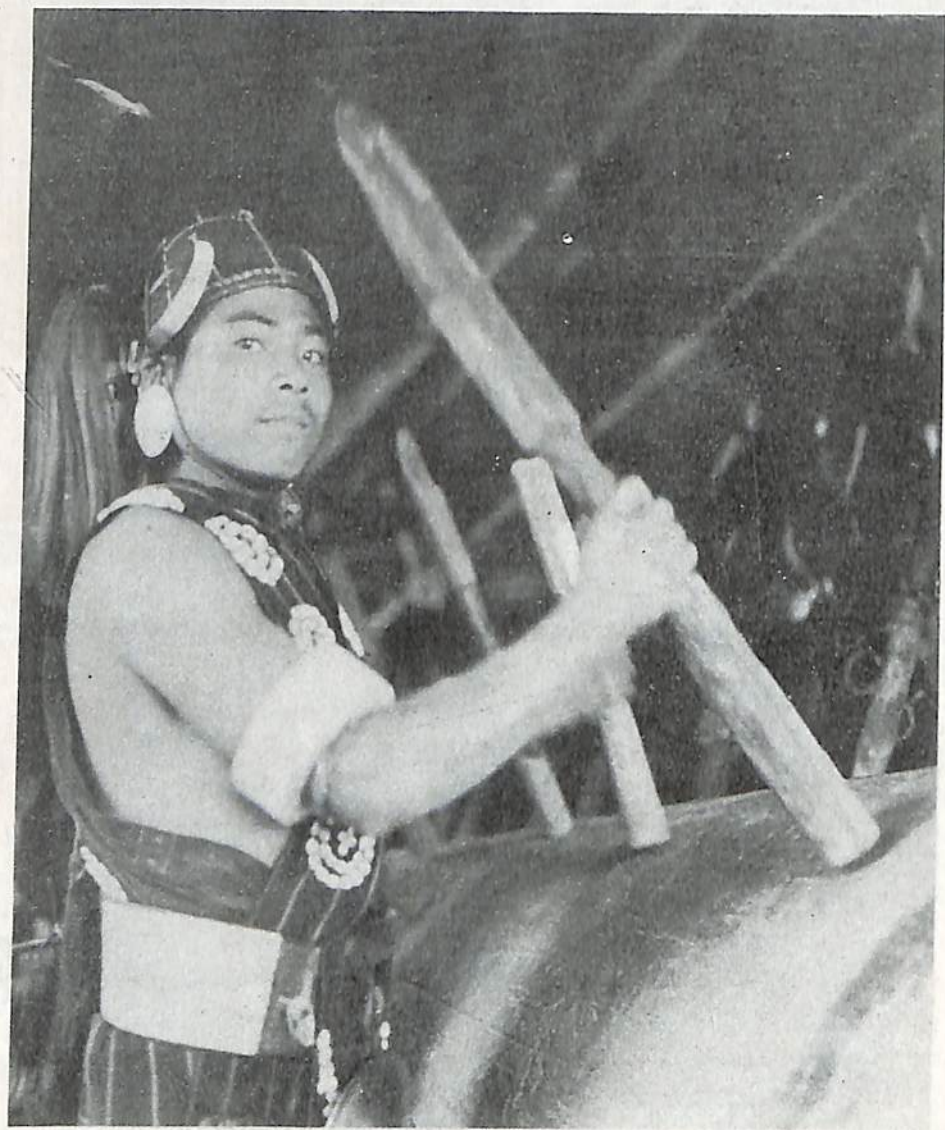
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INTRODUCTION

by

Shashi Ahluwalia

“The North-East region has over 26 million people of heterogeneous ethnic groups spread over a difficult terrain. There are five fullfledged States in it, namely, Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland and Meghalaya and two Union Territories, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram.

The region's main problem is economic backwardness, accentuated by the woeful lack of communications.

If the accumulated agony of the people is to be alleviated, the only way out is to give top priority to the region's economic needs, like harnessing its abundant natural resources with single-minded devotion. The setting up of the North-East Council was a signal break-through. Since its inception, the Council has proved its utility in taking up schemes to develop power, rail and road communication in the region.

ASSAM

The land of rising sun, perpetually hovering clouds, blue hills and the ever green plains, Assam manifests all the diversities and characteristics of a miniature India. The strategic location of the State, its varied resources and the glorious heritage of the people have secured for Assam a unique place in the geography, history and socio-political life of India. Down the centuries Assam served as a gateway for succeeding streams of races entering into India from the South-East and

the Far East of this continent. It is through this State also that the Indo-Gangetic civilization transcended to the scores of islands of the eastern Pacific. Indian mythology and the epics are replete with glorious references about the heroic exploits of the monarchs of Kamarupa, Sonitpur and Kundilnagar and the beauty and the brilliance of the princesses of this area like Rukmini, Usha, Ulupi and Hidimba. The daughter of the Kamarupa King, Bhagaddatta had the distinction of becoming the Empress of India through her marriage with the Chief of the Kauravas.

Even in the recorded history Kamarupa's Bhaskaravarma of the 7th century was accorded the highest honour in the reception at the conference of the Indian Kings convened by Harshavardhana. The advent of the Ahoms in 1228 A.D. and their successful and uninterrupted administration spreading over 600 years brought stability to this region and earned special fame for excellence of culture and economic achievement. The advent of Aryan civilization into the plains of Assam dating back to 400 B.C. consolidated the links with the rest of the country. The Aryans, however, never entered Assam as conquerors, as a result of which this area has been able to remain free from a number of scourges that marked the Aryan way of life in the rest of the country. The most outstanding feature in Assam is the lack of caste rigorousness and total absence of untouchability. Evils of Hindu society like Suttie and dowry have been virtually absent in Assam.

When Assam passed into the hands of the British in 1826, it had already witnessed a series of natural and political catastrophes causing a virtual breakdown of its economic life, and bringing in its trail social strains on its population. Over a million Assamese were killed during the Civil War that rocked the State from 1776 to the close of the 18th century. While the beginning of the 19th century witnessed one of the most harrowing invasions from Burma, when lakhs of people were butchered or were driven out of the State, the close of the 19th century witnessed repeated outbreaks of epidemics like Kala Azaar and Cholera, which denuded a district like Nowgong of one third of its population. A series of earthquakes and floods

in the 18th and 19th centuries almost crippled the economy of the State.

During the pre-independence era Assam lagged far behind the rest of the country in respect of developmental activities. The railway lines were laid in Assam in the 1880's but vast areas were left untouched by railways till the advent of freedom.

The partition of the country added to the complexity of Assam's problems. With the separation of eastern Bengal to constitute what was then called East Pakistan, Assam lost her direct outlet to the sea and to the main land through dependable surface and sea routes.

INDUSTRY

Assam is rich in mineral wealth. It holds a unique position in the production of mineral oil. Other minerals found in the State are coal, limestone, refractory clay, dolomite and natural gas.

Of the agriculture based industries, tea occupies an important place. There are nearly 750 tea plantations in the State. Petroleum and petroleum products form the other main industries. Assam produces about 50 per cent of the country's total petroleum output and natural gas. The State has two oil refineries and the third, with a petro-chemical complex, is under way. There is also a public sector fertilizer factory in Namrup. Other industries are sugar, jute, silk, paper, plywood manufacture and rice and oil milling. Important cottage industries are handloom, sericulture, manufacture of cane and bamboo articles, carpentry, smithy and manufacture of brass utensils. The pace of industrialisation in the State has been boosted up significantly with the setting up of five District Industries Centres (DIC). An export-oriented handloom project has been started at Sualkuchi to exploit the export potentialities of Eri and Muga.

IRRIGATION AND POWER

The two medium irrigation schemes started in the State during the Third Five Year Plan and which spilled over to

the Fourth Plan were the Yamuna and Sukla irrigation projects. The two projects have already been commissioned. At present there are four medium and more than 200 minor irrigation projects in the State. Execution of one major, nine medium and 218 minor projects has started. It has been decided to develop a gross irrigation coverage of 7.67 lakh hectares of land against a total net crop area of 31.76 lakh hectares in the State. New power projects are under construction at Lakwa and Bongaigaon.

TEA INDUSTRY OF ASSAM

Assam is the 'tea country' of India. Tea is the principal cash crop of the State and one of the main export items of India. Our country produces about 30 per cent of the total world produce and its share in the export market is about 28 per cent. India is the biggest producer and biggest exporter of tea in the world. Of this 53 per cent is produced in Assam and its contribution to the national exchequer as foreign exchange earner is 60 per cent of the total. At present there are some 750 tea gardens in Assam with 1,89,000 hectares of planted area. In 1980 tea production of the area was 305 million kg. as against India's total of 575 million kg. Besides contributing handsomely to the central excise coffer, the tea industry is the biggest labour-oriented industry of Assam. Moreover to cater to the different needs of the industry, other ancillary industries grew up which in the course of time, blossomed into independent industries. Thus tea has played a very important role in the socio-economic life of the State.

LABOUR INTENSIVE INDUSTRY

Tea is highly labour intensive industry employing 3.46 lakh men and 3.60 lakh women (their biggest single avenue of organised employment) and 85 thousand others (adolescents and children), it provides year-round employments. Moreover in the peak tea season, 3 to 4 lakh temporary labourers are hired. Over 18 lakh workers get employment through other ancillary industries.

Originally, the labourers had to be brought from Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Chotanagpur area of Bihar to work in the land. Through the years these people have merged with the local scene. Today their descendents play an important role in the socio-economic and political life of Assam. The living condition, wages, various facilities, have also improved and the children go to school to get education; some of them are going for higher studies also. In 1955, the Assam Tea Plantations Provident Fund Scheme was introduced as a part of social security measures.

DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

The Britishers first entered Assam mainly by the river-way of the Brahmaputra. For a long time even in this country, there was steamer service between Gauhati and Calcutta. It was originally opened to cater for the needs of tea gardens to carry machinery, consumer goods, post, etc. Afterwards it could not serve the expanding tea industry and developing the roadways and Railways became necessary.

Faced with the difficulty of commuting and collecting the tea produced, roads were constructed to connect the farflung gardens. A look at the two Trunk Roads of Assam on both the banks of the Brahmaputra shows that the tea gardens are situated at either side of main highways and the artery roads.

ANCILLARY INDUSTRIES

Not only did tea become a top priority industry within a short span of time it also helped the development of some ancillary industries which in the long run became self-sufficient and independent industries. As a first example we can point out plywood industry. Originally started to manufacture tea chests (The Assam Saw Mill and Timber Company was floated in 1918) and now it is one of the established industries of India.

The requirements of tea machinery led to manufacturing units in Calcutta. Today India is self-sufficient in this respect and also exports these to other countries earning substantial

amount of foreign exchange. Aluminium foil, tinplate, metal fittings, paper card board and fertilisers are other industries providing employment directly or indirectly connected with tea production.

No doubt tea is the major industry of Assam. 11 per cent of the State's revenue comes from tea. Assam alone produces 30 per cent of the world's total production, more than 50 per cent of India's and 67 per cent of the North East India's, thus becoming the single biggest producer of tea. Tea plantations do not encourage soil erosion and do not disturb ecological balance which has become a modern day problem in many spheres. Besides the sloping land used up by the gardens are not suitable for other cultivations. If not successfully planted with tea bushes, it would have remained fallow or a jungle only. The gardens also provide scope for local concated population to find 'white collar' jobs as clerks, typists, etc. The districts of Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Darrang in the Brahmaputra valley and Cachar District in the south contain most of the gardens. Among them Dibrugarh District produces the best tea. Assam tea liquor is strong and Darjeeling tea is famous for its aroma. After Independence most of the gardens have been bought by the Indians.

EXPORT INDUSTRY

Tea is mainly an export industry. India exports tea to some 50 countries earning substantial amount of foreign exchange. Besides the major importers U.K. and U.S.S.R. West Germany, Netherlands, Poland, U.S.A., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Egypt, Tunisia, Iraq, Iran, etc. also import our tea. Climatically, Assam is highly suitable for cultivation of tea. The tea industry must not be allowed to stagnate or be neglected as other tea-exporting countries like Sri Lanka, China are providing strong competition in the foreign market. Of late, the industry has been afflicted by other problems of high cost of production, fall in quality, etc. the transport bottleneck is another problem. As the Broad Gauge is yet to reach Gauhati, the main outlet for the hinterland of tea, the cost of transport (mainly by the road) is high and

until the Broad Gauge railway is opened the problem will persist. Some gardens are so old, especially in the Cachar District that new plantation is necessary as no amount of proning can revive its productivity. This again calls for sizeable amount of investment.

AUCTION MARKET OF GAUHATI

After much clamour, the long overdue Auction Market was opened at Gauhati in September 1970. This has given a boost to the local tea planters and has been able to attract foreign buyers and sometimes record price too. From the total of 22 million kg. tea sold in 1971-72 in the Gauhati Auction sales increased to 69.8 million kg. in 1979-80. Thus without having to commute Calcutta and saving considerable transport cost and avoiding the Calcutta Tea Entry Tax, the tea planters of the region are getting the benefit. Export of tea through Kandla in the West Coast has increased in the recent past as the port-duty is less there as compared to Calcutta and the authorities arrange for speedy storage and disposal (Economic Survey of Assam 1970). Dr. Amiya K. Paul in his article "Role of the Tea Plantation Industry in the Economic Development of North-East India" suggests two auction centres—one for internal consumption of tea in India and the other for the foreign market which will promote export and will bring higher price for quality tea. Dr. Paul also suggests setting up of a fertilizer plant in Gauhati with a capacity of 100 tonnes per day as the one at Namrup cannot cater for the agriculture sector and the giant tea sector.

In conclusion it can be said that the demand for tea is not likely to fall as it is a major beverage of the world with two thirds of its population drinking it. Efforts to improve its quality through research and marketing it with a special eye on the foreign market must be kept up so that this major industry does not lose out to other countries. After all a small country like Sri Lanka can surprise us by leading in the tourism development in Asia leaving behind a much more potential India. In this context, the Tea Board and the Tea Trading Corporation of India have a vital role to play.

Specially those knowhow, machinery, raw material and, if necessary, finance should be made available. Besides the traditional markets, efforts should be made to woo the buyers from the new drinking areas of the world. "Such a service at the garden level will change the whole economy of tea in India" and the land of the 'two leaves and a bud' can retain its promising position.

MANIPUR

AGRICULTURE

The main occupation of 66 per cent of the population of Mainpur is agriculture. Nearly 92 per cent of the total land area is hilly and covered by forests. Forest reserves are being developed by planting better species of timber. Bamboo is found in large quantities. In the Jiri and Barak river drainage area alone bamboos cover an estimated area of 2,585 sq. km. yielding 3,00,000 tonnes annually. Main crop is paddy, while wheat and maize are also grown in some areas. Orchards are also being set up.

INDUSTRY

The State has no large scale industry. Handloom weaving is the largest single cottage industry. Other cottage industries are sericulture, bamboo and cane articles, carpentry, blacksmithy leather goods, edible oil crushing, rice milling, gur and Khandsari.

To accelerate the development of small scale industries, an industrial advisory board has been set up and the jurisdiction of Assam Financial Corporation extended to Manipur. At Takyelpat near Imphal, an industrial estate is being set up.

IRRIGATION AND POWER

Irrigation is done through minor irrigation works by constructing weirs across running streams for better distribution of water during the monsoons. Loktak is the only major power project in the State.

MEGHALAYA AGRICULTURE

Over 80 per cent of the people of Meghalaya are engaged in agricultural pursuits. Irrigated area is about 27 per cent of the cultivated area. The principal crops are potato, tez-pata, sugarcane, oilseeds, cotton, jute, mesta and arecanut. Selected areas have been earmarked for growing high-yielding varieties of paddy, wheat and maize. In the Khasi and Jaintia Hills districts fruits and vegetables are also grown and special programmes have been undertaken to develop horticulture. The production of foodgrains is around 1,30,000 tonnes annually. The annual production of cash crops is estimated to be : Jute 50,000 bales, potato 71,000 tonnes and tapioca 5,000 tonnes. The state is making good progress in horticulture. It produces a' out 70,000 tonnes of pineapples, 80,000 tonnes of oranges and 35,000 tonnes of bananas annually.

INDUSTRY

The mineral wealth of the Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills districts includes coal, sillimanite, limestone, dolomite, fire clay, felspar, quartz and glass sand. Ninetyfive per cent of India's total output of sillimanite is produced in the Khasi Hills District. The Garo Hills District has deposits of coal, limestone, fire clay and light coloured sand-stone. The estimated reserves of coal in the State are about 12,000 lakh tonnes.

The Cement factory at Cherrapunjee produces 590 tonnes of clinker and 605 tonnes of cement daily. The capacity of this factory is being extended to 955 tonnes of cement daily. A timber treatment plant is being set up at Daruggiri in Garo Hills. Several mineral-based industries are coming up. A plywood factory and a beverages factory have already been set up.

IRRIGATION AND POWER

There are at present four hydel projects with a total installed capacity of 125.2 mw. In addition to this there is a micro hydle station of 1.5 mw capacity at Shillong.

NAGALAND

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is the main occupation of 90 per cent of the population of Nagaland. Rice is the only important foodgrain grown in the State. The total area operated for cultivation is 6,80,000 hectares. The total terraced rice cultivated area with irrigation is 38,000 hectares.

Forests cover 17.56 per cent of the area of the State and they contribute considerably to the revenue.

INDUSTRY

There is a sugar mill with a crushing capacity of 1,200 tonnes per day at Dimapur. The Nagaland Forest Products Ltd. at Tijit has gone into production. A paper mill with a production capacity of 100 tonnes per day and a distillery unit at Dimapur are being set up. A factory for the production of decorative and commercial plywood is also coming up. Handloom and sericulture are the important cottage industries. There are six weaving-cum-production centres, five sericulture farms, one handicraft training-cum-production centre and three small scale industries service centres.

IRRIGATION AND POWER

Minor irrigation works in the State are mostly meant to divert small hill streamlets to irrigate valleys used for rice cultivation. Total installed capacity of power upto date is 3.17 mw. Out of 964 villages in Nagaland, the number of electrified villages till now is 275.

MIZORAM

AGRICULTURE

About 90 per cent of the people of Mizoram are engaged in agricultural pursuits. Out of about 60,000 families, 50,000 families are in agriculture, of which 10,000 are in the process of permanent settlement and 40,000 are still continuing shift cultivation. At present 5 per cent of total area is under culti-

vation and a little over 1.5 per cent is made permanent cultivation. Irrigated area forms seven per cent of the total cultivated area. In the hill slopes maize and paddy are cultivated. Other crops grown are pulses, sugarcane, chillies, ginger, tobacco, vegetables, turmeric, potato, banana and pineapple. Shift cultivation is ordinarily practised though terrace rice cultivation and Wet rice cultivation practices have been taken up in recent years.

Nearly two thirds of the area of the territory is covered with forests. Important forest products are timber, bamboo and *agar*.

INDUSTRY

There is no major industry in Mizoram. Handloom and handicrafts are the cottage industries. Rice milling, oil and flour milling, mechanised bamboo workshops, saw milling, brick making, aluminium casting and furniture workshops are some of the small industries which have been established. A survey conducted in 1973-74 has established that there is sufficient raw material for establishing a paper-pulp project.

IRRIGATION AND POWER

Schemes like the cementing for water points construction of small reservoirs at the collection points in the streams or springs and some improvised way of bringing water as near the villages as possible are being implemented. Irrigation is difficult because of the mountainous terrain.

There are seven diesel power stations to generate electricity mainly for domestic consumption at Aizwal, Lunglei, Lawngtlai, Champhai and Hnahthial. The total power generation capacity is estimated to be about 1,876 kw.

TRIPURA

About 60 per cent of the area is under forests. Total sown area in the State is 245.9 thousand hectares and total gross cropped area is 392.3 thousand hectares. The net irrigated area is only 11.9 thousand hectares, *i.e.* about 4.8

per cent of net sown area. Rice, Jute, mesta, potatoes, oilseeds, wheat, pulses, sugarcane and cotton are the main crops.

Tea is the major industry in Tripura. Tea plantations cover an area of about 5,600 hectares at the end of 1979-80. The annual production of processed tea was about 46 lakh kg. Important cottage industries are handlooms, handicrafts and khadi. There are 89 weavers' societies and 88 handicrafts and carpentry societies.

Some major industries are proposed to be set up in the State. They include a paper mill and a jute mill. Establishment of the jute mill has made substantial progress. The number of private sector industries under small scale industry scheme are 1,221 and those of public sector industries are 23.

Between 1978 and 1980, 125 river-lift irrigation schemes were taken up, 200 shallow tube-wells were sunk, 15 deep tube-wells were installed in different parts of the State. One medium irrigation project over river Gomati was taken up in December, 1980. During this period, irrigation potential has been raised from 3,875 hectares to 9,125 hectares.

Once a visitor descends on the sacred soil of Tripura, his exist will entirely depend, as is a popular belief in Tripura, on the will of Tripurasundari, the reigning deity of the sacred land. The superstition obviously makes sense when even the casual visitor to Tripura is captivated by the charm of this land. The charm of Agartala, the capital town, lies in the rhythmic blending in it of the classical and the modern. The old monuments standing amidst the thronging bazar present a strange sight. The Ujjayanta palace, however, stands out with distinction. Reminiscent of a royal dynasty, which held sway over a great Tripura for an uninterrupted thousand years the palace presents a grand synthesis of different architectural styles. The main entrance is flanked by two patches of water with the intervening space presenting a replica of a Mughal garden.

The Kunjaban palace, at a stone's throw from the Circuit House has been converted into the Governor's House one with a difference though. The antiquity of its structure too takes one down the memory lane into those days of royal

grandeur. The palace is also associated with the memories of poet Rabindranath who composed here some of his finest lyrics, during his stay with the Tripura Monarch.

The rectangular shaped Jagannath temple, in the vicinity of the Ujjayanta palace, is octogonal at the basement with a pradakshina path round the sanctum. The temple draws a constant stream of devotees who stream also to the nearby Uma Maheswar temple. The lake-garlanded Maharaja Bir Bikram College campus, the Kunjaban lake and the shy Howrah river which flows past the town gently are worth seeing. The well arranged State Museum near a busy street corner provides another peep to the State's past.

Eight kilometre drive by taxi or town bus from Agartala will take one to the famous Chaturdash Devta temple on the bank of the Howrah. The temple believed to have been constructed during the Mahabharata age, houses fourteen gods and goddesses, made of an alloy of eight sacred metals. July, however, is the proper time to visit the temple, when people from all over the State assemble there for the week long kharchi puja, and the ker puja, a fortnight later. The latter occasion is marked by colourful dances.

Another spectacular edifice, the Nirmahal, on the vast expanse of the big lake. Rudrasagar, is 49 kilometres away by road from Agartala. The lake offers ample opportunities for different aquatic sports, while the palace itself is ideal for picnic in unusual surroundings. One, who rows away from the Nirmahal in the evening, will never forget the grandeur of the enchanted building against the backdrop of a setting sun. The secluded inspection bungalow at Kakraban at the terminus of a few minutes' drive from Nirmahal, can accommodate the tourist who is reluctant to go back without enjoying the moonlit spectacle as well.

The lake-dotted Udaipur town is only 14 kilometres away from Kakraban. The famous temple of Tripurasundari, known as Matar bari in popular parlance, is only a kilometre off from Udaipur town. Claimed to be one of the fiftyone pithasthanas, the temple area pulstate with reverberating chantings and crowd of devotees. The temple with an artificial lake nearby, is about

five centuries old. Six hours drive from Agartala by bus or car will take the visitor to Unakuti, the hill-top pilgrimage, where rock cut gods and goddesses have been nestling since the Buddhist times. It is only six kilometres off from Kailasahar, the sub-divisional town with modestly priced accommodation facilities, which can also be approached by air from Agartala.

One needs to drive only a hundred and ten hilly kilometres to find out the source of Gomati river, which plays a vital role in Rabindranath's lyric drama, 'Bisarjan'. The foamy symphony of the Dumbur falls has inspired more poetry in Tripura. This source of the Gomati also known as Tirthamukh, draws legion people during the Uttarayan Samkranti, the occasion for a big fair. A magnificent temple of resergent Tripura, the inspection bungalow at Amarpur, 21 kilometres away, overlooking a big lake should be visited either for accommodation or sheer pleasure of sight seeing.

Whichever season one motors up the hill slopes to the eastern gringe of the Jampuitang range, one lands there in spring time. The unrivalled beauty of the land of eternal spring spiced with the murmuring streams and the exquisite wild fragrance, is a wholly diverting experience.

A visit to an interior village, with treetop tongi houses and the colourful tribals in the fields, can offer a different kind of holiday. Some tribal villages are very close to the capital town itself. The visitor will also come by deer, rabbits and different species of birds all over the State.

And before saying goodbye to this magic land, the visitor will have enough souvenirs to pick up from. It can be anythin ; a wooden lamp stand or an ivory doll, a *dubri*, the colourful garment, or a *riya* the magnificent breastwear for ladies. or a flower ornament. Or it can be the innocent smile of the Tripuri maiden which hangs on air long after she walked out of sight, or the rhythm of the Reang dancers' steps, which resounds in your ears even after the dancers retire. It can be the nostalgic memory of the famous Tippers flute floating across hills and dales in the eerie mid day silence.

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

AGRICULTURE

Nearly 46 per cent of the population of Arunachal Pradesh is engaged in agriculture. Irrigated area forms 17 per cent of the total cultivated area of about 14,000 hectares. The traditional method of agriculture is jhumming, a kind of shifting cultivation. Main crops are rice, maize, millets, wheat and mustard. Forest covers 61,000 sq. km. of the area.

The horticultural potential in Arunachal Pradesh is noted very high. Banana, citrus and pineapple below 3,000 feet, peach, plum, pears and apricot upto 5,000 and apple plum, cherries, walnuts, almonds and hazelnuts, etc. above 5,000 feet are grown in three out of five districts of Arunachal Pradesh.

INDUSTRY

Principal industries are forest-based medium and small industries established include saw mills, plywood and veneering mills, rice mills, and preservation units, oil expellers, besides handloom and handicraft industries. The government is providing training facilities in various trades under cottage industries as well as technical education through the Government Craft Training Centres and Industrial Training Institutes.

IRRIGATION AND POWER

A hydel project with an installed capacity of 750 kw. was commissioned at Rahung in 1972. Two more hydel projects at Pasighat and Basar with installed capacities of 200 kw. and 100 mw. respectively were completed in November 1973. During 1976 and 1977, Along (400 kw), Tezu (500 kw), Tiratjo-micro-hydel project (750 kw) and Tawang (1,500 kw) were commissioned. Ziro 2,000 kw), Tezu (500 kw), Dirang (1,500 kw) and Siagh Hydro-electric projects are almost ready. The total installed capacity in March 1975 was 3.4 mw. Arunachal Pradesh had only seven electrified villages in 1961 and the number increased to 61 by March 31, 1975.

by

Indira Gandhi

The various political parts of this region are bound by several common characteristics. Their people share a variety and picturesqueness of dress and custom that is rarely equalled. If they have the good fortune to live in the midst of green and lush surroundings, nature also visits them with many hardships, torrential rains, floods and landslides. The very terrain presents formidable obstacles to communications. Roads and bridges are needed to connect one point with another and to serve the region as a whole. Rivers remain to be harnessed for common advantage. The resources of the forests and the wealth hidden in the soil must be utilised for the welfare of all.

The primary purpose of this Council is the development of the region for greater human welfare. The first principle of development is co-ordinated activity. I have no doubt that the different units of this region will gain by such co-ordinated work.

I should like to take this opportunity to remove some misconceptions regarding the scope and functioning of this Council. This is an organisation of the various political units

(Excerpts from the inaugural address by the Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi at the 1st meeting of North Eastern Council at Shillong on 7th November, 1972).

of this region, set up under an Act of Parliament, to formulate a coordinated plan for development and welfare. It is not a super-government. It does not abridge the power of the States and Union Territories in any manner whatsoever. It is not an extension of the Union Government. It is an advisory and not a supervisory body. It does not alter the relationship of the member units with the Central Government. The Central Government will not use the Council to interfere with the affairs and functioning of the various Governments of this region.

I should like the Council to draw up projects which will benefit more than one unit. There are sectors such as transport and communication, power, marketing, institutional financing, training, preparation of feasibility studies for industries, etc. in which a regional approach would be most welcome. Vision and practicability are the two key tests of good planning, I should like to assure you the suggestions made by the Council and the projects drawn up by it will be considered with particular attention by the Planning Commission and also the various Ministeries of the Government of India.

The implementation of these projects and schemes will be the charge of the respective Government and their agencies. This might entail the strengthening of their existing administrative and executive machinery. It is important that each of the North Eastern States builds up expertise in the matter of data collection, project preparation and construction of administration.