

**GAZETTEER OF INDIA
ASSAM STATE**



CACHAR DISTRICT GAZETTEER

ASSAM DISTRICT GAZETTEERS

CACHAR DISTRICT

Edited by
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&
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GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
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GAZETTEER OF INDIA

ASSAM STATE

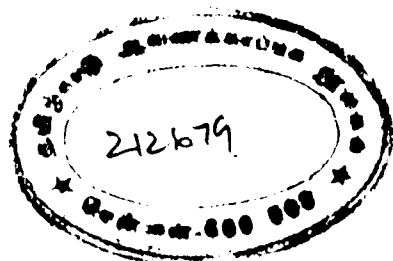
CACHAR DISTRICT

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FOREWORD

I am glad to present before the public the Gazetteer of the District of Cachar which is the eighth in the series of the District Gazetteers, prepared and published by the Department of District Gazetteers under the Education Department, Government of Assam. Though belated, the volume has been brought out within a very short period through the untiring efforts of Dr. B.B. Hazarika, Editor-in-Chief, and his staff and for which I am thankful to them. It is as comprehensive as informative, dealing with the important aspects of life and administration in the concerned district. It is expected that the volume would serve as a useful guide to all those who are engaged in the administration, welfare and research activities of the district of Cachar in particular and in general of the State and of the Country.

Dated, Guwahati
the 23rd, September,
1991.

(Dr. Bhumidhar Barman)
Minister, Education, Assam &
Chairman of State Advisory Board,
Deptt. of District Gazetteers,
Assam : Guwahati.

PREFACE

In 1959, the work of preparation of District Gazetteers had been started by the Government of Assam. At that time the State of Assam was comprising of eleven districts covering all the hill areas around it. Subsequently with the creation of Meghalaya and Mizoram along with the bifurcation and reconstitution of a number of districts, the task of preparing Gazetteers of only eight districts remained with us and the Gazetteer of Cachar including Hailakandi and Karimganj is the eighth in the series of District Gazetteers of Assam, so far published by the Department of District Gazetteers of Assam Government. With this the work of publishing the Gazetteers of all the districts of the State covering newly created/ bifurcated districts has also been completed. After publication of a number of Gazetteers and the printing work of others when largely advanced, the Government of Assam on subsequent stages have created a number of districts in the State and as such the already prepared Gazetteers cover all the areas which now form a number of Districts.

Importance of the District of Cachar in the life of the people of the southern part of Assam need no emphasis. Before the creation of the district of Hailakandi and of Karimganj, Cachar was the southern most district of the State of Assam having international borders between India and present Bangladesh and being the main entrance of the country to the Mizo people. The district of Cachar has historical importance also. It has a rich historical past which is yet to be explored by the researchers. Historians are of the opinion that Tripura, the most ancient kingdom of eastern part of the country, had its capital first in Cachar region. The kings of Tripura dynasty and that of the Kachari are said to be collateral branches of same stock of people. And with the passing of time the Kacharis got supreme control over Cachar and the Tripuris over the further south region of the country. The Kachari rule lasted in Cachar till the first quarters of the Nineteenth Century when it lost its independence to the British. The rest of the history of the district is also more or less same to other districts of the State as it came into the main stream of the country since the British occupation. Further, it has a number of places for pilgrimage for the followers of the different sects. A few of these are Bhubaneswar Siva Temple on the top of Bhuban hill, Siddheshwar Temple, the Mokam of Shah Arpin, the Mokam of Khaki Pir and the Underground Fort at Bhuban hill. It can boast of a special dialect of its own known as Cachari dialect. The district of Cachar can also boast for its cane works. It can also boast for certain fine as well as old architectural species like *Snana Mandir* and *Bara Duari* at Khaspur, the capital of the Kacharis of bygone days.

The first systematic attempt for compiling district Gazetteers of the State of Assam was made by Mr. B.C. Allen and the volumes on all the existing districts were published between 1905-07 and since then no Gazetteers with up-to-date information have been produced. Hence was the imperative necessity for bringing out new Gazetteers incorporating there in changes that have taken place during the period in the country. The preliminary draft of Cachar District Gazetteer was prepared by the already defunct District Gazetteer Office at Silchar in between 1959 and 1969 while the final draft was prepared by the Headquarters Staff of

the Department. Though approval for printing was received as early as 1979 and the printing work was also completed in 1983 during the tenure of Smt. Suchibrata Roy Choudhury in the office of the Editor-in-Chief, Department of District Gazetteers, it took very long time to release the volume from the Press. Here I must acknowledge with thanks the service rendered by Smt. Roy Choudhury. I have been transferred from the post of Director, Department of Historical & Antiquarian Studies to this Department as Editor-in-Chief in the middle of 1986 to effect the release of Kamrup District Gazetteer and the Cachar District Gazetteer which had been pending in the press for long by removing the hindrance which caused the pendency of the volumes in the press. It is a pleasure to put on record here that the Kamrup District Gazetteer has already been released from the press in the year 1990. It becomes and imperative to review and revised quite a large portion of the textual matters for correction and necessary modification as the volume, though already printed, has been lying in the press for a long period. The revision as well as correction in quite a good number of pages, not in serial order but in different places of an already printed volume without disturbing its sequence and at the same time keeping intact the rest of the already printed pages, is a very difficult task. It is done by replacing a number of old pages with new ones. It cannot be claimed that the work has been done to the full satisfaction as there are obviously a number of limitations. Despite the limitations, endeavour has been made to complete the volume with all the available data and statistics upto 1977 and unless specially mentioned otherwise in the text. However it has also been tried whenever possible to bring it upto date. As, already pointed out, the volume has been lying in the press for long, a number of chapters of the volume have been sent for scrutiny and modifications to some experts like Dr. S. Chattarjee, Dr. Md. Taher, Dr. I.M. Hazarika, Dr. B. Goswami, Dr. T.C. Deka, Dr. Y. Timiji and Srimati Nirupama Hagjer and on the basis of the scrutiny by experts who have made several suggestions and in some cases even supplied new materials also, the relevant chapters have greatly been improved. My sincere thanks are due to them. Besides these experts, in compiling this volume I have personally consulted many scholars of repute and I make unreserved acknowledgement here of their advices and leads. All the names in this regard cannot possibly be mentioned here as they will be enormous in number. However a special mention is to be made of Dr. J.B. Bhattacharyya and of Dr. N.K. Singha whom I consulted in a number of occasions. My thanks are also due to them. We have tried our best to cover all the subjects dealt with in the volume comprehensively but ramined far off from our target in spite of stringent efforts for which I crave excuse from the scholars as well as the public.

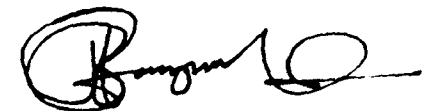
It is quite impossible to accomplish a gigantic task as compilation of Gazetteers without active help and co-operation from all the concerned quarters including Governmental Departments, public and private institutions and other agencies. I would like to avail this opportunity to offer my sincere thanks to Dr. Bhumidhar Barman, the Minister of Education, Government of Assam and the Chairman of the State Advisory Board for the Department of District Gazetteers, Assam and all the members of the said Board for having proffered their help and advices and to the Gazetteer Unit of the Central Government for

their suggestions and co-operation. My thanks are also due to all the officials, past and present, of the Department of Education, Government of Assam for their constructive, helpful and sympathetic approach and attitudes towards the requirements of this Department and its working. I would like to place on record my sincere thanks to all those individuals and agencies like libraries, private insitutions, etc., and to all those officials and non-officials who in one way or other have helped in the collection of materials and in the preparation, printing or bringing out of this volume. My thanks are also due to Sri P.J. Barua, Proprietor, Hemkosh Press, Guwahati and to his staff namely Sri Kameshwar Singh and Md. Nabir Ali for designning and printing the volume - a very difficult job rather in a short time.

Lastly but not least I owe special thanks to all my colleagues, present and past including Late Sachindra Nath Neog, Editor, and Compilers Late Rameswar Das, and Late Padma Kanta Barua and Sri Mohan Chandra Bhuyan, Sri Ramesh Chandra Medhi, Smt. Binata Das, Smt. Bharati Hazarika and Smt. Ashadeep Deka and of other cadres also in the Department for the their co-operation, loyalty and high sense of devotion to duty. Here I must specially acknowledge with thanks the services that rendered by Compiler Sri Rajdeep Talukdar in the matter of revising the volume and in incorporating into it, the suggestion of the experts at the stage of reprinting, without which, I doubt, the job of reprinting would have not been completed so soon.

Regret is expressed here for some minor printing mistakes, occurred here and there for which an errata is appended. But the errata is appended mainly for correcting a large number of textual errors through it without replacing the concerned pages and as such the errata is as important as the text itself.

Hope, the scholars, administrators and the public for whom the volume has been intended, would appreciate our difficulties and excuse our short-comings with magnanimity and also hope the book will meet at least a fraction of the deficiency in the fields.



Guwahati, the
23rd September,
1991.

(Dr. Bijay Bhushan Hazarika)
Editor-in-Chief, District Gazetteers,
Assam, Guwahati.

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CHAPTER—1

GENERAL

(a) Introductory :

(i) **Origin of the name :** Cachar, the name of the district concerned, is directly derived from the Sanskrit word *Khachar*, the meaning of which is a "broadening region", near mountain or near water or it may have been so called after the tribe "Kacharis". The Kacharis might perhaps, be described as the earliest known inhabitants of the Brahmaputra Valley and resembled the people of Goalpara and the adjoining districts of Bengal. In the Brahmaputra Valley Kacharis were known as Bodo or Bodo-fisa (sons of the Bodo). Again, in the North-Cachar Hills they were called Dimasa, a corruption of Dimafisa which means "sons of the great river". The Ahoms called them *Timisa* which clearly is a corrupt form of Dimasa and this name was in use while they were in the Dhansiri Valley. It is difficult to trace out the origin of the name but it may be mentioned here that according to the Limbu legend of creation as observed by Risley in the Tribes & Castes of Bengale,—“one of the two progenitors of human race settled in *Khachar* country, which is the name given by the Nepalese to the tract at the foot of the Hills between the Brahmaputra and Kosi rivers, and there became the father of the Koch, Mech and Dhimal tribes. If *Khachar* was an early home of the Mech¹ or the headquarters of a powerful Mech dynasty, the members of the tribe in Assam may well have been called *Khacharis* or *Kacharis*; the omission of the aspirate is a common occurrence in words borrowed from Bengali or Assamese”.^{1A}

But it seems more likely that Hedamba was an old name of Cachar, which the Brahmans afterwards connected with the Kachari dynasty just as in the Brahmaputra valley they connected successive dynasties of aboriginal potentates with the mythical Naraka. The Kachari kings, formerly styled "Lord of Hedamba". It has, therefore, been suggested that Hedamba had long been the name of the Kachari kingdom and that Dimapur, the capital is, in reality, a corruption of Hedambapur. It may be mentioned here that the word Hedamba for Hiramba frequently occurred in inscriptions and other records including the epic *Mahabharata*, yet, there is no evidence that the Kacharis used it at early period. E. Gait, however, is of opinion that the

1. They must have come originally, as we have already seen, from the north-east, but the movement westwards would not necessarily be continuous and, at times after, a strong flow, there may easily have been an ebb.—as cited by Gait in *History of Assam, Calcutta*, 1967, pp. 299.

1A. E. Gait : *History of Assam, Calcutta*, 1967, reprint, pp. 299-303.

Kacharis did not get their name from Cachar. On the otherhand, the word Hirimba also may be an Aryan corruption of the Bodo word 'Dima', meaning big river.

(ii) **Location, area and population** : The Cachar district, a heterogeneous land both of high and low lands and level plains stands at the extreme South-east corner of this state. It lies between 92°15' and 93°16' East longitude and 24°8' and 25°8' North latitude. It is surrounded on the north by North Cachar Hills district and Meghalaya State ; on the south by the Mizoram State ; on the east by Manipur State and on the west by Bangladesh and Tripura State.

The total area of the district according to 1971 census was, 6,962.0 sq. kilometres. The population of the district as per the same census was 17,13,318 of whom 8,91,126 were males and 8,22,192 were females as against 13,78,476 persons (7,22,487 males and 6,55,989 females) censused in 1961. According to 1971 census, there were 8 towns of different size in the district. The urban population of the district was 1,35,692 while the rural population was 15,77,626 living in 2,413 villages excluding 51 uninhabited villages as against 6 towns with 96,813 urban population, 12,81,663 rural population and 2,389 villages excluding 109 uninhabited villages in 1961. The population per square kilometre in urban areas was 246, according to 1971 census.

Table below gives the areas and population of the eight towns in the district.²

Name of the Urban areas	Population	Area (in sq. kms.)
Urban total in the District	1,35,692	39.43
1. Silchar	52,596	10.00
2. Karimganj	31,618	5.93
3. Hailakandi	16,644	6.32
4. Badarpur	12,537	4.90
5. Badarpur Railway Town	7,163	1.20
6. Ramkrishnanagar	6,657	8.70
7. Lala	5,536	0.68
8. Lakhipur	2,941	1.63

(iii) **History of the district as an administrative unit** : The history of the district as an administrative unit under the British rule can be well traced since August 1832,³ when the British Government decided to take over

2. *Census of India, 1971, Series-3, Assam, Part-II A, Administrative Service, Assam (1971), pp. 108-114.*

3. R. M. Lahiri : *The Annexation of Assam, 1975, Page 130.*

the possession of Govinda Chandra, a Kachari Raja, after his assassination. It is doubtful, whether some time preceding the British rule the entire area of the present Cachar district was under one ruler, but it is certain that when it was ruled by its own independent rulers, and its area was far more extensive than it is at present when it was under the rule of *Kamrupadhipati* who belonged to either *Hairamba* or *Bhowma* dynasty. C.A. Sopitt, however, supports that the Kacharis migrated to the plains of Cachar only in 1750 and the king Surdarpa and his successors ruled over it.

During 13th century A.D., Kacharis who were probably the earliest inhabitants of Brahmaputra Valley, ruled over a vast area extending to the south bank of Brahmaputra from Kalang to Dikhow or beyond including the Dhansiri Valley and the present North Cachar Hills. Towards the end of the 13th century, the outlying Kachari settlements on the east of Dikhow river withdrew along with the advance of Ahoms and the river Dikhow remained the boundary between the two nations for a hundred years. There after in 1536, the Ahoms took over Dimapur, capital of Kachari king Detsung after defeating him in a battle. The Kacharis retreated further south and established a new capital at Maibong.

It is gathered that during this period the Kachari kings held a greater part of the Nowgong district and the North Cachar Hills and gradually shifted their capital towards the plains of Cachar. The Ahom king Rudra Singha defeated Kachari Raja Tamradhvaj in 1706 and the Kachari king abandoned Maibong and took refuge at Khaspur in the plains of Cachar. From this time, the Kachari princes seemed to have settled in the plains of Cachar permanently. His son Surdarpa Narayan built palaces and temples in different parts of Khaspur and the kingdom was renamed Hidimba kingdom.

In the nineteenth century, as the result of Cachar king's involvement in political intrigue between two royal brothers of Manipur, the British had to intervene to combat the Burmese threat. In March, 1824, after the conclusion of a Treaty, Cachar lapsed to the British under the term of a treaty executed between the Kachari king Govinda Chandra and the British. The district was formally annexed by the proclamation of August 14, 1832.

Before discussing the development of the district under the British Government, some reference must be made to Tula Ram Senapati's territory. In March 1829, Govinda Chandra was defeated at the hands of Govind Ram, a cousin of Tularam, who was driven later on to Jaintia territory by Govindaram. From here Tula Ram was brought back by Gombhir Singh, Raja of Manipur, and in 1829, Mr. Scott, the Agent to the Governor-General

on the North-East-Frontier, induced Govind Chandra to assign to Tularam the hill territory which Tularam then held under him. Mr. Scott also warned Tularam not to venture any further encroachment into the territory of Govinda Chandra and then a definite boundary between the North Cachar and the Cachar plains was established.⁴

As regards its eastern boundary, to appease the land hunger of the Manipuri Prince Gombhir Singh whom the British considered as a powerful ally in combating future Burmese threat, Mr. Scott, the British Political Agent on the North East Frontier of India, induced Govinda Chandra, the weak king of Cachar to settle a part of area at Chandrapur lying to the western bank of the Barak. This action caused Gambhir Singh to extend his possession to the east of the Jhiri. Finally on annexation of Cachar by the British in 1832, in contrary to the recommendation of Lt. Fisher, who was then in charge of Cachar and Mr. Robertson—the successor of Mr. Scott the land strip lying to the east of river Jhiri and west of the Barak was finally granted to Maripur and since then the eastern boundary of Cachar fixed along the Jhiri.⁵ Subsequently in 1833, the Central Cachar, a part of the hill tracts of Oichar, assigned to Tularam by the Cachar king Govinda Chandra, also, was annexed by the British government consequent upon a border incident between some British subjects of Dharampur and subjects of Tularam.

Captain Fisher, of the Survey Department was first appointed as Superintendent in the district. In 1835, the district was annexed to the Commissionership of Dacca and the title of officer in charge was changed from Superintendent to Deputy Commissioner who was entrusted with the power of a Magistrate also exercised political authority over the tribes on the frontier. The Judge of Sylhet acts as Session Judge for Cachar. In 1854, the northern part of Cachar which had become the British territory on the death of Tularam was annexed to the Assam district of Nowgong but in 1867, on the formation of the Naga Hills district, this tract was partitioned between the district of Nowgong and Cachar. It consisted of 3 sub-divisions viz.—North Cachar with an area of 4276 square kilometres which was wholly a hilly country and 2 plains Sub-divisions of Silchar and Hailakandi with 4967 square kilometres. Later in 1951, with the constitution of United Mikir (now Karbi Anglong) and North Cachar Hills district following the partition of India, the North Cachar Hills tract

4. R. M. Lahiri : *The Annexation of Assam*, 1975, p. 126.
5. *Ibid*, pp. 143—4.

was separated from Cachar, loss being substantiated by joining of Karimganj sub-division constituted with a part of old Karimganj P.S., Badarpur, Ratabari and Patharkandi P.S. from the pre-independence district of Sylhet.

The names of present Sub-divisions, Police Stations with Area and Population are given below :

Sl. No.	Sub-division Police Station	Area in Sq. Kms.	No. of Towns	No. of villages	Population		
					Total	Rural	Urban
A. Silchar		3,776.1	2	975	8,23,515	7,67,978	55,537
	Sub-division			34*			
1. Katigora P.S.		647.5	..	177	1,15,715	1,15,715	..
				4*			
2. Borkhola P.S.		362.6	..	86	60,291	60,291	..
				4*			
3. Udharband P.S.		432.5	..	102	63,109	63,109	..
				1*			
4. Lakhipur P.S.		712.2	1	205	1,44,792	1,41,853	2,921
				17*			
5. Silchar P.S.		678.5	1	222	2,89,705	2,37,110	52,596
				4*			
6. Sonai P.S.		942.8	..	182	1,49,900	1,49,900	..
				4*			
B. Karimganj		1,839.0	4	1,076	5,82,108	5,24,133	57,975
	Subdivision			1*			
7. Karimganj P.S.		375.6	1	330	2,07,953	1,76,335	31,618
				1*			
8. Badarpur P.S.		142.5	2	135	80,819	61,119	19,700
9. Patharkandi P.S.		678.6	..	312	1,43,949	1,43,949	
10. Ratabari P.S.		642.3	1	299	1,49,387	1,42,730	6,657
				—			
C. Hailakandi		1,326.1	2	362	3,07,695	2,85,515	22,180
	Sub-division			16*			
11. Hailakandi P.S.		474.0	2	204	2,11,381	1,89,201	22,180
				2*			
12. Katlichara P.S.		852.1	..	158	96,314	96,314	..
				14*			
Total		6,962.0	8	2,413	17,13,318	15,77,626	1,35,692

* Uninhabited Villages.

Source : Census of India, 1971, Series-3, Assam, Part-II-A, General Population Tables, p. 44-48.

(b) Topography :

The physical basis of Cachar is singularly diversified and beautiful. The district is composed of hills and hillocks, low land, level plains with fertile cultivable land and other natural resources. The district is surrounded on three sides,—north, east and south by high hills. There are isolated ranges of hills within the district. It is intersected by a large river, the Barak, from the east to the west. Two large valleys lie to the south of the river, divided by a range of hills running from the north to the south. The district is, for the most part, under rains during the summer season. It has also extensive lakes and marshes. The valleys in the south are the Hailakandi valley (in the west) and the Chatla Fen (in the east). To the extreme south, highland bordering the Mizoram hills covered by above water is, for the most part, forest and cultivable land. The northern portion of the district is covered by cultivable plain lands. The district on the whole, is rich in vegetation with valuable hard and soft wood trees, bamboo groves and fruit trees. The soil of the plains is alluvial with great fertility. On the hills and other elevated tracts, the surface soil is a rich vegetable mould and the rocks underneath are composed of quartz, schist and conglomerate.

The Silchar sub-division includes the southern section of the hills of North Cachar. Its average width in Cachar is 6 to 11 km with peaks ranging between 914.0 and 1819 metres. This hilly part represents the transverse spurs of the Borail Range. Many of these spurs are thrown out of the range towards the south-west with diminishing height. Between the valleys formed by these spurs flow several rivers, viz., Jiri, Chiri, Madhura, Jatinga, Arang, Larang, Gumra and Baleswari southward ultimately to meet the Barak. Of the hills lying to the south of the Barak, the principal one is the Bhubans, that runs north-south. Its heights vary from 213 to 304.80 metres. Another hill named the Rangti pahar also runs north-south, forming a watershed between two rivers, Dhaleswari and Sonai. Many streams flow down from this hill range, which drain the Chatla Fen valley. A third hill range here is known as the Tipam range. Its height varies between 30.48 and 152 metres. The Sarashpur or Sidheswar hills form the western boundary of Cachar and their heights vary from 182.88 to 609.60 metres. In shape, the hills are either ridged or peaked. Some hills appear long enough to be called as ridges. Some have high peaks while some are saddlebacked. The Bhuban range is notably precipitous. Almost all the hills are covered with forests except where tea is cultivated. The entire district is dotted with isolated low hillocks, locally known as 'tillas' which rise from the level alluvium ground. The Barail Range on the north skirts the headwaters of the Larang and the Kayang nals and culminate in the peaks of Kalongtam, Sharpal and Doliya. The district has swamps and beels here and there, with reed grass in abundance.

The river banks of the Barak are mostly lined with villages covered with areca palms, plantain and bamboo groves.

(c) River system and water resources :

The Barak : The Barak is the principal river of the Cachar district. Another name of it is Barobakro. It rises on the southern slopes of the lofty ranges of Nagaland and forms the northern boundary of Manipur State, where it is called as Kairong. From there it flows in a westerly and southerly course to Tipaimukh in the extreme south-west corner of the district where it takes a sharp U-turn to the north and forms the boundary line between Cachar and Manipur to the extent where the Jhiri river joins it. From here it turns to the west and flows a tortuous course across the middle of the district till it reaches Kandigram in Karimganj where it bifurcates into two branches. The northern branch here is called Surma while the southern branch is known as Kushiya. The western bank of Surma forms the boundary between Karimganj and Sylhet (Bangladesh) from Kandigram of Karimganj to Bisnupur of Sylhet. It is here that the Surma enters Bangladesh. The other branch, Kushiya, also forms the boundary between Cachar and Sylhet from Bhanga in Cachar to Gajukata in Sylhet where it enters Bangladesh. The total length of the Barak river from its source to its confluence with the old channel of Brahmaputra near Bhairab Bazar (Bangladesh) is about 396.00 km. But, of this only 192 km lie within the borders of the Cachar district. During the winter season the river, in places, is extremely shallow, and it flows between steep banks which often, rise to a height of 12.19 to 15.24 metres of either side. After heavy rain in the hills the river is subjected to strong currents and the water level rises upto 6.10 to 9.14 metres in a surprisingly short period of time. During the rainy season even large steamers can come up the Barak to Silchar, but in the cold weather there is often barely a metre depth of water in the channel.

The maximum flood discharge that has been recorded was 1,81,000 cusecs at Lakhipur on 16th June 1958. The bankful capacity of the river at different reaches are :

Silchar reach	..	..	1,50,000 cusecs.
Badarpur reach	..	..	1,54,000 cusecs.

The Jhiri : The Barak receives numerous small tributaries from the hills through which the river takes its course. The Jhiri is the first important affluent to join it in Cachar. It originates in the North Cachar Hills and flowing a course of 120 km meets the Barak river. The greater part of its course lies between Assam and Manipur. Its principal tributaries are the Jenam and the Digli or Kumruna which run through the hills immediately to the west.

The Chiri and Madhura : A little to the west of Lakhipur the Barak receives the Chiri. The Chiri runs through hills for about 8 km and then through both plains and hills upto Pailapur. After that it goes into open lands and meets the Barak at Chandrapur near Banskandi. The next important tributary of the Barak is Madhura or Bungpui which joins it a little to the west of Silchar town.

The Jatinga : The Jatinga river is well known as the railway line runs along its valley. It rises south of Haflong and runs south-west through the hills till it debounces on to the plains at Panighat. Then it flows through the Barkhala Pargana, and after receiving the Dalu on the left bank, falls into the Barak opposite to Jaynagar. Its length is 57.60 km. West of the Jatinga many small streams drain the country south of Barail. The bed of Jatinga river is full of gravels.

The Sonai : The principal rivers on the south bank of the Barak are the Dhaleswari and Sonai. The Sonai rises in the Mizo Hills. Running a tortuous course for 96 km it falls in the Barak river at Sonaimukh. Upto Maniarkhal it goes through the forest land and therefrom upto its confluence both the banks are fringed with plains with villages.

The Dhaleswari : The river Dhaleswari also rises in the Mizo hills where it is named Tlang. Originally, it flowed along the west side of the Hailakandi valley, and met the Barak a little to the east of Badarpur. A former king of Cachar is said to have diverted its course a little above Rangpur, consequently the old channel dried up for a distance of about 1.60 km. after the commencement of the new channel, which is called Katakhal. In spite of the fact that the lower reaches of the river are fully cut off from it that issues from the Mizo Hills, still the bed has a considerable water and a boat of about 4.06429 metric tonnes burden can go from Hailakandi town to as far as Ainakhal during the months from June to September. The Katakhal flows along the eastern part of the valley and falls into the Barak river near Salchapra. Both the banks here are steep and high; the channel of the river is deep. It is liable to sudden freshets which sometimes cause damages to the nearby villages. The area between the Sonai and the Katakhal is drained by the Rukni, a tributary of the former river and the Ghagra which falls into the Barak.

The Longai : The Longai river rises in the Tampai hills of the Tripura ranges and flows a northerly course towards Karimganj and then turns its course westwards through the Hakaluki Haor (marshy land) and ultimately falls into Kushiya. During summer the river loses its own existence when it flows through the marshy area of Hakaluki Haor. The total length of the river is about 152 km.

Beels and Marshes :

On the north, the east, and the south, the district is shut by the ranges of hills. Below these, the vast stretch of plain is ornamented with low isolated hills and forests, especially in the south. There are also many *beels* and marshes on these plains. Although there are no lakes in Cachar, the Chatla Fen appears as a lake-like sheet of water for 3 to 4 months during the rainy season. It then becomes navigable by boats. Its dimension is about 19.3121 kilometres in length and 3.2186 kilometres in breadth. The Chatla Fen plays an important role in the physical geography of Cachar district. The Barak river enters the district from the east overcharged with silt. Moreover, it gets torrents in its course through the district from the hills of Nagaland, North Cachar, and Mizoram. So both the Chatla Fen and Hailakandi valley become swamps during the rains. In the earlier part of summer, water is discharged out of these valleys to the Barak, but as soon as the monsoon sets in and the river begins to get water from the Manipur hills it rises above the level of the surrounding plains and instead of draining out water from the valleys, it inundates them. Rising and falling of its water is so sudden, that within a very short period the direction of water changes. When the Barak rises above the Fen, its muddy water, heavy with silt, swell the marshes into a wide and deep lake. When the river recedes, water from the Fen is drained to the Barak. Meanwhile, the muddy river water deposits its silt and this process raises the bed of the Fen and the lake becomes a shallow Fen. The Fens, thus, are turned into ready swamps, which ultimately turn into marshes covered with coarse grass. The Chatla Fen contained sixty deep pools of water in 1879 and before that there were ninety such pools. The shallow marshes are in the process of becoming dry land fit for rice cultivation.

Besides the Chatla Fen, *beels* found in the Hailakandi sub-division are Bawa and Churgul (5.07998 sq. km.); *Kuliala* (2.58999 sq. km.) and *Chumati* (1.29 sq. km.). Other more important marshes in the district of Cachar are Bakri Haor (25.9 sq. km.); Bowalia (15.53 sq. km.); Dhubri (2.58 sq. km.); Koya (2.58 sq. km.); Karkaria (1.29 sq. km.); Puma (5.07 sq. km.); Thapani (10.35 sq. km.) and Kholang (15.53 sq. km.).

(d) Geology :

From the limestone ridge of Khasi and Jaintia Hills to the southeast of hot spring at North Cachar Hills the upper tertiary rocks extend in an unbroken range of Barail or "great dyke" stretching from the southwest to the north-east across the district. The rocks are horizontal, consisting of fine-grained sand-stones and shales. The following table will explain the tertiary succession prevailed in the district.

Group	Formation	Age
	Older alluvium	Recent and Pleistocene
.....	— U.C. —	—————
(S) Dihing Group	Pebble bed and beds of soft clay	Pliocene
Dupitila Group	Dupitila formation	Mio-Pliocenes
—	— U.C. —	—————
Tipam Group	Girujan clay formation sandstone formation	Miocene
Surma Group	Boka Bil formation	Miocene
	Bhuban formation	
	Unconformity	
Barail Group	Renji formation	
	Tenam formation	Oligocene
.....	Laisang formation	
Disang Group	—————	Eocene

(S) The Disang Group give rise to low ground and its outcrop is very clearly indicated by the strike valley of the upper part of the Larang, the Kayang and the upper part of the Jatinga. West of the Kayang, all but the upper beds are cut by the Hailong-Disang fault.

(K) Over it lies with apparent conformity the Barail Groups of Oligocene age. The Barail outcrops which continue from Jaintiapur to Bangladesh in an east-west direction, gradually bend north-east beyond the Jatinga gorge. The type section of the Barail is provided by the Jenam river in North Cachar where they can be classified into the following formations.

Renji formation, 883 m	..	Massive sandstone.
Jenam formation, 1218 m	..	Sandstone, alternation with shale and carbonaceous shale
Laisang formation, 2437 m	..	Bedded sandstone, subordinate shale.

The Laisang formation is exposed near Bandarkhal in railway cutting and in the Jenam near Laisang. The Jenam formation is well seen near Kur Kuri, near the head water of the Dalu and the Madhura rivers. The Renji formation forms the hills north of Badarpur.

(Y) The overlying Surma Group with an unconformity at base occupies a large area in the district, occurring in many inliers and forming a strip along the northern side of the Barak valley. The Surma Group has been subdivided as follows :—

Surma Group	Bokabil formation	Sandy shale, clay-shale ferruginous sand-alternatives, ferruginous, massive, false bedded sandstones.
	Bhuban formation	Sandstone, impure sandstone shales, sandy shales, conglomerates.

The divisions are recognizable over a distance of 332 km. The Bhuban formation is well exposed immediately north of the Barak near Badarpur, and in the Bhuban hills, from which the name of the formation has been adopted, also in the hills on either side of the Hailakandi Valley, in the hill section between Damchara and Bandarkhal and in the Dalu and Madhura rivers. A rich fossil bed at the top of the Bhuban formation occurs at Kanchanpur 26 km. south-west of Badarpur.

The Bokabil formation as a whole forms a sort of passage from the Bhuban formation up into the Tipam sandstone formation.

The Tipam Group is known well over a vast area being found as far south-west as the Arakan coast of Burma extending through Tripura to a few synclinal areas in North Cachar Hills and then to Hokong valley in Burma.

It occurs conformably over the Surma.

The Tipam Group is divisible as follows :—

Girujan clay formation, 899 m	..	Mostly argillaceous rocks in which mottled clay predominate.
Tipam sandstone formation, 914 m.	..	Coarse, gritty, ferruginous sandstone blue to green, weathering orange brown to yellow in colour with shael. Fossil wood is abundant in a few localities.

Typical sections are exposed in the hills between the Chergola and the Langali valley, the Rath Tita on south-west of Lakhipur where the Tipam sandstones are there, and tends to show some characteristics of the Girujan formation. In the Bhuban hills, the Tipam outcrop is marked by long narrow valleys which develop in the shales. Near Labak, east of Silchar, there are several good sections of the Girujan formation.

(M) Dupitila formation, 519 m .. Coarse ferruginous sandstone with numbers of layers of quartz pebble.

The location of the bed is untraceable here in Cachar.

(N) The Dihing Groups about 607 to 914 m. thick lie unconformably over the Tipam Group showing an abrupt and entire change in lithology. They are made up of an alternation of pebble beds and beds of soft clay which look like recent alluvium. The Dihing beds are exposed near Madhura, north-east of Silchar near Nagar Tea Garden, and Binnakandi near Chandranathpur. The pebble beds consist of quartzite and sandstone pebble (often stained red) embedded in a matrix of red sand. The development of sharp overfold here makes it impossible to ascertain the thickness of the beds exposed. It is a very thick shales groups.

Older alluvium occurs in the two plateaus, one lying at about 61-107 m. above the alluvial level near Kumbhir, north-east of Silchar, and the other near Dewan, east of Silchar, at about 30 m. above the alluvial level. The Barak valley appears to mark the junction of two movements of rocks in different directions, one from the north and the other from the east, and to have suffered in consequence. The Barail range strike east-west and the Disang and the Barail have been folded into an anticline with an east-west axis. South of the Barak, the strata have been folded into north-south wave-like corrugations which give rise to the alternation of lines of hills and valleys. In the corrugations, the tops are usually narrower than the bottoms of the troughs, and the inclined flanks separating the crest from the trough are very steep, the strata dipping at high angles. In many instances one of the flanks of the fold is much steeper than the other and in these asymmetric anticlines it is common to find strike-faulting accompanied by vertical and inveted strata.

Mineral Wealth : The district is not very rich in mineral deposits. Salt springs exist both in Bhuban hills and the Barail hills ranges. Lime is found on a tributary of the Langting to the north-east of Maibong station. The rocks here are shales dipping at 20° to the north-north-west, and the stream has a bed deposited with calcareous tuff on the upturned edges of the shales. The deposit is of small extent and the thickness is 60-96 centimetres or less. Such deposits are also found in the valleys near Gunjong. Out crop of limestone are between the Doiang and Kapili, in the valleys of the Amram and Langyam streams and at Sinkilangao, Langhuha, and other places. Petroleum was also found at Masimpur and Badarpur on the bank of the Barak river, and a small stream namely Larang that flows to the north of Damcharahaju. It was also found at various places of the Saraspur hills. Petroleum also reported to have been in the Patharia Reserve Forest. In the Badarpur and Masimpur fields petroleum was drilled out from the Bhuban stage of the Surma series. The fields were active for eighteen years from 1915 to 1933 A.D. But the oil bearing sands were of restricted extent. So the fields were finally

abandoned when they were fully exhausted. The company drilled altogether 63 wells and obtained 1,864,000 barrels of crude oil which was refined in the Digboi refinery.

Earthquakes : Cachar, like the rest of Assam, is a seismic prone area. This region falls within the Himalayan mountains and the Naga and Lushai Hills around the northern, the north-eastern and the eastern border of the stable peninsular wedge of Assam plateau. Though equilibrium has largely been attained, the organic forces which resulted in the rise of the mountains are still in progress. Adjustment taking place intermittently finds expression as earthquakes.

Like the rest of Assam the district of Cachar is always subject to earthquakes as it lies in the same seismic area. This district in fact, was the target of several major earthquakes in the past. The earthquake which occurred on January 10, 1869 caused much damages to the district specially the Silchar town which was washed by the Barak river. The landslips were many and extensive and many homesteads were carried away by the high water of the Barak. The Jail wall, the Church tower, the cemetery gates and also the military hospital were all levelled to the ground. The district, however, experienced comparatively little damage from the great earthquake of 1897 but in Hailakandi, the Sub-divisional officer's residence and the Dak Bungalow were made uninhabitable. Fissures appeared here and there and in Katigora Tahsil houses and land in the neighbourhood of the Barak subsided into the river. Some damages were caused to some tea gardens and the Badarpur-Silchar railway. The great earthquake of August 15, 1950, was keenly felt but practically Cachar did not suffer of extensive damages. Some minor cracks occurred in the big buildings due to the shocks. On the first of July, 1957, an earthquake shock was keenly felt in the different parts of the district. Though the intensity of it was fairly high yet the district experienced only some minor damages of residential buildings. The intensity of the shock at Silchar according to Rossi Forrel scale was VIII. In the district, as many as thirteen earthquake shocks were felt during a period of 11 years, i.e., from 1948 to 1959 but no damage was done to the district by these earthquakes.

The notable earthquake of 1950 had its epicentre at 28° 5' N, 96° 7' E. and had a magnitude of 8.6 Richter. The estimated area of North-Eastern Assam was 4,900 sq. kms. which was affected by the quake heavily and estimated areas in Assam which suffered minor damage was about 1,01,000 sq. kms. The area in India, Burma, and Bangladesh over which shocks was felt was about 16,83,500 sq. kms. It was followed

by a train of after shocks. The following is the list of important after shocks.⁶

Date	Epicentre		Magnitude (Richter)
	Lat.	Long.	
1. 16 August, 1950	28°6'N	95°7'E	7.0
2. 18 August, 1950	26°6'N	95°1'E	7.0
3. 13 September, 1950	27°8'N	95°5'E	7.0

Cachar district was, however, not heavily damaged by the ravages of the quake. A table showing the date, epicentre and magnitude of some earthquakes which were felt in the Assam region is given below⁷ :-

Date	Epicentre		Magnitude (Richter)
	Lat (N)	Long (E)	
1. 10.1.1869		Near Cachar	7½
2. 12.6.1897		Shillong plateau	8.7
3. 31.8.1906	27°	97°	7
4. 12.12.1903	26°30'	97°	7½
5. 14.12.1915		Near Nowgong	5
6. 8.7.1918	24°50'	91°	7.6
7. 9.9.1923	25°30'	91°	7.1
8. 3.7.1930	25°8'	90°2'	5.6
9. 27.1.1931	25°4'	96°8'	7.6
10. 30.1.1931	do	do	5.6
11. 14.8.1932	25°8'	95°7'	7.0
12. 15.1.1934	26°6'	86°8'	8½
13. 16.8.1938	23°5'	94°15'	7.2
14. 21.1.1941	27°2'	92°0'	6½
15. 23.10.1943	26°8'	94°0'	7.2
16. 12.9.1946	23°9'	96°2'	7½
17. 29.7.1947	28°80'	93°7'	7¼
18. 15.8.1950	28°5'	96°7'	8.6
19. 17.8.1952	30°5'	91°5'	7.5
20. 21.3.1954	24°2'	95°1'	7½
21. 1.7.1957	24°4'	93°8'	7½
22. 12.7.1964	24°9'	95°3'	6.7
23. 17.10.1969	23°1'	84°7'	6.0

6. *A note on the seismicity of Assam Region* by the Director General of Observatories, Todi Road, New Delhi-3, pp. 15.

7. *Ibid*, Appendix, pp. 1-12.

(e) Flora :

Botanically the forests of Cachar district can broadly be divided into two divisions : (a) tropical evergreen forests and (b) tropical semi-evergreen forests.

(a) Tropical Evergreen types : The following species are generally found in this type.

In the upper storey—Cham, Champa-Sundi, Kari Chasundi, Gomari, Sutrang and Danin, etc.

In the middle storey—Jam, Kurti, Rata, Karal, Fing, Chamia, Dhuna, Nageswar, Jinari, Chelita, Borderfela, etc.

In lower storey—Mohal, Agar, Chalmugra, Dalmugra, Fulegha, etc.

Under growth—Scrubby growths of various species of which Jakura, Lua, Lütki, Ramgua, Kittapatta, Gandhi, Sutra, Bon-haldi, Paharilot are common.

Bamboo—Dulu, Pecha, Mulibamboos, Belhua, Bakal, Barooa, Dinga, etc., are generally occurring in places in some quantity.

Cane—Juti, Rongi, Golla, Sundi, etc., cane climbers are relatively few and generally belong to the species of shillot kuchai lots, etc.

(b) Tropical semi-evergreen types : The areas of this type of forests are chiefly covered with *muli* and *dulu* bamboos in scattered way. Both the species are evergreen deciduous. The species of trees occurring in this type of forests are Gorjan, Hotia, Tula, Jalu, Gomari, Champa, Kara, Haldu, Dumboi, Simul, Bohera, Horitaki, Awal, Dewacham, Gulab, Madhubuna, Kadam, Jam, Ring, Kurta, Karal, Jaki, Jinari, etc. The undergrowth and ground cover are Thatch, Ekra, Khagra, Nal, Rema, Patidei, Bhati, Non-Borai, etc.

Medicinal Herbs : Gandhi and Sarpagandha herbs are found in the forests.

There is no such change of forest area of the district during last 70 years but due to devastation of tree forest areas in places by the people and for wind fall of trees, some areas of the Reserve Forest were opened where gradually different types of bamboos are surviving.

Thatching grass in the Forest area in open land of the hills are grazings which gives a good amount of revenue by selling the same in Mohal system.

The other grass like Bama, Dubri, Takugras in low-lying areas are available which are generally used as fodder to the cattle. Nal Khagra, Ekra, etc. are also available.

The commercial value of the above grades is far reaching and may be used for hard board industries.

There is great importance of forestry in the economy of the district. A large portion of the revenue is derived out of the forest wealth such as timbers, bamboos, canes, thatch, agar, stone, sand, etc.

There are altogether fourteen Reserve Forests in Cachar district at present. The total area of these reserve forests is 2414.13 sq. kms. The area under Unclassed State Forests is 32,393 hectares which are covered with miscellaneous trees, bamboos, stones, sands and other raw materials. There is a proposal for creation of another three Reserve Forests in the district namely (1) Second Addition to Singla Reserve Forest, (2) Adarkona Reserve Forest and (3) Arang Reserve Forest covering an area of 4035.770 hectares. The area proposed for these Reserve Forests in hilly tracts is mixed with evergreen forests consisted of miscellaneous trees, bamboos, canes, thatch, stones, sands, etc.

Principal products and other value :

	Annual Yield		Value (average of ten years)
1. Timber	93,000.00	cum	3,44,000.00
2. Firewood	7,086.00	cum	8,258.00
3. Bamboo	34,927.99	M. Tones	3,08,700.00
4. Cane	323.00	M. Tones	
5. Thatch	165,173	bales	
6. Agar	28	Quintal	
7. Dhama	11	Quintal	
8. Rema	73,457	bales	
9. Sukchini	6.83	Quintal	
10. Chalmugra	8.00	Quintal	
11. Kitta pata	6,700	bales	
12. Tezpat	800	bales	
13. Gandhi	11.00	Quintal	
14. Patidai	77,110	Nos.	
15. Chattapata	23,660	bales	
16. Nageswar flower	3.00	Quintal	
17. Chargoal	8.50	Quintal	
18. Ekra	55	bales	

The following Forest based industries of the district are running from the timber sources of the Forests.

- (a) Sawmills—13
- (b) Plywood Mills—2
- (c) Match-wood Industries—1.

The above industries are not fully fed with timber sources of the Forests of Cachar district. They are to collect timbers from Manipur, Mizoram, N. C. Hills, and other places.

The following measures have been adopted to secure scientific exploitation and development of forest resources of the district. Every year trees are marked by demarcating centre-wise areas under Forest Ranges of the division of the district to be exploited in clear felling system. These timber coupes are generally disposed of by sale on tenders.

After complete clearing and removal of the forests resources the areas are taken up for raising plantations under non-plan and development plan schemes.

The following creations are taken up in the district under development scheme.

- (1) Teak Plantation.
- (2) Plywood Plantation.
- (3) Match-wood Plantation.

Under non-plan scheme teak species are raised in the areas under *taungya* scheme.

The development of communication in forest belt is made by improvement of 277.930 km. of Forest Road of the district.

Forest Fisheries : There are eight Forest Fisheries in the district under management of the Cachar Forest Division.

Forest Villages : The population of the Forest villages of the district is 28,253. The villagers are generally cultivators. Certain measures are taken up for improvement of the forest villages by excavation of tank, ring-well, forest village road, footpaths, etc., by the Forest Administration of the district.

The adult forest villagers are rendering five days labour free of wages to the department in the year in lieu of collection of certain forest products from the forests and as per terms and condition of the forest village rule, every adult Forest villager gets ten *bighas* of *rupit* land with one or two *bighas* of Homestead land, not transferable in the village areas and they are bound to render twenty days paid labour in *khiraj* rate to the Forest Department.

Cachar Forest Department was first started in the district in the year 1874-75 with headquarters at Silchar.

The programme of reservation of Forests in Cachar district was taken up in the year 1876-77 to enter the forest resources (flora and fauna) for preservation and exploitation under the scientific management.

The following Reserve forests were constituted in Cachar before the partition of India.

Name of Revenue Forests	Date of establishment	Area in sq. kilometre
1. Inner line Reserve forest	1878	1065.43
2. Katakhal Reserve forest	1878	140.93
3. Barak Reserve forest	1878	265.29
4. Sonai Reserve forest	1878	
5. Barail Reserve forest		

After partition of India, a part of Patharia Reserve along with all the thirteen other already constituted Reserve forests remained in Cachar and a new Reserve forest under the name and style of Bongai Reserve forest was constituted.

The Divisional Forest Officer Cachar Division is functioning as the administrative and controlling head of the Cachar forests. He is under the administrative control of the Conservator of Forest, Hills and Chief Conservator of Forest, Assam.

Forest Belt : The forests of the Cachar district have been classified into two divisions—the Reserve Forest and Unclassed State Forest. The Reserve Forests have been constituted under the Assam Regulation, 1891. According to the Divisional Forest Officer, Cachar's report dated March 4, 1977, there is a total area of 2,414.13 sq. kms. or 2,35,298 hectares excluding proposed area of 4,035.770 hectares of Reserve Forest under Cachar Forest Division, whereas the corresponding figure for 1903-04 was 2,090.1219 sq. km. Unclassed State Forest is, however, simply Government waste land and does not necessarily possess any of the characteristics which are usually associated with the expression 'forest'. It may be a sandy *char*, or a huge expanse of low-lying land covered with high grass and reeds and almost totally destitute of trees. The area of Unclassed State Forest was 184.4828 sq. kms. or 1,84,149 hectares which dwindled to 32,393 hectares in 1970-71⁸. This diminution of the area of

8. *Statistical Hand Book of Assam*, 1970-71, Deptt. of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, Shillong. p. 47.

Unclassed State Forests may be attributed to river erosion or to the pressure on land caused by population.

Fauna : The Cachar district consists of two distinct physiographic portions (1) the hills which are a section of the Assam range and (2) the plain which forms the eastern extremity of the Surma Valley. Due to variation of altitude of the North Cachar Hills, the climate as well as the vegetation are also variable. All these factors invite different varieties of birds. Seasonal Variations may occur in the population of birds due to influx of migrants. zoogeographically the district is in the Indian sub-region of the Oriental realm. Some Assam-Burma elements may also be found in the eastern part of the district. Representative of Palaearctic and Indo-Chinese avifauna are also met with at suitable areas.

Main avian types of the district are : (1) Waders and aquatic birds, (2) birds of prey and (3) birds of wood. Of these, worth mentioning are Eastern golden plover, Whinorole, Curlew, Black-tailed, Godwit, Redshank, Robins, Stork, Ibis, Egret, Teal, Goose, Rail, Quail, Lapwing, Snipe, Pochard, Duck, Crane, Hen, King-fisher, Fowl, Parakeets, Cuckoo, Koel, Lark, Bulbuls, Mynas, Parrotbills and Babbler of different varieties. Most of the Himalayan, Assam, and Burmese varieties of birds available in other districts of Assam are also sometimes can be found here.

Besides Burmese Tita, Wagtails, Flowerpakers, Sunbirds, Rosefinch, Buntings and birds like Sparrow, Baya, Myna, Weaverbirds, etc., belonging to Ploceidae family of Passeriformes order, are also present in Cachar forests.

No detailed survey has been made so far on birds of the district. However, recent environmental changes, specially reduction in forest areas and influx of population has affected the avifauna in the district.

Ducks and Geese (Anatidae) ; Pheasants and Quails (Phasiandae) ; Crane (Gruidae) ; Rails and Coots (Rallidae) ; Plover, Sandpiper, Snipe (Charadriidae) ; Painted Snipe (Rostratulidae) ; Doves and Pigeons (Columbidae) are claimed as 'Game Birds' being they are hunted.

Mammals and Osteology : Distribution and character of the mammalian races in Cachar are similar to the forest region with foothill of the Himalaya's, except in the hill ranges where Malayan and Indo-Chinese flora are traceable. All types of mammals available in Indian forest are available in Cachar district. but most important of these animals are Nilaj Bandor (Macaca mulatta-Rhesus Mecaque), Mati Bhaluk (Melursus ursinus—Sloth Bear), Wild Boar, Golden Cat, Hati (Elephas maximus, Linnaeus—Indian Elephant), Wild buffalo, Barking deer, Hog deer, Spotted deer, Sambar, Leopard and Methon (*Bos gaurus*—Bison, Gaur),

The Cachar forest is the only forest in India which is inhabited by Hoolok Gibbon. The other rare species of mammals noticed in Cachar forests are Slow Loris (*Nycticebus concang*) and *Dhekiapatia bagh* (*Panthera tigris-tiger*) and they need special protection. Another kind of mammal which is reported to be visiting Cachar grass land sporadically is Assam hare (*Caprolagus hispidus*) which also requires special protection.

The slate black elephant of Cachar is supposed to be the most sturdy of its kind and they very frequently migrate to the North Cachar and K. & J. Hills of Meghalaya, and even to Kajiranga and southern Kamrup.

Of fishes, leeches, insects, reptiles, fungi and bectarias found in Assam are also prevalent in Cachar.

The species of Amphibia, excepting *Herpela fulleri* (Fam : *Caeciliidae*) frogs which has been recorded from Cachar, and likely to be found in Cachar district (Assam), are *Rana limnocharis*, *Rana tigrina tigrina*, *Rana limnocharis limnocharis* and *Rana alticola*. While the first two varieties are found in bushes, grasses grown around ditches, and the shallow ponds and tanks, the third variety is a paddy field dweller and the last one lives in hilly areas. *Cascillians* are limbless snake like amphibians of which the only variety reported from north-eastern India is *Herpela fulleri*. They are found only in areas with good rainfall.

Butterflies available in Cachar are of the following 5 families : (1) Papilionide, (2) Danaisdal, (3) Satyridae (2 varieties), (4) Nyphalidae (2 varieties) and (5) Lycaenidae.

Only one species of termites reported from Cachar is *Odontotermes* found at Silchar.

Elephant Catching : At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Cachar *Mahals* which included both the districts of N. C. Hills and present district of Cachar (excluding Karimganj), were divided into two *Mahals* for the purpose of elephant catching. As in now, the *Mahals* were put to auction. Present per head royalty for capture of each tusker, male elephant and female elephant is Rs. 500/-, Rs. 425/-, and Rs. 350/- respectively. The successful lessees of the *mahals* are to pay monthly fees in addition to usual royalty.

There are two elephant hunting seasons viz., *Season Sikar* and *Gazali Sikar*. *Season Sikar* is from 1st October to 31st March of a year and *Gazali Sikar* is from middle of May or first of June to the middle or last part of July according to the time when new sprouting of grass starts in the jungle. The *Mahal* lease is valid only for one season.

There are three methods of elephant catching, viz., *Mela Sikar*, *Kheda Sikar* and *Pitfall system*. In Assam proper, the most common and prevalent system is *Mela Sikar*. But in Cachar district, the system of *Kheda Sikar* and *Pitfalls* are also used.

Mela Sikar : It is an unique system of elephant hunting in the entire elephant-hunting world in which the Assamese people can claim monopoly in expertise. This system is said to have been introduced by Swargadeo Purandar Singha in Assam.

Kheda Sikar : The system is borrowed from Burma and Senderson popularised this system in Assam. This system is known only by Syam, Tai and other Mangolian tribes of Assam. This system is followed by the Kacharis of Cachar as an indigenous system of elephant catching. The stockades used in *Kheda Sikar* are (1) *Pung garh* and (2) *Dandi garh*. *Pung garhs* are generally executed on full moon or new moon day as animals generally come to 'pung', i.e., saltlake beds at that time. The second stockade, i.e., *Dandi garh* is very risky as on getting scent of hunters through air, at which elephants are the most expert, the elephant herd can change its tract, i.e., *Dandi*, and the whole operation may fail.

Pit fall system : It is the most primitive system of elephant catching, in which big deep pits covered with leaves and dry grasses are made and unsuspecting elephants fall there and lay helpless being unable to move. This system is very dangerous as it may result in total loss of the captured elephant. This system is no longer in use in Assam.

The present process of elephant catching in the district is done by *Mela Sikar*.

	Assamese name
There are three kinds of elephants :	
1. Tuskar (Male with tusk)	Dantal.
2. Makhna (Male without or with very short tusk)	Makhna.
3. Female	Madi.

The following table will give an idea about position of elephant hunting as revenue earner in the Cachar district in recent years :

Year	No. of elephant captured	Royalty, etc., realised.
1967-68	25	Rs. 3,995.00
1968-69	16	Rs. 5,756.00
1969-70	10	Rs. 4,580.00
1970-71	11	Rs. 5,059.00
1971-72	2	Rs. 880.00
1972-73	12	Rs. 5,060.00
1973-74	10	Rs. 4,526.00
1974-75	4	Rs. 1,781.00

Game laws and measures for the preservation of wild life : There are various laws and measures for the preservation of Wild life. Shooting, hunting or trapping in a sanctuary is absolutely prohibited except under special licences issued by the Chief Conservator of Forests to approved sportsman for the exclusive purpose of hunting and killing carnivorous animals. The killing and capture of wild animals and birds are prohibited during the closed seasons as prescribed in Assam Forest Manual of 1947. Under Sections 34(2) (f) and 35(2) of Assam Forest Regulations (VII) of 1891, killing of the one-horned rhinoceros in the Unclassed State Forest is prohibited, except with the previous sanction of the State Government. The Rhinoceros Preservation Act, 1954 prohibits killing, capturing and injuring rhinoceros. Rules ensuring the protection of fish have also been framed. Under sections 25(g) and 72 of Assam Forest Regulation (VII) of 1891, the capturing of fish by the use of explosive or poison, the netting of fish except under special licence issued by the Divisional Forest Officer, and taking of eggs and trapping of birds are absolutely prohibited.

Hunting, shooting or fishing within a reserved forest is prohibited except under licence issued in accordance with prevailing rules. The Conservator of Forests with the previous approval of the State Government may declare any reserved forest or part thereof to be Class I or Class II reserve, where the restrictions on hunting, killing or injuring forest animals are made more stringent to preserve rare birds and animals. Class I forests are in turn divided into shooting blocks, none of which remains open for more than 15 consecutive days to be reopened only after a gap of another 15 days. No person or member of a party reserving a block is permitted to kill more than (1) two buffaloes, (2) two bisons, (3) four sambars, (4) two swamp deers and (5) one spotted deer.

There are also certain legal restrictions with regard to shooting implements. Use of rifles of bore less than 300 for shooting game is prohibited. Cartridges loaded with shot larger than No. 4 is not to be used in reserved forest.

The following 3 tables from 'A' to 'C' give an idea of revenue-earning position of Cachar forests in the recent years.

Table—A

Revenue earned from the Reserve Forest in Cachar district.

Year	Revenue
1951-52	5,49,732.42
1955-56	3,31,996.63
1960-61	3,43,965.22
1965-66	5,82,474.21
1966-67	7,93,512.27
1967-68	9,28,506.36
1968-69	12,18,926.47
1969-70	15,90,409.46
1970-71	12,55,578.15
1971-72	12,27,048.34
1972-73	14,41,777.60
1973-74	14,93,535.64
1974-75	15,63,026.83

Table—B.

Revenue earned from Forest Fisheries in the district of Cachar as on 1-4-75.

Sl. No.	Name of Forest Fisheries (Mahal)	Location (in Reserved Forest)	Area	Total Production (in Qnt)	Annual Revenue (in Rs.)
1.	Erabil Fishery	Kathakhali in Matijuri Range	1,000 hectare	10.00	308.00
2.	Dhaleswari Fishery	Inner line in Matijuri Range	2.72 sq. km.	1000.00	12,500.00
3.	Lakhinagar Fishery	Upper, Jiri Lakhipur Range	6.00 hectare.	20.00	2,864.00
4.	Rukni Fishery	Inner line Reserve, Sonai Range	0.04 sq. km.	10.00	303.00
5.	Bagewalla Fishery	Sonai, Sonai Range	80.00 hectare	10.00	303.00
6.	Pechar Godi Beel Fishery	Sonai, Sonai Range	32.00 hectare	10.00	306.00
7.	Sabri Fishery	Longai, Longai Beat	6.00 hectare	2.00	50.00

Source : D. F. O. Cachar, Silchar.

Table—C

The out turn of timber, fuel, cane, bamboo and other

Year	Timber in m ³	Fuel in sm ³	Cane in metric ton	Bamboo in metric ton	Thatch in bunch	Agar in quintal	Dhuna in quintal
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1970-71	10194.499	3373.080	349.24	39801.62	145475	9.33	31.50
1971-72	11011.165	22712.000	440.82	77747.93	3848995	0.75	4.16
1972-73	12748.478	2162.000	524.26	30711.93	1573625	0.06	4.59
1973-74	11908.211	8273.000	2091.20	47174.97	86662	0.80	1.22
1974-75	10944.025	5125.82	369.92	29732.43	5077485	4.50	..

Source : D.F.O., Cachar, Silchar.

The Climate and rainfall : The climate of this district is characterised by an abundant rainfall, moderate temperature and high humidities. The year may be divided into four seasons. The cold season from December to February is followed by the hot season from March to May. The south-west monsoon season is from June to September. October and November constitute the post-monsoon season.

Rainfall : Records of rainfall in the district are available for 15 stations for periods ranging from 40 to 89 years. The details of the rainfall at these stations and for the district as a whole are given in Tables 1 and 2 appended to this chapter. The average annual rainfall in the district is 3,293.9 mm. The rainfall generally increases from the south to the north. The rainfall is not confined to the south-west monsoon season alone. The summer rains in the period March to May, mostly as thundershowers, constitute about 27 per cent of the annual rainfall. The south-west monsoon arrives over the district by the last week of May and withdraws by the first week of October. The rainfall during the south-west monsoon season is 58 per cent of the annual total. Some rainfall is received in the post-monsoon season also. The variation in the rainfall from year to year is small. During the fifty year period from 1901 to 1950, the highest annual rainfall in the district amounting only 125 per cent of the normal occurred in 1929. The lowest annual rainfall in the same period was 73 per cent of the normal and it occurred in 1919. This was the only year in the fifty year period when the district as a whole got less than 80 per cent of the normal rainfall. At Silchar and Koyah there was one occasion each in the fifty year period, when two consecutive years had rainfall

forest products in Cachar district under Cachar Forest Division.

Rema in Bundle	Sukchini in quintal	Chalmogra in quintal	Kitta Pata in bundle	Tej Pata in bundle	Gandhi in quintal	Patidai in number	Chatta Pata in bundle
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
369206	0.26	0.22	2250	700	0.29	..	..
2225	..	..	20000	20000	2.00	6250	1205
10,000	21.00	15.00	700	..	30.00	..	..
10,000	1.00	..	10000	..	..	..	..
622	2.75	6.15	402	69	13.00	..	120000

less than 80 per cent of the normal. It will be seen from Table 2 that the rainfall in the district was between 2,800 and 3,800 mm in 39 years out of 50.

On an average there are 135 rainy days i.e., days, with rainfall of 2.5 mm. or more in a year. This number varies from 123 at Patharkandi to 141 at Karimganj and Bhanga.

The heaviest rainfall in 24 hours recorded at any station in the district was 660.7 mm at Karimganj on September 9, 1885.

Temperature : The two meteorological observatories in the district are at Silchar and Kumbhigram. The temperature and other meteorological records of Silchar observatory may be taken as representative of the conditions in the district as a whole. The cold season starts towards the end of November, January is the coldest month with the mean daily minimum temperature at 11.7°C and the mean maximum at 25.5°C. From about the later half of February temperature rises rapidly. The weather in the later half of the summer season is rather uncomfortable due to the dampness in the air although the temperatures are not excessive. The frequent thunderstorms lower the temperatures to some extent. In the monsoon season, the day temperatures are usually as high and sometimes a little higher than in May. The night temperature, however, is higher than those in the summer season. As a result, the weather is unpleasant when it is not actually raining. With the withdrawal of the monsoon in early October, the night temperature begins to decrease, the decrease in day temperatures being appreciable only after October.

The highest maximum temperature recorded at Silchar was 37.4°C.

on April 16, 1937 and July 28, 1896. The lowest minimum temperature was 5.0° on February 10, 1905.

Humidity : The air is highly humid nearly all the year round. During February and March, the air is comparatively less humid, the afternoon humidities being less than 60 per cent.

Cloudiness : Skies are heavily clouded to overcast during the period May to September. The cloudiness decreases thereafter and in the cold season skies are lightly and moderately clouded. The cloudiness increases in March and April.

Winds : Winds are generally light throughout the year, except in association with thunderstorms in the summer season, when the winds are strong for short spells. The direction of winds is generally often variable.

Table—1

Normals and extremes

Station	No. of years of data	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Karimganj	50 a + 20.8 b × 1.2	45.5	147.1	414.0	560.8	791.2	580.4	551.2	23.1
Durllavcheria	50 a 16.3 b 1.2	41.1	120.4	315.2	406.7	530.5	399.3	386.8	21.2
Patharkandi	30 a 15.0 b 1.1	44.7	95.8	322.6	463.8	632.5	424.2	431.5	20.4
Silchar	50 a 20.6 b 1.4	48.8	147.1	369.8	429.5	614.2	542.0	523.0	22.2
Monierkhal	50 a 18.3 b 1.4	43.7	111.5	247.9	330.5	541.0	570.7	566.7	23.2
Badarpur	50 a 18.5 b 1.2	40.6	137.7	368.5	463.0	643.4	517.7	496.5	22.6
Cachar (District)	a 18.6 b 1.3	45.4	137.3	349.1	451.1	626.4	513.7	502.1	22.1

+ (a) Normal rainfall in mm

× (b) Average number of rainy days (days with rain of 2.5 mm or more)

But in the afternoons in the south-west monsoon season, winds from the southwest or west are more common. In the morning hours winds from east, north-east and south-east are more common throughout the year.

Special Weather Phenomena : Some of the storms and depressions in May and the post-monsoon season approach the district and its neighbourhood and cause widespread heavy rain. Thunderstorms are frequent in the summer season. Occasionally these are accompanied with hail and squalls. Fogs are frequent in the period from November to February.

Tables 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 appended to the chapter give the temperature and humidity, mean wind speed and frequency of weather phenomena respectively for Silchar.

of Rainfall

Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Annual	Highest annual rainfall as % of normal year*	Lowest annual rainfall as % of normal year*	Heaviest rainfall in 24 hour** (mm)	Date		
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
457.2 17.4	251.7 8.6	45.5 2.0	7.9 0.6	3873.3 140.6	143 (1927)	71 (1943)	660.7	1985	Sept.	9
332.7 16.6	174.2 8.6	40.9 1.8	7.1 0.6	2761.2 129.6	133 (1929)	74 (1909)	320.3	1915	July	9
380.5 15.4	195.3 7.6	56.6 2.0	6.9 0.3	3069.4 122.9	122 (1929)	79 (1922)	274.8	1938	Sept.	21
403.1 17.1	197.6 8.6	43.4 2.1	3.6 0.6	3347.7 137.9	167 (1927)	64 (1919)	290.3	1893	May	30
422.9 17.8	173.7 8.7	41.7 2.3	9.1 0.8	3067.7 136.0	124 (1912)	74 (1919)	296.7	1944	June	17
404.1 16.3	202.7 8.2	45.7 2.2	6.6 0.5	3345.8 136.6	130 (1915)	74 (1944)	258.3	1915	July	10
399.3 16.6	199.3 8.4	44.2 2.0	7.4 0.6	3293.9 134.7	125 (1929)	73 (1919)				

* Years given in brackets.

** Based on all available data upto 1970.

Table-2
Frequency of Annual Rainfall in the district
(1901-1920)

Range in mm	No. of years	Range in mm	No. of years
2401-2600	1	3401-3600	12
2601-2800	5	3601-3800	3
2801-3000	6	3801-4000	2
3001-3200	11	4001-4200	3
3201-3400	7		

Table-3
Normals of Temperature and Relative Humidity (Silchar)

Month	Mean Daily Maximum Temperature	Mean Daily Minimum temperature	Highest Maximum ever recorded	Lowest Minimum ever recorded	Relative Humidity 0830 1730
	0 C	0 C	0 C	0 C	%
January	25.5	11.7	30.6	5.6	84
February	27.1	13.6	35.0	5.0	77
March	30.4	17.5	37.8	8.3	71
April	31.5	20.8	39.4	13.9	74
May	31.2	22.8	38.9	15.6	81
June	31.3	24.6	37.8	19.4	86
July	31.8	25.1	39.4	21.1	86
August	31.2	24.5	38.3	19.4	86
September	31.8	24.7	38.3	18.9	85
October	31.1	22.7	36.7	15.6	83
November	29.2	17.6	35.0	10.6	74
December	26.5	13.3	31.7	6.1	84
Annual	29.9	19.9			81

* Hours L.S.T. Extremes of temp. upto 1974

Table-4

Mean Wind Speed in Km/Hr.

	Jan	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Annual
	1.4	1.8	2.5	2.7	2.4	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.6	1.4	1.5	1.2	1.8

Table-5
Special Weather Phenomena
(Silchar)

Mean No. of days with	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Annual
Thunder	0.2	0.7	4	6	9	6	4	5	5	3	0.1	0	43
Hail	0	0	0.2	0.1	0.1	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0.5
Dust-storm	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Squall	0	0	0.1	0.4	0.2	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.8
Fog	2	0.4	0.1	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.1	0	1.9	3	8

*No. of occasions 2 and above are given in whole numbers.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY

(a) Pre-history :

Evidence on the life on Pre-historic man in Assam is almost nil. From the geographical account and the scanty socio-economic description of Assam found in 'Periplus of the Erythrean Sea', it appears that the Kiratas who were called the Kirrhadae and the Sesatae by the author of 'Periplus', were living in the hilly areas of Assam which also included Cachar and Tripura. As mentioned in Periplus, gold was collected and sent to markets in China and other parts of India from Assam through Tripura by river and sea. Some Scholars like Tavernier,¹ also found gold to be a local product of Assam. Taylor² suggests that the place of gold was somewhere in Tripura which was within Pragjyotisa. Dionysius,³ Aelian and Ctesias⁴ give account of a hill tribe of Assam who are, according to scholars, identical with Kiratas or Kacharis or Bodos of Assam and use of dyed silk (probably Endi and Muga) and lac was prevalent amongst them and they traded in these materials.

Neoliths: According to Ursula Graham Bower, the entire Barail area in North Cachar is full of caves, fortifications and villages of an extinct race called Sicmi. But there is no evidence to support this statement.

A neolithic adze of shouldered type was discovered in Kanarpara of the district of Cachar. This type of adzes is called stone celts and supposed to be Mon-Khmer-Irrawaddy class according to Theobald who described the celts to have resembled the Burmese type.⁵ The celts are now preserved at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, London. These celts were very likely used by the primitive inhabitants of the eastern region to kill human enemies and also for flaying animals. P.C. Choudhury is of opinion that these celts presenting the prevalence of Neolithic culture in Assam was associated with the cult of fertility and magic which led to foundation of Tantric religious life in ancient Assam.⁶

HISTORY

Megaliths : That the Megalithic culture was prevalent among the Kacharis is evident from the monoliths of Dimapur - an old capital of Kachari kings. But as they migrated to Tripura and Cachar from the Brahmaputra Valley through North Cachar, they carried the germ of Hinduism with them and finally gave up megalithic practices and so no megalithic evidence has yet been discovered in the Cachar plains. Hindu influence is even noted in most of the monoliths found at Dimapur though basically these megaliths with phallic shape were connected with cult of fertility and animism followed by the Nagas. In North Cachar Hills also some hollowed monoliths have been discovered. According to Mills and Hutton, they represent a rather specialised development of a phallic-ancestor cult typical of Assam, widely spread in south-east Asia and extending over even to Oceania and Madagascar. These megaliths were erected as the tombs of the dead ancestors who were worshipped for fertility of the land leading to clanish prosperity of their descendents.

From these accounts and from the neoliths so far discovered in Cachar area adjoining Brahmaputra Valley, it can be surmised that the ancient inhabitants of Cachar also belonged to the same tribe called Kiratas, who were described by different scholars at different times as Schirataes, Thinae, Sinae, or Scythic Seres; of whom Mairang or Mahiranga was the first king known through the prevalent traditions.

Though there is no definite documentary evidence about history of political rule of ancient Cachar, from Nidhanpur Grant, Doobi Grant and descriptive geographical account of the North-eastern part of Assam so far found in the writings of Greek, Roman and other travellers of the globe, it can be gathered that the entire south-east area beyond the Barail was under the rule of Kamarupadhipatis who were mentioned in the epics and Puranas to have the area upto the sea under their sway. Later, with decline of strength and power of Kamarupadhipatis, the empire broke into different small kingdoms and the account of these small kings are not so well traceable anywhere except in the *Charitaputhis*, *Rajvamsavallis*, *Ahom Buranjis* and *Tripura Rajamala*.

From a narrative in the *Sabha Parva* of *Mahabharata* it is found that the second Pandava Bhima in course of Pandavas' *Digvijaya* campaign went upto Lauhitya river after subjugating Paundra, Suhma, Vanga, and Tamralipta; and that the third Pandava Arjuna after subjugating the chief of *Sakala-dwipa* situating in Lauhitya Sagara, taking the vanquished chiefs with him, attacked Bhagadatta, the king of Pragjyotisha whose troops were consisting of Kiratas, Chinas and dwellers of the sea coast. In some Puranas the Barak is also mentioned

1. Ball : *Travels*, 1977, Vol. II, P. 221, Edited by W. Crook.

2. Taylor : *J.A.S.B.*, 1847, -1, pp. 20-27.

3. *J.A.S.B.*, 1847, 1. p. 46.

4. Heeren : *Asiatic Nations*, II App. IV. p. 380.

5. *Memoris of the Geological Survey of India*, Vol. X, Part II, pp. 167-71.

6. P.C. Choudhury : *History of Civilization of Assam*, 1959, Gauhati, pp. 60-61.

and described as a sacred river.⁷ These descriptions, read with the geographical accounts given by the author of the '*Periplus of the Erythraean sea*' of about the first century A.D., the Geography of Ptolemy written in about 150 A. D. and confirmed by the account of Yuan Chwang, show clearly that the south-western part of Bengal upto the western part of present Sylhet in Bangladesh was under the sea which was then known as Lauhitya Sagar due to its direct connection with the Lauhitya (present Brahmaputra river) and that the entire land with the hills lying to the north-east of Lauhitya Sagar was known as Kamarupa ruled by the Bhauma dynasty. This contention is also strengthened by the discovery of Doobi Grant of Bhaskara Varman in the eastern Sylhet. N. K. Bhattasali, according to whom Samatata Kingdom mentioned in Allahabad Pillar Inscription, consisted of the entire region enclosed within the lower part of the old Lauhitya and hills of Tripura, Sylhet and Cachar, points out that Samatata passed on to Bhutivarmana, the 8th illustrious king of Varmana dynasty soon after 508 A. D. According to P.C. Choudhury too, Bhutivarman's victories not only made him master of North Bengal and the outlying regions of Samatata, Tripura, Sylhet, Cachar and Davaka including greater portions of modern Assam in the east, but also laid the foundation of the future greatness of Bhaskaravarman⁸ in his later generations. This fact is also testified by Yuan Chwang. P. C. Choudhury further holds that during the reign of Salastambha, the founder of a line of ruling dynasty after the Varmanas, too retained the eastern part of Magadha, whole of northern Bengal, Sylhet and some portion of the south-east Bengal under his sway.⁹ From a *sloka* of *Mudra Rakshasa* it is found that after Bhaskar Varman 'Mlechcha revolt' was feared in Kamarupa due to the weakness of Bhaskara's successors. Probably that fear was materialised and the 'Mlechcha' or Non-Aryan races become powerful and this resulted in establishment of a number of small kingdoms in the region. But during the middle part of 8th century also, lands from Sadiya in the east to Ayodhya in the west and from the Himalayas in the north as far as Bay of Bengal and Orissa in the south-west¹⁰ came under the rule of Kamarupadhipati Sri Harsadeva or Sri Harsha of Salastambha family. According to Bargaon Copper Plate Grant of Ratnapala, Salastambha is of a

mlechcha dynasty while Bhandarkar ascribes Bhouma origin to them. As P.C. Choudhury further says, 'it is almost certain that the Gouda ruler defeated by Yasovarmana of Kanauj sometimes between 748-750 A.D. was Harshadeva¹¹ of Kamarupa. This contention also is supported by S. K. Aiyenger. This descriptions suggested that even in the middle part of the 8th century A.D. Cachar was within the fold of the empire of the Kamarupadhipati.

Nomenclature : In his '*Kachari Tribes in N. C. Hills*' C. A. Soppit deduced that Damasazao (Dimasa) or Kacharis on leaving Maibong and settling in Cachar, were called by the neighbouring Sylhet Bengalis 'Kacharis' and the term was accepted by other outsiders. But the reverse also may be the fact. The Kacharis do not call themselves by the name Kachari. Kacharis of Brahmaputra valley call themselves Bodo (Bodofisha) and the Kacharis of Cachar region call themselves 'Dimasha' or 'Dimafisha'. According to Sir E.A. Gait¹² the word 'Kachari' is derived from the sanskrit word 'Kucha' or 'Kachha' which means seashore or bordering place. As the Bodo tribes were inhabiting and ruling the border areas of Aryavarta in Aryan inhabited India, situating on the bank of the sea extending through the Ganga-Barhmaputra confluence¹³, they were called 'Kachari'. We can surmise that probably a powerful section of the people belonging to this tribe, after proceeding to the southern hilly regions leaving the northern hills and valleys, established their own kingdom which was known as Dabaka during the reign of Gupta Kings and as the Aryans called them Kacharis the region mainly under their sway came to be known as Cachar from which both the districts of North Cachar and Cachar got their present nomenclature.

We can accept the interpretation of Sri S. Thaosen who in the book '*Asamar Janajati*' states that the Bodos of the present Cachar (both N. C. Hills and Cachar) came to be known as 'Dimasa' after they came to settle on the bank of river Dhansiri which is called 'Dima' by them. This was probably done in order to distinguish themselves from the northern Bodos who remained in the Brahmaputra valley after Aryan ingress by king Naraka and continued to call themselves 'Bodofisa', i.e., children of the Bodo.

7. *Kacharer Itibritta*-By U. N. Guha, P. 5.

8. P. C. Choudhury, *History of Civilization of Assam*, Gauhati, 1959, p. 168.

9. *Ibid*, p. 214.

10. *Ibid*, p. 218-219.

11. *Ibid*, p. 224.

12. E. A. Gait, *History of Assam*, 1967, p. 299.

13. U. C. Guha : *Kacharer Itibritta*, 1971, Guahati, p. 47.

According to Sri Sonaram Thaosen, the Dimasa established their capital at Dimapur at about 1086 A.D.¹⁴. This time corresponds to the last part of Pala dynasty's rule in Banga and the rule of a branch of Bhouma dynasty in Kamarupa which beginning with Barhmapala (990 A.D.) to Jayapala who died in 1138 A.D. ruled Kamarupa for about 150 years. So this should be the time when Dharmapala, a powerful king of this dynasty who called themselves Palas, shifted his capital from Durjaya which is identified with Pragjyotishpura by K. L. Barua to Kamarupanagar (probably North Gauhati according to K. L. Barua) as a strategy for defence against the Kacharis and forced them to remove the capital site of Kachari Kingdom of Dabaka from Kapili valley to Dimapur.

Medieval and Modern Period : It is only with the coming of the Kacharis in the medieval period, the curtain on Cachar's history is gradually lifted. In the *Rajamala* or chronicle of Kings of Tripura there are references to rule of Tripura-dissident branch of royal Dimasa tribe, on the bank of the Barak prior to the shifting of Dimasa king's capital to Khaspur. It is stated in the *Rajamala* that when the Dimasa Kacharis in the 16th century had entered into the Cachar Plain, there ensued a long conflict with the Tipras, and the Tipras being worsted was forced to leave Cachar by gradual stages. It is clearly written in the *Rajamala* that at one stage the Barak was demarcated as the boundary between Tripura and Kachari kingdoms¹⁵. Some historians are of opinion that the conflict must have happened in Kapili valley.

As pointed out and discussed earlier it is not to be presumed that the Kacharis got their name from Cachar. They were known by that name in many parts far remote from Cachar, and were so called as long before a section of the tribe took possession of that district.

The Kacharis surely form a section of the great Bodo group belonging to the Mongoloid horde who in ancient times had entered into Assam in successive waves. They Kacharis of Cachar and North Cachar Hills call themselves *Dimasa*, which, according to Gait, is a corruption of 'Dimafisa' or sons of great rivers. There are different legends connecting their origin with great rivers. According to one legend they had their origin somewhere between the upper water of the Yangtse-Kaing and the Hoang-ho where from in course of migration they had entered into Assam. According to a second legend they were first born in the confluence of the Dila (Lohit i.e. Brahmaputra) and the Sagi.¹⁶ The historical

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value of these legends is that they show association of the Kacharis with great rivers in the early stage of their history. The early movements of the Kacharis in Assam are yet to be known for certain. But what we know for certain from the Ahom *Buranji* is that in the 13th century the Kacharis ruled over a Kingdom which extended along the south bank of the Brahmaputra, from the Dikhu to the Kallang and included also the Dhansiri and the tract which now forms the North-Cachar Hills.¹⁷ The capital of the Kingdom was at Dimapur where the ruins of the Kachari period are still in existence. Probably, the ancient kingdom of Dabaka mentioned in the Prayag Pillar Inscription of Samudra Gupta is identical with the ancient Kachari or tribal kingdom of Dabaka situating to the south-east of ancient Kamarupa though no such documentary proof has been discovered yet. This aspect deserves an intensive as well as extensive research work.

From the *Kachari Buranji*, a chronicle maintained by the Ahom historians, it can be gathered that originally the Kachari king of Bodo origin migrating from Sadiya area and the northern bank of the Brahmaputra, established their kingdom in Kapili valley. According to the tradition prevalent amongst the Tripura tribes of Tripura which corresponds to the tradition enumerated in the *Kachari Buranji*, a number of known kings of Bodo dynasty ruling in Kapili Valley were Manikyas or Manik. One of the childless Kachari Raja Manik adopted a youth supposed to be born of Siva-the Bodo God and enthroned him as the king of the Kachari kingdom. As per one tradition, the name of the king was Manik and the adopted son was his son-in-law. As per another tradition, the name of the childless king was either Sasempha or Birhas. During their reign, there was conflict between two brothers and the eldest prince drove away the younger prince who was the Viceroy at Kapili Valley to the south and the younger prince established his kingdom in Tripura on the bank of the Barak.¹⁸ Mahamanikya alias Mahamanikyapha was the son of that king.¹⁹ From the Assamese *Ramayana* written by Sri Madhab Kandali, it is found that this Mahamanikya who was a great patron of literature and culture, assigned the work of translation of the epic Ramayana from original Sanskrit into Assamese and accordingly Sri Madhab Kandali did the translation in the middle part of the thirteenth century A.D. Mahamanikya alias Mahamanikpha was a powerful

14. Sonaram Thaosen : *Dimasa Kachari*-an article published in *Asamar Janajati* by Asom Sahitya Sabha, 1962, pp. 44-47.

15. K. D. Menon : *Tripura District Gazetteer*, 1975, p. 71.

16. *Gazetteer of Cachar* by Allen, p. 19.

17. *A History of Assam* by Gait (revised edition), 1967, p. 300.

18. K. D. Menon : *Tripura District Gazetteer*, 1951, pp. 70-1.

19. *Kachari Buranji*-edited by Dr. S. K. Bhuyan, 1951, pp. 3-10.

Kachari king. His origin was assigned to Baraha, i.e., Naraka and was called *Barahiraja*.

This Mahamanikya or Mahamanipha has been mentioned as one of the predecessors of Ratnamanikya whose coin has been discovered in Tripura. The date of the coin issued by Ratnamanikya is Saka 1386 (1464 A.D.)²⁰.

According to *Kachari Buranji*, Mukuta was the adopted son rather son-in-law of Manik Kachari. A coin of Mukutamanikya recently discovered in Tripura bears the date of Saka 1411 corresponding to 1489 A.D. It is also found that the names of the Tippera kings mentioned in *Rajamala* almost correspond to most of the Kachari kings ruling in Cachar. Hence it can be safely said that the Manikya dynasty of Tripura the first royal dynasty confined to the rule of Tripura owed their origin to the same royal dynasty who had been reigning in Kapili Valley and subsequently migrated to Cachar through North-Cachar.

Mahamanikya has been described as Barahiraja by Sri Madhab Kandali and according to S.K. Bhuyan, Jaintia Raja is also called Barahiraja. Even now some of the Jaintia chiefs use the name 'manik' after their first name and from this also it is evident that this branch of Jaintia Raja, the Cachar king and Tippera king-all draw their royal heritage from the same stock.

The Ahoms who had entered into Assam in the 13th century had established a kingdom to the east of the Kachari kingdom. For many years, the Dikhu appears to have formed the boundary of the two nations. Skirmishes between the two went on but the first recorded engagement took place in 1490 in which the Ahoms were worsted. But the thrust of the Ahoms continued on the Kachari kingdom. In about 1536 when hostilities again broke out, Detsung, the Kachari king, was defeated and his capital Dimapur was sacked. The Kacharis were thus shorn of all their possessions in the valley of the Dhansiri and the North of the Kallang in Nowgong. After the destruction of Dimapur the Kachari kings established their capital at Maibong on the bank of the Mahur river, and in order to compensate the loss suffered in the Dhansiri valley the king of Maibong, crossing the North Cachar Hills, came down to the plain lands of Cachar. From the glimpses of history which are found in the *Rajmala* or the Chronicle of kings of Tripura it appears that the Kacharis took possession of Cachar by gradual stages by driving out the Tipras.

In the middle of the 16th century the Kachari king of Maibong was attacked and defeated by Chilarai, the brother and general of the great Koch king

king Naranarayan.²¹ It is interesting to note that in the Cachar district there is still a small group of people who are known as Dehans. They are reputed to be descendants of some Koches who accompanied Chilarai's army and continued to live in Cachar. The Dehans now call themselves "*Raj-Bangshis*." During the period of Kachari rule at Maibong, the Kachari kings held the greater part of the Nowgong district, the North Cachar Hills and the plains of Cachar. The last one as has been said above, was wrested from the hands of the Tipras. The most powerful of the Kachari kings ruling at Maibong was Yasho-Narayan. He defeated the Jayantia and Ahom kings. But the most important event of his reign was war with the Mughals. It was not possible for the Mughals to attack the Kachari capital in the hilly region but the plain portion of Cachar was very much exposed to them. So Cachar proper had to bear the burnt of the Mughal attacks.

The first invasion of Cachar by the Mughals took place in the beginning of the seventeenth century, when Islam Khan was the Governor of Bengal and Jahangir was the emperor of India.

After consolidating Mughal position of Bengal, Jahangir's army conquered and occupied Sylhet, which was a stronghold of the Afgans. From Sylhet, the Mughals under the generalship of Sheikh Kamal attacked Cachar. They first attacked the Kachari stronghold at Pratapgarh. After a month's stubborn resistance the Kacharis were compelled to give away and retreat to the fort of Asuritika which was some 20 miles North-East of Pratapgarh and which has been identified with modern Haritika.²² But here the Kacharis who were defeated, took to flight and Seikh Kamal instead of prolonging the war, offered terms of peace which were accepted by the Kachari king, but his kingdom unlike Sylhet was not annexed to the Mughal empire.²³

Emperor Jahangir did not approve the easy terms of the treaty. He ordered the Governor of Bengal to renew the attack on the Kachari kingdom. This time, the expedition was led by Mubarak Khan. On the fall of Asuritika when the Mughals threatened to proceed further the Kachari King got alarmed, tendered his submission and purchased peace by paying suitable tributes.²⁴ But the Kachari king soon shook off Mughals allegiance and this provoked the Mughals to renew attack on Cachar. But the death of the Mughal General in the midst of the war created confusion in the Mughal army as a result, the Mughal campaign ended

21. *History of Assam* by E.A. Gait, p.303.

22. J.N.Sarkar, ed. *History of Bengal*, p.280-1.

23. *Ibid*, p.282.

24. *Ibid*, p.283.

20. K.D.Menon-*Tripura District Gazetteer*, 1975, p.74.

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in failure and Yasho Narayan drove out the Mughals from Cachar. Kachari king thus regained his independence. The same king Yasho Narayan added another title *Pratap* to his name after defeating the Ahoms at Raha.

From *Jayanta Buranji* and *Kachari Buranji* edited by S.K. Bhuyan, and Gait's *History of Assam* which are all based on written Ahom chronicles it is established that Pratap Narayan was the name assumed by the Kachari king Yasho Narayan who was a contemporary of the Ahom king Pratap Singh (Burha Raja) and the Jaintia Prince Yashomanik. Some mention Indra Narayan, the great grandson of Yasho Narayan to have assumed the title of 'Pratap Narayan' and 'Satrudaman' and this is apparently a mistake of fact caused by the some traditions prevalent in East Bengal. To quote Gait, "Strudaman is the hero of a Bengali novel called *Ranachandi*, which is based on traditions current in Cachar. But the book does not appear to contain any reliable historical information. The previous ruler, his father Upendra Narayan, who was killed, it is said, in the course of an invasion of Cachar by a detachment of Mir Jumala's Assam expeditionary force and Satrudaman and his affianced wife drove them out. As a matter of fact, Satrudaman must have died about forty years before the date of Mir Jumala's invasion and the reference is probably to one or other of the invasions of Cachar."²⁵ So the above contention seems mere interpolation as to highlight the reign of Satrudaman, who had been reigning in 1610 A.D.²⁶ Mir Jumala's invasion of Assam took place in 1662 A.D. during the time of Aurangzab who captured Mughal throne after flight of prince Suja. But the first invasion of Cachar took place during the reign of Mughal Emperor Jahangir when Islam Khan was the Governor of Bengal and during that time Yasho Narayan, a contemporary of Ahom king Pratap Singh (Susengpha), was the ruling king of Cachar.

During the reign of the successors of Satrudaman intermittent wars with the Ahoms continued. The cause of these wars was the refusal of the Kachari kings to regard themselves as the protected rulers of the Ahoms. Rudra Singh, the most powerful of the Ahom kings, became very aggressive and in 1706 he sent an expedition against the Kachari king Tamradhvaj, who boldly proclaimed his independence. The Kacharis offered but little resistance to the overwhelming Ahom force consisted of 70,000 men, and their capital at Maibong was occupied

25. E.A. Gait : *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1967, p.305.

26. U. Guha : *Kachar Itihas*, 1971, pp.77 and 79.

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without much difficulty. The vanquished king Tamradhvaj fled to Khaspur (some are of opinion that it was Bikrampur) in the plains of Cachar, whence he sent an urgent appeal for help to Ram Singh, Raja of Jaintia. Rudra Singh ordered his army to advance towards the plains of Cachar, but when he heard that his army had been decimated by fever and dysentery he ordered it return back to his own country.²⁷

On hearing of this Tamradhvaj sent word to Ram Singh that his aid was no longer needed, but perceiving an opportunity for adding the Kachari country to his own dominions, Ram Singh secured Tamradhvaj's person by a stratagem and kept him prisoner in Jaintipur. Tamradhvaj managed to send a letter to Rudra Singh at Rangpur (Sibsagar) begging for forgiveness and imploring his assistance, and the latter, failing to obtain his release by peaceful means, despatched two armies to invade Jaintia country. Jaintipur was occupied and the two princes were conveyed to the Brahmaputra valley. As Tamradhvaj agreed to pay tribute, he was allowed to return to his country. Soon after reaching Khaspur he fell ill and died in 1708 and his son Suradarpa was accepted as the king of Cachar.

Little is known of the history of Cachar during the eighteenth century. But what is important for social and economic point of view is that with the transfer of capital to Khaspur, population increased rapidly in the plains of Cachar and with it more land came under cultivation. The most important cause of increase of population was the immigration of people from the neighbouring district of Sylhet. It was the lure of fertile land of Cachar which drew people from Sylhet. For different reasons people came to Cachar from Manipur. Manipur in the eighteenth century repeatedly suffered from fratricidal wars, and during these wars Manipuris poured into Cachar as refugees.

The first connection of the British with the district dates from 1763 when Mr. Verelst marched from Chittagong with five companies of foot soldiers to assist the Manipur Raja Jai Singh who had been driven from his throne by the Burmese. They reached Khaspur in April 1763 and remained there for nearly a year but was prevented by continuous rain and virulent disease, from going further.²⁸

Manipur Raja Jai Singh took shelter in the court of Kachari king at Khaspur. Between 1775 and 1782, Jai Singh was compelled to flee to Cachar on four different occasions as the result of fresh Burmese attack. As the result of this struggle, a good friendship was developed between the Kachari king and the

27. E.A. Gait, *History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1967, p.307

28. E.W. Dun : *Gazetteer of Manipur*, 1886, reprinted, 1975, p.40

Manipuri king resulting in a matrimonial tie.

The reign of Krishna Chandra who ascended the throne in 1773 A.D. is important for more than one reason. One historical event of importance was the formal conversion of Krishna Chandra to Hinduism in 1790. Most probably his upgradation to Kshatriya caste as the Dimachas were already Hindu.

During conversion ceremony Raja Krishna Chandra and his brother Govinda Chandra entered the body of a copper effigy of a cow and on emergence from it, they were proclaimed to be Hindus of the Kshatriya caste. A genealogy of hundred generation; beginning with Bhima, the hero of Mahabharata, was composed for them by the Brahmins. Needless to say many of the names are purely imaginary and in some cases kings who had reigned in fairly recent times, are not mentioned at all, and some names repeated at a considerable interval of time just to fill up the time gap in genealogy. The list is clearly a compound of oral traditions and deliberate inventions and has no historical value.²⁹ With the formal conversion of the king, all the Kacharis in Cachar followed his example and all the Kacharis in the district now describe themselves as Hindus. Incidentally it should be mentioned that the Hinduisation of the Kacharis began during the Maibong period.

Another important historical event of Krishna Chandra's reign was his war with the Ahoms. During the convulsions that shook the Ahom kingdom in the latter part of the eighteenth century, many Moamarias and other Ahom subjects took shelter in the territory of Krishna Chandra. In Kamaleswar's reign the extradition of these refugees was demanded but refused. This resulted in a war which lasted from 1803 until 1805, when a crushing defeat was inflicted on the Kacharis.³⁰

Krishna Chandra's marriage with the Manipuri princess Induprabha was an event of great political significance. Since that marriage Manipuri princes felt attracted towards the court of the Kachari king, and ultimately Cachar became a political chess-board of the Manipuri princes. King Madhu Chandra of Manipur, being driven out of his kingdom by his two brothers, Chaurjit and Marjit, applied to Krishna Chandra for aid which was afforded to him. But in course of his attempt to regain the throne Madhu Chandra was killed in 1806. Chaurjit and Marjit then fell out and Marjit was compelled to retire to Cachar, taking with him a hockey pony of quite excellence. Govinda Chandra, the brother of the king, took possession of the animal by force, in defiance of the wishes of the

29. Gait : *A History of Assam*, 1967, p. 307.

30. Detailed account can be found in the *Thungkhungla Buranji*, English edition, Chapter X.

owner. Marjit left Cachar in anger and applied to Burma for assistance, and with the aid of the Burmese, drove his two brothers, Chaurjit and Gambhir Singh from Manipur in 1812. The former took shelter in Jaintipur and the latter in Cachar. When in 1813 Cachar was thus getting involved in complications with Manipuri princes, Krishna Chandra died and his younger brother Govinda ascended the throne.

On becoming king, Govinda Chandra married Indu Probha the widow of his elder brother and thereby courted the displeasure of his subjects. Moreover, misfortune dogged him from the beginning of his reign. On his accession he was involved in trouble in the north. Kahi Dan who had been a table servant of the Late Raja, was appointed by Govinda Chandra to an office in northern hilly tract, where he rebelled and endeavoured to form an independent kingdom. But he was foolish enough to put himself in the power of the Raja's agent at Dharampur by whom he was put to death. Kahi Dan's son Tularam, who was then acting as a servant of the Raja, fled to the hills and successfully resisted all attempts to reduce him.

Loss of the North-Cachar Hills was the first blow on Govinda Chandra, but worse was still to follow. In 1818 Marjit Singh of Manipur invaded the plains portion of Cachar.³¹ Govinda Chandra then called to his assistance Chaurjit Singh, the exiled Manipuri Raja, to help him to repel the invasion, but having done so Chaurjit Singh proceeded to establish himself in Cachar. In the following year Marjit, being driven from Manipur by the Burmese, found his way to Cachar. The three Manipuri princes then parcelled out Cachar among themselves forcing the lawful Raja Govinda Chandra to flee to Sylhet. From 1818 to 1823 Cachar was under occupation of the Manipuri princes. The three brothers constantly contended for supremacy and the inevitable result of their dispute proved to be most injurious to the Country.

There was cessation of agricultural pursuits and a considerable portion of Cachar people fled to the adjacent territories of Sylhet, Jayantia and Tripura.

In the beginning of 1824, the Burmese, who were then in possession of the Brahmaputra Valley, began to advance from Manipur. The British did not like the idea of Cachar going under the Burmese, as thereby the territories of a powerful nation would extend right up to the frontier of Sylhet. They opened negotiation with Gambhir Singh, the most powerful of the Manipuri princes, thinking that he would be able to protect Cachar from invasion without the assistance of the British. But Gambhir Singh at this refused to entangle himself

31. E.A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1967, (reprint) p.309

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Gambhir Singh at this stage refused to entangle himself in any alliance with the British.

The British then turned to Govinda Chandra and started negotiation with him for a treaty. But during the period of negotiation the Britishers practically entered Cachar with their army and cleared it from the Burmese by the end of February 1824. This compelled Govinda Chandra to enter into a treaty on 6th March 1824 with the British to regain his kingdom. According to the treaty the kingdom of Cachar was to be restored to Raja Govinda Chandra as a protected kingdom, and in return Govinda Chandra was to pay an annual tribute of Rs. 10,000 to the British Government.

At the termination of the Burmese war in 1826, Govinda Chandra returned to Cachar and took up his abode at Haritkar. Govinda Chandra was restored to the throne, but the protecting power doubted whether he would be able to pay the annual tribute regularly and instructed the Commissioner of Sylhet to ascertain whether the Raja was still willing to cede the Cachar Raj to the Company.³²

Govinda Chandra soon found himself involved in a sea of difficulties. In spite of his every effort he failed to expel Tularam who remained in possession of the northern Hills. David Scott, the Agent to the Governor-General of the North-East Frontier, noticing that Tularam's territory was becoming a hot-bed of politics, induced Govinda Chandra in 1829 to recognise Tularam as the ruler of the territory under his control.

Revenue yield of Cachar which was one lakh during Krishna Chandra fell horribly as the result of repeated troubles caused by Tularam and the Manipuri princes. So Govinda Chandra had to apply for remission of tribute for 1825-27 and it was granted by the British paramount power. But again 'the Supreme Government' called upon the Commissioner of Sylhet to ascertain from the Raja if he was willing to hand over his kingdom to the East India Company as he was advanced in years, bodily infirm, and had no heir to succeed him—though according to Mr. Tucker, the Commissioner of Sylhet, he was not old in years, and expected still to live a long life. Govinda Chandra tried to bring back stability to his country by cowing down Tularam with the help of Govinda Ram and Durgacharan, and also by developing friendship with the Manipuri king as an ally against the Burmese. He also tried to improve his financial position by levying higher royalty on timber exported out of Cachar by British merchants and by prohibiting exportation of rice in order to obtain State-monopoly on paddy for benefit of the royal treasury. But it appears that the British was bent

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upon their final hold over fertile plains of Cachar and they tried to bring about different charge against Govinda Chandra to make raising of revenue impossible for him. The Political Agent Mr. Scott coaxed Govinda Chandra into parting with the hilly tracts and Chandrapur area in favour of Tularam and Gambhir Singh—Raja of Manipur, respectively much against his own will and interest. Such disturbing series of circumstances were created around Govinda Chandra that he had no area to breathe. Thus under a constant strain both politically and economically, Govinda Chandra tragically breathed his last in 1830.³³ He was assassinated.

There is also another aspect to the story. Cachar was populated with a numerically strong immigrants from Sylhet, who bore little respect for the *Kachari-Raj* like the Bengali settlers in Brahmaputra valley who looked down on Assam's administrative structure as not good enough in comparison to Bengal.³⁴ These settlers accepted only political security under the Kachari king and enjoyed the fruit of the rich soil under a nominal lease-rent paid through the *Khel*-leader of their own selection. Property rights and judicial laws even were of their own. So circumstances offered a good chance to the British Commissioner at Sylhet to bring the charge of tyranny and cruelty to the cultivators of Cachar (majority of whom were immigrants from Sylhet) against Govinda Chandra.

In 1830, Govinda Chandra died at the hands of a Manipuri assassin. In the absence of a natural heir his kingdom was annexed to the British dominion by a proclamation dated the 14th August, 1832.

Thus ended the rule of the Kacharis in Cachar. Cachar is a more modern name. During the Kachari rule it was known as *Hirimba* or *Heramba* and the Kachari kings were referred to as Lord of *Hirimba* or *Heramba*. The name continued to be used for some years under the British rule.

At the time of annexation, condition of Cachar was extremely deplorable. It suffered from want of population and its vast areas of plain fertile lands, once densely populated, were covered with dense jungles. On the north of the Barak this unhappy state was mainly due to the depredations committed by the Burmese. In the south it was open to constant Kuki raids which followed the death of Raja Krishna Chandra. During this troublesome period, people in large number left Cachar and took shelter in Sylhet. With the return of Govinda Chandra in 1826 situation did not improve, rather it worsened. His financial

³³ *Ibid*, pp. 124-137

³⁴ A.C. Bhuyan, *Political History of Assam*, Vol. II, ed. 1978. p.283

32. R.M.Lahiri: *The Annexation of Assam*, 1975, p. 123

difficulty forced him to resort to ruthless extortion of money from his subjects thereby compelling many to leave Cachar. He almost killed the trade with Manipur and Sylhet by imposing the heaviest transit dues on all articles of merchandise.³⁵

A reference may be made to Tularam Senapati, who was a lifelong enemy of Govinda Chandra who, however, assigned to the former a tract in the North Cachar Hills in 1829 at the inducement of David Scott. On the death of Govinda he had laid claim to the vacant Raj but his claim proved to be groundless and was summarily rejected. He was however, confirmed in the possession of the greater part of the tract assigned to him by Govinda Chandra, which was bounded on the south by the Mahur river and the Naga Hills, on the west by the Doyang, on the east by the Dhansiri and on the north by the Jamuna and the Doyang. He agreed to pay a yearly tribute of Rs. 490/-. On the other hand, he was granted for life a pension of fifty rupees a month. He was not given the title of Raja, and was permitted to try only small offences while serious ones were tried by the officers in charge of Nowgong district. The number of subjects under Tularam was about 5200, and the revenue paid by them did not exceed Rs. 1000/-. Captain Butler who visited Tularam in 1845 found him in extremely miserable condition. His dwelling was a wretched grass hut and everything around him looked poverty stricken and sickly. Tularam died in 1851, and as his two sons, Nakul Ram Barman and Brajanath Barman, proved incapable of administering the country, it was resumed in 1854.

Before we enter into the history of Cachar under the British rule, something may be said about the Kachari system of administration and for this the following account is reproduced from the *Statistical Account of Cachar* by Sri W.W. Hunter.

"From their arrival at Khaspur the district history of Cachar commences. Numerous colonies of Bengalis, who came up the Barak valley from Sylhet, had meanwhile planted their first settlements on the northern side of the river, shortly after passing the Sylhet frontier. It is supposed that *Musalman* Bengalis also migrated into Cachar about the same time. At first the new-comers seem to have simply cleared land as stray settlers, paying rent to the *Cachari Raja*. By degrees, as they became stronger, they obtained from the princes a sort of constitution, which protected them from interference on the part of *Cachari* tax gatherers and court officials. Thus, when the British took possession of the

35. E.A. Gait : *A History of Assam*, 1967, p. 356.

distric in 1830, they found two distinct systems of administration in existence. One of these, dealing with the *Cachari* subjects, consisted of a long gradation of officials, who held appointment which would have involved a minute control over the subjects but for the circumstances that there were hardly any subjects to control. The only people subject to their immediate authority were the.... hill tribes of Parbattias, Cacharis, Kukis, Nagas etc. Among these officers were a *Bara Bhandari* (chief lawman), with a large establishment of subordinate lawmen ; a *Senapati* or General, with a number of superior officers, not quite so titular as the law-men; also a religious establishment of *Cachari* Burman, to perform sacrifices for the health of the king and the safety of the people. These sacrifices were handed down from primitive times and could only be performed by the descendants of the native *Cachari* priests. Among them was a human sacrifice for the Raja celebrated on certain great occasions.

Hindu Agricultural Communities: The Bengalis, on the other hand, were almost independent of these officers. Their great aim here, as elsewhere, was to keep themselves a peculiar people. They sought only for as much influence at court as would secure them from interference. They had a constitution of their own, based on a revenue system now peculiar to Cachar.The fundamental principle of this system was the holding of land by a number of persons connected by voluntary association. The unit of the system was the *Khel*. Just as in Hindu communities, the village forms the basis of the agricultural common wealth, which is bound together theoretically or practically, by ties of kindred and caste, so the *Khel* formed the unit of the agricultural community of Cachar; but its members were not connected by any ties of kindred, caste, nationality or creed. From the first, Musalmans and Hindus are found side by side in the same *khel*; and now that this principle of voluntary association has extended to other enterprises, no bar of race or creed is opposed to the admission of any part of the population. Thus there are instances of associations for leasing fisheries or catching elephants, which include not only Bengalis of every caste and creed, but Kukis, Nagas, and even Europeans. When the Manipuries began to settle in Cachar, they were at first inclined to be exclusive, and to associate in taking land only with their own race. But since our accession they have fallen into the general scheme, and now a Manipuri often takes lease along with a *Musalman* or a Hindu, to the exclusion of a man of his own race who may be objectionable on account of his temper or character. The principle of association is, therefore, purely commercial. It is a voluntary co-partnership of a number of persons for the purpose of carrying on a specified undertaking acknowledging no other nexus except community of interest. This nexus does not even

extended to community of capital or of profit, for as soon as the common lease is obtained, the land is divided by the partners amongst themselves, and each sets up for himself on his own allotment..... But although the nexus was weak as between the individual sharers, it was absolutely inseparable as regards their obligations to the ruling power. These obligations consisted in, firstly, the payment of the revenue, and secondly, the discharge of certain customary services. The latter included the supply of labour for the Raja's works and of necessities to him on his progresses..... The first common obligation, that of paying the rent, still remains. This was originally done by means of an agent (*Mukhtar*) appointed by the sharers and confirmed by the sovereign. He was generally the leading man and principal sharer in the corporation, and seems to have been primarily responsible to the Raja for the rent. That is to say, if he came up to court with a deficient payment and a lame excuse, he was the man on whom the royal wrath fell, and was squeezed in the first instance, before steps were taken against the corporation.

In course of time, as the number of *khels* increased, groups of adjacent *khels* were joined together into larger unions, marking the second stage in the development of the principle of voluntary association in the Cachar revenue system. The larger union was called a *raj*; and as each *khel* had been represented at court by its principal sharer as agent, so each *raj* elected the principal man in it, or the head man of the chief *khel*, as its own representative. In both cases the Raja's approval was required and a title seems usually to have been conferred on the officer who represented the *raj*. These titles were of Bengali origin. The representative of the larger union was entitled either *Chaudhari*, *Mazumdar*, *Lashkar*, *Bar-Bhuiya* or *Chhotabhuiya*, according to his social status, and the comparative importance of the union he represented. Of these titles, the only one requiring notice is *Lashkar*, which extends far up into the Garo Hills, where the head men of agricultural villages are called by the same name. These titles originally clung to the land and its representatives, but before we obtained possession of the country, they had become transferable at a fixed scale of prices. The title of *Chaudhari* fetched £ 10; that of *Mazumdar* £ 8, that of *Lashkar* £ 6, *Bara-Bhuiya* £ 5, and *Chhotabhuiya* probably £ 4. The titles were hereditary, and descended to all the sons and their descendants. By degrees the unions began to separate into classes. Those that paid their whole rent to the Raja were called *Khelma*, and their representative *Khelma Laskar* or *Khelma Choudhury*. The general process was that the sharers in each

it to the *Raja* at the royal residence. The office of the *mukhtar* or agent was theoretically elective, and at first no doubt the holders of it were actually elected. By degrees, however, the office became hereditary; either the eldest son or next male relative succeeding with more or less show of election.

By the development of this system, the Bengalis practically obtained a constitution which in quiet times was sufficient to preserve them from all interference on the part of the royal officers. In the first place, it secured them from the visits of the revenue officials. Once the lease was given and the *khel* or agricultural guild was established, the sharers had an elective organisation of their own for collecting the rent and for depositing in the royal treasury. As their representatives were primarily responsible in their persons for the rent, and no doubt were often imprisoned, or otherwise made to appease the royal indignation, in case of default, they probably assumed petty powers, judicial and fiscal, with a view to providing against the contingency of default, and of forcing the individual guildsmen to pay up their shares. At all events, the fact remains that they did acquire such powers, and at the date of the British occupation they appear in the light of an unpaid magistracy, with fiscal and communal powers. All were alike subject to the sovereign and each derived his title from him. But the fiscal gradation of guild representation was carried into the unpaid magisterial service, the guild representative being inferior in his criminal functions to the union representative, if indeed he had any acknowledged and properly conferred powers at all. At the head of all was the League Representative of Bikrampur, the first Hindu subject of the *Cachari Raja*. As the insignia of his office, a whip was bestowed on him by his sovereign, and he exercised an indistinct sort of primacy among the other union representatives. The king retained his judicial prerogative in all heinous offences, such as murder; and there seems to be some probability that the *Bara Bhandari* (*Cachari* chief law man), the *Raj Pandit* (Hindu spiritual guide to the king), and *Bara Mazumdar* (principal union representative) set as a sort of judicial committee to advise the Raja in capital cases where a Bengali was concerned. The fact that the Hindu Civil Code depended upon *Sastras*, and the Musalman Code on the *Koran*, both of which the *Cachari Raja* was equally ignorant; forced the immigrants to depend on some voluntary organization for settling their internal disputes, and their head-men were thus entrusted with certain fiscal and criminal powers. These criminal powers depended upon the representative status of the league heads, and not upon the title conferred by the *Raja*. Thus, the chief criminal power was vested in not in a *Chaudhari* but in the *Mazumdar* of Bikrampur, who

became *Bara Mazumdar*, and as such above all the *Chaudharis* in the state. While the fiscal and criminal administration was thus provided for with minimum of royal interference, civil disputes were settled without any interference whatever. In case of a difference between the sharers of a *khel*, the matter was referred to the *khel- mukhtar* who probably took the advice of the elders on the subject; if he could not settle the dispute, the question was referred to the *Rajmukhtar* or union representative. In disputes between *khels*, the court of the first instance was the *League Head* who, with the assistance of a council selected from the different *khels* within his *raj*, heard and decided the case. It is not clear whether any legal organisation existed for enforcing such decrees; but the fiscal and criminal powers of the *Rajmukhtar* gave him a large and loose authority, and as a matter of fact, his decree was enforced by the imprisonment of any person who delayed to obey. In difficult or keenly contested cases, an appeal or reference could be made to the *Raja*. In such cases the sovereign consulted the *Raj Pandit*; if the parties were Hindu and that officer repeated the *Sastras* and laid down the law. In Musalman cases the *Raja* consulted with whoever was the chief acknowledged exponent, for the time being, of the *Kuran*. Stories are still current how, when a Hindu case came up, the *Raja* asked his *pandit* what the sacred texts said. The *pandit* declared them. The *Raja* answered, 'It is just', made due obeisance to the *pandit*, gave him a present and decided the case.³⁶

British Administration: On the annexation of Cachar its southern region was formed into a district with headquarters at Silchar and was placed in charge of a Superintendent who was subordinate to the Agent to the Governor General. In 1836 it was transferred to the Dacca Division. The first Superintendent of Cachar was Captain Fisher, who was described by Pemberton as an officer of proved ability and great local experience. After about one year of the annexation, Cachar's eastern boundary with Manipur was demarcated by a treaty with Gambhir Singh, who on the termination of the war with Burma, went back to Manipur as king. By the treaty the British Government agreed to give to the *Raja* of Manipur the line of the Jiri River and the western bank of the Barak as the boundary. As a result of the demarcation of the new boundary Cachar lost a tract of territory of considerable size.³⁷ Cachar bounded, as it is by hills on all sides except towards Sylhet, proved to be a problem ridden district to the British. Their one tough task was to protect Cachar from the raids of the tribal people. At the initial stage the Kukis, emerging

from the Lushai hills, now called Mizoram, created havoc in regions south of the Barak. Villages which were growing up in the area were plundered and the plains people fled away to the northern bank of the Barak in consequence of which the region again turned into dense forests. As a solution of this problem, Captain Fisher settled Manipuris³⁸ on the southern border of Cachar with the hope that the Manipuris being vigorous and courageous would be able to resist the Kuki raids. Intermittent Kuki raids continued till the forties, when the Kuki themselves being driven out of the Lushai hills by the Lushais got scattered on the hills in the east and the north. The Kukis gradually were chastened and some became loyal so much so that a proposal was mooted to raise a Kuki Levy.

With disappearance of the Kuki menace, peace was not established in the region to the south of the Barak. The place of the Kukis was taken by the Lushais, now called the Mizos, who made their first appearance on this frontier about the year 1840. The Lushais committed their first raid in 1849, and the punitive expedition which followed was so successful that they gave no further trouble until 1868.³⁹

In 1868-69 a series of outrages were made when the garden of Loharbong was burnt and an attack was made on Moniarkhal. An expedition was despatched into the hills but it proved abortive. In December 1869, Mr. Edger, the Deputy Commissioner, made a tour into the Lushai Hills but it did not improve the relations with the hillmen.

In the beginning of 1871, the Lushais raided Ainarkhal, Alexandrapur, Katlicherra, Moniarkhal, Darmikhal and Nagdigram. The last raid was made on Jhalnachara garden. During these raids they indulged in large-scale destruction and killing.

Mr. Winchester, a planter of a neighbouring garden, was murdered during the raid on Alexandrapur and his daughter Merry had been kidnapped.⁴⁰ Local authorities adopted certain measures to repulse the raiders and then sent two expeditions, one from Chittagong and the other from Cachar to beat the Lushais effectively in their own territory. The expeditions were completely successful in procuring the submission of the Lushai Chiefs and satisfaction for outrageous committed by them. The Lushai released the captives including the daughter of Winchester. A line of strong outposts was established along the whole southern frontier of Cachar. Since 1871, Cachar's relation with the Lushais gradually began to improve.

In 1832, the British annexed the Plain portion of Cachar comprising of modern Silchar and Hailakandi Sub-Division. In 1867 a big portion

36. *Statistical Account of Assam*,

Vol. II, pp. 394-399

37. *History of Manipur*

by J Roy, p. 76

38. *History of Assam* by Gait p. 357.

39. *Ibid*, p.370

40. Dr. B. B. Hazarika: *Political Life in Assam During the Nineteenth Century*, 1987, p 316

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of the North cachar Hills was transferred to Cachar, and since then North Cachar Hills had continued as a part of Cachar, and it was only in 1952 this Sub-division was separated from Cachar.

Freedom Movement: Though Cachar people did not take any part in the mutiny of 1857-58 Cachar did not remain wholly untouched by it. At the end of 1857, three companies of sepoy, who had mutinized at Chittagong, passing through Tipperah, advanced as far as Latu in the district of Sylhet. There they were met by a detachment of the Sylhet Light Infantry under Major Byng, and in the several engagements that took place there the mutineers, being worsted, took to flight with a loss of 26 killed. Major Byng himself was also killed in the skirmish. The mutineers passing through jungles crossed the hills and entered into the Hailakandi Valley. Their object was to go to Manipur. But being pursued by the British army, they were worsted in skirmishes that took place at Mohanpur, Jatinga and Banraj and then Bhooban hills. Finding their position desperate the sepoy gave a last fight on 12th January, 1858 but being defeated they got dispersed into the jungle where they were hunted down by the Kukis or died of starvation. It is believed that out of about 200 mutineers that left Chittagong, not more than three or four individuals escaped death or capture.

In 1882 a curious outbreak occurred which resulted in the death of the district officer. A Dimacha, named Sambhudan, who had set himself up as a performer of miraculous cures, claiming divine inspiration, took the title of Deo and attracted quite a large number of followers from the hillmen. He pitched an *ashram* at Maibong and lived on the contributions of the neighbours. Allegations were made of to the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar that Sambhudan was extorting money from his neighbours. Major Boyd, Deputy Commissioner proceeded to Maibong with a party of armed policemen. In the skirmish that followed eight or nine Cacharies were killed. Major Boyd, himself also received a mortal wound to which he succumbed. Sambhudan evaded capture for some time, but his hiding place was afterwards discovered. In attempting to escape from the cordon of the police which surrounded him, he received a wound in the leg, from the effects of which he bled to death. A man named Man Singh, who acted as a sort of high priest of Sambhudan, was sentenced to transportation for life.

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Immigration of Manipuris in Cachar began in the 18th century and that was mainly due to political disturbances in Manipur. Death of every king in Manipur was followed by fratricidal war and the vanquished princes had no alternative but to take shelter in Cachar. The same process continued even after the annexation of Cachar to British dominion. In the Manipuris the British Government found the right type of people who could resist the raids of tribal people and so the Manipuris were settled in the Cachar-Lushai borders. As per the earliest census that took place in Cachar in 1851, the number of Manipuris was recorded as seven thousand. Some of the disgruntled Manipuri princes living in Cachar tried to help the mutineers in 1857. During the Manipur war in 1890 there was great commotion among the Manipuris who numbered about 25,000 in Cachar, and the Government had to take precautionary measures to keep them under control.

After the expedition of 1871 as has been stated above, the Lushais remained peaceful for twenty years, and during this period all their problems were solved by friendly negotiations. But gradual tightening of control on Lushai hills was not viewed with pleasure by the Lushais, and a time came when they began to see the affairs with discontent. The discontent was manifest when in 1892 a party of Lushais raided the garden of Barunchara. They burnt five houses, killed 42 labourers, and mutilated many. This raid was repulsed and the insurrection was quelled without trouble.

In 1893, a tragic incident took place in the Baladhan tea estate. One midnight, some people entered into the bungalow, murdered the European Manager and the Chawkidar, and a woman who lived in the bungalow was mortally wounded. Six Manipuris and one Gurkha were finally sent up for trial before the Session Judge. The newspapers controlled by the Britons raised such a hue and cry on this incident and cried for blood in such an indecent way that it embittered the feelings of the Indians and the whole issue took a racial colour. The Session Judge convicted all the prisoners and sentenced four to death and three to transportation for life.

On appeal they were acquitted by the Calcutta High Court. The cases created a stir all over Bengal. Many nationalist leaders extended financial assistance for conducting this case. The case was watched with interest even in England and a question was asked in Parliament with regard to certain irregularities which were said to have taken place in the course of police investigation, the Magisterial enquiry, and the trial in the Sessions Court. The credit for the acquittal of the accused to large extent goes to Kamini Kumar Chanda.

With the advent of the 20th century, Freedom Movement was getting more and more aggressive in character. Though, Cachar was situated far away from the main centres of the freedom movement, yet the impacts of the movement was felt in this district. When, following the partition of Bengal, there began Swadesi movement in Bengal, Cachar did not lag behind. In 1905 the Cachar Swadesi Sabha was established and this Sabha spearheaded the Swadesi movement in Cachar. In 1920, Sylhet-Bengal Re-union League was organised in Sylhet demanding separation of Sylhet from Assam on the ground that they have their socio-economic base in Bengal. In July 1924, the issue came up before the Second Reformed Council where the Cachar members joined voice with Sylhet Swarajists, i.e., B. N. Choudhury and others, and demanded separation of Cachar from Assam on the ground that if Sylhet goes, the Bengalis of Cachar will not be able to live alone.⁴¹ The first Surma Valley Political Conference was held on 11-12 August 1906 at Sylhet under the Presidenship of K.K. Chanda and addressed by Bipin Chandra Pal, the devout Hindu Bengali leader of Surma Valley. The third meeting addressed by Bipin Chandra Pal was at Silchar on 21st August 1906 and rapid insurge of boycott movement swept Silchar. Wholesale traders who happened to be Hindus warned their retailers against sale of foreign salt, while the merchants who stocked Liverpool salt were all Muslims. The Second Surma Valley Political Conference was held in Karimganj in April 1908. Swami Dayananda alias Gurudas Choudhury, an ex-government servant founded Arunachal Ashram in 1908 at Silchar and started stern religious activities based on Hinduism. This made him a political suspect of British who were all Christians, and the British Government seized his book during the search of the Ashram. As Swami Dayananda issued a bold statement challenging the authority of the British in the matter, he was apprehended and jailed.⁴² Almost everyday protest meetings were held and bonfire was made for British goods.

The Non-Co-operation and the Khilafat movements created a great stir in Cachar. In August 1921, Mahatma Gandhi and Muhammad Ali visited Silchar and their visit intensified the movements. Volunteers picketed the liquor and foreign cloth shops. Many students left the Government High School, and a National School was started for the education of such students. A girls school popularly known as the Swadeshi School was also started at this time. The National School for the boys did not last long, but the Swadeshi School for girls.

40. A. Guha : *Planters Raj to Swaraj*, p. 166; *Political History of Assam*, Vol. II ed- A.C. Bhurayan, pp-284

41. A. Guha : *Planter's Raj to Swaraj*, pp-71-72, 80-81

has continued to stay. During the Non-co-operation and the *Khilafat* movements many were sent to prison. Women for the first time came out from behind the *purdah* and went round the town singing national songs. Since the beginning of the *Khilafat* movement, Non-co-operation movement in Surma Valley including Cachar was not visibly prominent, though in a pledge to offer service to *Khilafat*, the Muslim Tailors of Cachar also held meetings in their mosques and decided not to sew foreign clothes to their customers. In 1922, Cachar was brought under the operation of the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act (1911) and sentenced Tabarak Ali and Syamacharan Dev to rigorous imprisonment for violation of the Act in March 1922.⁴²

During the Non-co-operation movement there was labour strike in the tea-gardens of Cachar and Sylhet when thousands of labourers of these two districts threatened to leave the gardens and go back to their original homes. But Government and tea garden authorities forced and persuaded the labourers to return to the gardens from Chandpur. Repression on the striking labourers created great commotion in the district and volunteer force was raised who gave relief to the labourers who were in extreme distress. This tea garden labour strike had its repercussions even in Calcutta. As in Darrang and Sibsagar, in Cachar too, one of the aims of the Non-co-operationsists was to boycott market places, European Tea gardens and establish rival *hats* and *bazars*. 'In January 1922 there was even a short lived movement in Cachar to enlist tea-garden coolies as Congress Volunteers.'⁴³

Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-33 : Its repercussion in Cachar: During this movement, *Satyagrahis* picketed the liquor and foreign cloth shops for which many of them were sent behind prison bars.

With the entry of Japan in the Second World War and her rapid success in south-east Asia, Cachar became an important war base, and because of intensive military operations, August movement had no repercussion in Cachar. On 17th April 1942 Japan bombed the Derby tea estates which is about 16 k.m. away from Silchar. It created such a panic that within two or three days Silchar became a deserted town. With the advance of the Japanese towards India, importance of Cachar, specially of Silchar as a War-base, increased. All operations were conducted into Burma from Kumbhirgram and Lalaghat airstrips. Kumbhirgram in Silchar has gradually developed into an important aerodrome in eastern India but there is now no trace of the Lalaghat airstrip. Lalaghat is about 19 km. to the South of Hailakandi.

42. A. Guha: *Planter's Raj to Swaraj*, p.142

43. Ibid, pp. 129-37

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At the end of the war, as the prospect of independence was looming large, the advocates of the Pakistan in Cachar, as in the rest of India, launched movements and agitations as a result of which feelings ran very high here. In the midst of country-wide tense atmosphere, Mountbatten on 3rd June, 1947, announced the British Government's acceptance of the principles of partition. Before the actual partition, by a referendum it was decided that the district of Sylhet would go to Pakistan. But after partition by the Redcliff Award, Cachar got the four thanas of Sylhet, and these were Karimganj, Badarpur, Patharkandi and Ratabari. These four thanas now form the Karimganj sub-Division of Cachar.

Since partition, there began heavy influx of refugees from the then East Pakistan particularly from the District of Sylhet, to Cachar. The result was that the population of Cachar rose from 8,94,000 in 1941 to 11,16,000 in 1951. In the previous three decades average increase of population was 50,000. The rate of increase had remained unabated throughout the fifties and sixties. The influx of refugees has vastly altered the socio-economic life of Cachar.

Archaeological remains: Present Cachar contains a few archaeological remains of interest. At Khaspur there are a few small temples and masonry buildings. All these belong to the last stage of Kachari rule. All the existing structures are small in size, there is only one two-storied building known as Baraduari in Khaspur. The Kacharis had their own method of making the buildings leak-proof. On the walls of the buildings creepers, lotuses and foot-prints were sculptured. Ruins of Devi temple (Kachaikhanti) and a Siva temple are still there in Khaspur. The inscription on a stone plate says that this temple was constructed by Queen-mother Lakshmi Devi in 1798.

There is a Siva Temple on a hillock near Sonaimukh. The eastern and southern walls bear inscriptions in Assamese scripts referring to the construction of the temple by a Minister of king Krishna Chandra.

The Bhuban hills to the south-east of Cachar contains a few relics such as images and caves of historical importance. On the peak of 915 mt. above sea-level of the hill range that separated the plains of Cachar from the hilly tract of Manipur stands the ancient shrine which has been described as Bhubaneswar in the stone inscription of the Siva-tillah at Sonai. The image of Bhubaneswar and his consort Bhubaneswari lie below a high rock-projection forming a roof near Makum Tillah in Bhuban Pahar. The image of Bhubaneswar is about .98 mt. high, a slim figure wearing torn cloth, standing up with the left hand extending up to the left knee joint and the right palm resting on the chest. He has a necklace of beads round his neck. About 3.04 mt. north-east from it lies the

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image of Bhubaneswari, facing southwards, a massive figure buried underground upto the waist with two hands with earlobes pierced and extended up to the shoulder. The right hand of this image which very clearly resembles a Kuki woman, is broken. Near the Makum Tillah, there is a stone image of Vishnu. Excavation in the Bhuban Hill are likely to unearth valuable materials for history. Bhuban Hills sculpture stylistically dated in 7th century A.D.

In south Cachar, at Rajghat on the bank of the river Rukni traces of old roads, a big tank with brickbuilt steps, and such other ruins are seen. According to tradition Rajghat at one time was the capital of the Tipras.

In a small hillock situating at about 14.48 k.m. south-west of the Silchar town, there are ruins of a stone built temple with carved stones and broken images. The hillock is locally known as *Laklaki Tillah* and the Temple was supposed to have been constructed by the Kachari king Lakshmi Chandra in 1772-1780 A.D.

At Dudpatli on the north bank of the river Barak there is a mound known as Rajar Tila and it is said the last Kachari Raja Govinda Chandra had a small palace there. Traces of bricks are even now seen on this mound. A few years after the annexation of Cachar, a Superintendent proposed to bring bricks from this mound for construction of Government buildings at Silchar.

At Badarpur there are the remains of an old fort on a rock overhanging the Barak.

Of the Kachari Kings who had ruled Cachar, two gold coins of identical type⁴⁴ of Harish Chandra and a small silver coin of the last king Govinda Chandra have been found and they are now in possession of a Kachari gentleman of Barkhala. A few arms and weapons used by the Kacharis are also in his possession.

44. *Monthly Bulletin of the Asiatic Society*, Vol.V, No.9, September, 1970.

CHAPTER-III PEOPLE

(a) Population:

(i) Total population (male and female), Thana-wise: The District of Cachar, as is at present, was reconstituted with the Karimganj sub-division of Sylhet district as transferred and added to it after partition of India and by transfer of North Cachar Hills Sub-division of it to the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district in 1951. According to the 1971 Census, Cachar district accounted for about 11.72 percent of the total population of Assam. The district had a total population of 17,13,318 persons (8,91,126 males and 8,22,192 females) in 1971 as against 13,78,476 persons (7,22,487 males and 6,55,989 females) in 1961. Among the districts of Assam, Cachar occupied the 5th place in respect of total population and third place in respect of density in the 1971 Census.

The following table shows the population of the sub-divisions and thanas of the district according to the 1971 Census.

Sl. Subdivision/Thana No.	Area in sq.kms.	Male	Female	Total
A. Silchar Subdivision	3,776.1	4,29,434	3,94,081	8,23,515
1. Katigora P.S.	647.5	60,479	55,236	1,15,715
2. Borkhola P.S.	362.6	31,184	29,107	60,291
3. Udarband P.S.	432.5	32,982	30,127	63,109
4. Lakhipur P.S.	712.2	74,661	70,133	1,44,794
5. Silchar P.S.	678.5	1,53,075	1,36,631	2,89,706
6. Sonai P.S.	942.8	77,053	72,847	1,49,900
B. Karimganj Sub-division	1,839.0	3,01,654	2,80,454	5,82,108
7. Karimganj P.S.	375.6	1,08,129	99,824	2,07,953
8. Badarpur P.S.	142.5	41,930	38,889	80,819
9. Patharkandi P.S.	678.6	74,723	69,226	1,43,949
10. Ratabari P.S.	642.3	76,872	72,515	1,49,387
C. Hailakandi Sub-division	1,326.1	1,60,038	1,47,657	3,07,695
11. Hailakandi P.S.	474.0	1,09,995	1,01,386	2,11,381
12. Katlichera P.S.	852.1	50,043	46,271	96,314
Total of Cachar district	6,962.0	8,91,126	8,22,192	17,13,318

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Among Police Stations, Silchar (sadar) thana had the highest population of 2,89,706 persons in the district in 1971 though it occupied fifth position in respect of area. Silchar was followed in the descending order of population by Hailakandi, Karimganj, Sonai, Ratabari, Lakhipur, Patharkandi and Katigora Thanas. Borkhola thana occupied the lowest position in population.

Growth of population: As the district of Cachar underwent various changes since its formation till 1951, it is difficult to give a correct comparative estimate of the growth of population in the district. "In 1855, a rough Census was taken which gave a total of 85,000 inhabitants. (Dacca Blue Book, page 328). This estimate was apparently too low and ten years later Mr. Edger calculated that, including the coolies who had been imported in considerable numbers since that date, the total population was about 1,52,000 souls".¹ The first regular Census was taken in 1872 in which Cachar district accounted for 2,05,027 persons in the plains and 30,000 persons in the hills. The population in the plains increased to 2,93,738 in 1881 showing an increase of 43.3 per cent while in the hills it showed a decrease. The accuracy of the 1872 Census has, however, been doubted and the excessive increase that occurred in the plains during the next nine years affords good ground for supposing that it was incomplete. The population in the plains of the district increased by 73,804 during 1881-91 and by 47,239 during 1891-1901 showing the percentage growth of 25.1 per cent and 12.8 percent respectively. On the other hand, the hills showed 5 percent decrease in the former decade and 8 percent increase (excluding temporary workers on the railways in the latter decade) in the following decade. The higher increase in the plains during 1872-81 was due mainly to vigorous immigration, the natural growth rate being only 13.6 percent.² Thus unrestricted immigration from the neighbouring district of Sylhet and other provinces due to opening of the railways and tea gardens has played the most predominant role on the growth of population in Cachar in the past as well as in the current century.

The following table shows the growth of population during the period ranging from 1901 to 1971.

Years	Persons	Variation	Male	Variation	Female	Variation	P.C. decade variation
1901	6,30,302	—	3,26,477	—	3,03,825	—	—
1911	7,13,566+	83,264	371,478+	4,5001	3,42,088+	38,263+	13.21
1921	7,51,560+	37,994	3,91,666+	20,188	3,59,894+	17,806+	5.32
1931	8,03,694+	52,134	4,22,362+	30,6967	3,81,332+	21,433+	6.94
1941	8,95,140+	91,446	4,71,769+	49,407	4,23,371+	42,039+	11.38
1951	11,15,865+	2,20725	5,88,306+	1,16,537	5,27,559+	1,04,188+	24.66
1961	13,78,476+	72,62,611	7,22,487+	1,34,181	6,55,989+	1,28,430+	23.53
1971	17,13,318+	73,34,842	8,91,126+	1,68,639	8,22,192+	1,66,203+	24.29

1. B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol. I, Cachar, Calcutta, 1905, p.43

2. Ibid, p.44.

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A glance over the above table will reveal that during the period ranging from 1901 to 1971 there took place a tremendous growth of population in Cachar. But before arriving at any conclusion, certain things are to be borne in mind. First, Cachar of 1951 was not the same as the Cachar of the 1901-41 period. The former Cachar includes North Cachar Hills Sub-division but excludes Karimganj Sub-Division while in the latter it excludes North Cachar hills Sub-division but Karimganj Sub division. Thirdly, the total number of refugees that settled in Karimganj Sub-division following partition of 1947 is by far larger than the total number of refugees that settled in North Cachar Hills Sub-division.

The table above will show that the total population of the district in 1951 stood at 11,15,865 registering an increase of 220,725 over its 1941 population of 8,95,140. Between 1951-1971, there had been a further increase of 5,97,453. In 1951, Cachar had the 4th largest population among district of Assam. During the decade 1941-51. Cachar had added to its 1941 population a number larger than any district of Assam except Nowgong and Kamrup, But the increase contained 93,177 registered refugees. Ignoring the number of displaced persons the increase came to 1,27,548 which was 40 % higher than the total increase of the previous decade. Cachar thus showed an overall increase of 24.66 percent during 1941-51 decade, a rate higher than that registered by any other district of its Natural Division except Nowgong. This is in striking contrast to its position in the previous decade when Cachar registered a 11.38 % increase, and stood at the very bottom of the Natural Divisions in this respect. Hence there is every ground to believe that this increase is due to unregistered persons from East Bengal who came in search of land and livelihood across the boundary to Cachar.

The percentage growth rates of its population in 1961 and 1971 were 23.53 and 24.39 respectively and were a bit lower than that of the 1951 Census.

This huge increase in Cachar's population forced up its density per square mile from 333 in 1941 to 415 in 1951 and then to 529 in 1971 (it is about 130 in 1951, 162 in 1961 and 246 in 1971 per square kilometer). In the fifties its density increased by slightly more than 25 % over its 1941 figure and in 1971, it was 27 % increase over 1951. Cachar was the most densely populated district in Assam in 1951. The table given below shows thana-wise (per square mile) density of population of the district in 1951 and 1961. For 1971 density figures are given per square kilometre.

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Thana	Density		
	1951	1961	1971
1. Badarpur	1,195	1,388	567
2. Karimganj	1,010	1,183	554
3. Hailakandi	777	947	446
4. Silchar	744	923	427
5. Ratabari	354	474	233
6. Lakhipur	334	422	203
7. Patherkandi	328	414	212
8. Katigorah	320	378	179
9. Borkhola	279	320	166
10. Sonai	269	331	159
11. Udarband	264	320	146
12. Katlicherra	158	226	113

But in 1971, as a district, Nowgong was at the first position in density of population having 302 persons per square kms, the 2nd being Kamrup with 289 per square km, while Cachar was the 3rd with 246 persons per square kilometre.

The above table will show that the most densely populated part of the district was a central belt consisting of Karimganj, Badarpur, Hailakandi and Silchar thanas. The areas of lowest density was in the south and south-east comprising Katlicherra and Sonai thanas with another belt in the North-east consisting of Udarband and Borkhola thanas. Lakhipur in the east, Katigorah in the north and Patherkandi and Ratabari in the south-west occupy a somewhat middle position. The belt remains the same even now.

In 1951, Badarpur was the most densely populated thana in Assam. The principal reason for it having the highest density is that though its area is small (only 47 square miles), it includes a large population of Badarpur Railway Colony. The tremendous spurt in the density of the four densely populated thanas of Cachar, (from their 1941 figure to Badarpur 908, Karimganj 761, Hailakandi 665 and Silchar 565 in 1951) was largely due to heavy concentration of refugees in both the urban as well as rural areas of these thanas. But in 1971, Badarpur came down to the 2nd position, while Jalukbari P.S. in Kamrup district rose to the first position and Nowgong P.S. in Nowgong district gained the 3rd position. Density - figures being as follows : Jalukbari-1,726, Badarpur-567, Nowgong-554, Karimganj-554 per square km.

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(ii) **Immigration and Emigration:** Ever since the Kachris settled in Cachar, the district has been the victim of successive waves of immigration. During the Kachari reign, cultivators from the West, East Bengal and Sylhet came and settled down to their business without perhaps the least opposition. At the fag end of their rule, we witness the influx of Manipuris from the east. When British came and opened jungles for the purpose of tea plantation, a class of people destined to be labourers for generations together, came from beyond the frontiers of Assam. But of all the immigrations, the most noteworthy is the one which infiltrated the district in 1947 following the partition of India.

In 1901, 24 % of Cachar's population were found to be from outside the Province. B.C. Allen, mentioned in the Cachar District Gazetteer that in 1901, out of the total population of the plains of old Cachar district, 1,01,252 had been from outside the then Province of Assam and about three-fifths of the total came from Bengal, Manbhum, Hazaribag, Bankura and Ranchi, 12,000 from Central Provinces as tea garden labourers and 25,971 from Sylhet.³ In Karimganj 10 % of its total population was immigrants and of them about 25,000 who worked as tea garden labourers were from United Province and Central Provinces.⁴ Thus, the Kacharis, the original ruling tribe of Cachar and after whom the district was named, gradually became a non-entity in the Cachar region and concentrated mainly in N.C. Hills. As per 1901 Census, the number of Kachari people in Cachar plains was only 4,152. The same event of emigration of people from Sylhet to Cachar reoccurred in 1911 as is evident from the fact that while there was a natural increase of population in Sylhet by 11.7 %, the actual increase in that district was 10.3 percent. As usual about 1.5 % of Sylhet's Population immigrated to Cachar and through North Cachar to other parts of Assam. The actual increase of population in Cachar plains was found to be 13.4 % only as per the 1911 Census while natural increase was 25.3 % which shows a considerable emigration from Cachar. During the next decade, the tempo of immigration was, however, moderate in comparison to the previous decade. The total number of immigrants as per the census of 1921 in the district accounted for 90,574 persons as against 110,507 in 1911.⁵

The immigration from outside the state of Assam was composed of mainly tea garden labourers from Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Central Province, etc. and of the land hungry settlers from the erstwhile East Bengal including

3. B.C Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol. I, Cachar, Calcutta, 1905, pp-46

4. B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol. Sylhet, p. 68, 70

5. *Census of India*, 1921, Vol. III, Assam. Part-I. P.26

Mymensingh District. In normal times, there was little immigration of tea garden labourers into Cachar. The influx of the latter began as early as 1911 and their main target was the plains districts of Assam. Their thrust on the Cachar district was, however, not intensive during 1921-41. According to the 1951 Census, there were 130,000 Pakistan-born immigrants enumerated in Cachar and of them 93,000 were refugees. Hoards of refugees entered Assam as a result of Partition and communal disturbances in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). In the 1961 Census, the total number of net immigrants into Cachar district stood at 1,56,307. The highest number of Pakistani immigration occurred during 1947 and 1956, and most of them were displaced Hindus. Fresh waves of Hindu displaced persons from erstwhile East Pakistan (Bangladesh) took place in between 1964 and 1967 following the internal disturbances there.

The following table shows, the percentage of all immigrants from outside the State to the total population of the Cachar district in each decade since 1921 to 1961. ⁶

Year	Percentage of Males	Percentage of Females
1921	12.94	10.49
1931	6.12	4.82
1951	14.36	12.81
1961	11.59	11.06

As for emigration, it would be unwise to say that it did not take place at all. But when compared to immigration its dimension is so small that it hardly needs reckoning, and these emigrations were mainly of East Bengal refugees and land hungry cultivators to the other plains districts of Assam through Khasi Jaintia Hills, North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong and also of temporary tea garden labourers and construction labourers coming to the district from Chotanagpur, United Provinces, Central Province etc, as was earlier evidenced in 1911. A small percentage of emigrant people were going outside the district in connection with services, trade and other professions to other districts of Assam.

6. *Census of India*, 1961, Vol. III. Assam, Part I-A, General Report, Calcutta, 1964, p. 133.

Connected Problems : Mr. Mullan in 1931 was of the opinion that an increase of 7.5% in Silchar and Hailakandi was quite enough to make the pressure on the soil more noticeable. If this is true, the effects of the increase of 11.3 % and 24.66 % in subsequent decades of 1931-41 and 1941-51 respectively can best be imagined than described. Secondly, the refugees, the influx of whom was responsible to a great extent for the tremendous growth of population in the district, had neither land to fall back upon nor any avenue of industrial employment to make their living possible. Coupled with these was the tragedy that hardly any of them had any capital worth the name to carry on petty trade. The tea industry in Cachar which employs a large number of labourers is already seized up with the baffling problem of excess labour. The cumulative effect of these centripetal forces ensued an unemployment of higher magnitude. Thirdly, with the growth of population especially in urban area, sanitation, housing, water-supply conditions, etc., tumbled down and the paucity of civic amenities had become a chronic complaint. Fourthly, educational facilities could not keep abreast of growing demands and over-crowded under staffed institutions had become a breeding ground of discontented, disgruntled and dissatisfied students. Fifthly, growth of population encouraged people to build houses or hutments in every space in the town. This encroachment deprived the inhabitants of the town from fresh air and undermined their health. Lastly, playgrounds and parks for children became few and whatever little is there they could hardly meet the total requirements. So, we have before us not only an unhealthy present generation but also a crippled posterity.

(iii) Distribution between urban and rural areas: Drift towards towns from village and reasons for it : There were three towns in Cachar in 1951. They were Silchar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. Besides these towns, there were developed localities such as Badarpur, Patharkandi, Lakhipur, Sonai, Udarband, Katlicherra, etc. In 1961, three more places namely Lala, Badarpur Railway town and Lakhipur were declared towns. In 1971, Badarpur proper and Ramkrishnanagar were also brought into the category of towns. Other places are not towns in strict sense of the term. Nor are they villages. In the matter of countings of population of towns, we have left such places out of our purview. They will, however, be taken into account at the time of calculation of population of villages.

The population of the towns of Cachar stood at 61,376 in 1951 while that of the villages at 10,54,489. In 1971, urban population figure in Cachar district shot up to 1,35,692 against a population of 15,77,626 in the rural areas.

The following table shows sub-division-wise distribution of population between towns and villages during 1951 and 1971.

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Subdivision	Year	Town	Village
Silchar	1951	34,059	5,07,832
	1961	43,626	6,20,725
	1971	55,537	7,67,978
Karimganj	1951	19,098	3,57,226
	1961	34,568	4,30,630
	1971	57,975	5,24,123
Hailakandi	1951	8,219	1,87,431
	1961	18,619	2,30,308
	1971	22,180	2,85,515

In 1901, the total population of Silchar town was 9,256. During the course of fifty years, it rose to 34,059 showing a growth of 17,458 persons during the decade 1941-51 which is much higher than the growth of 3,532 witnessed in the decade 1931-41. During the two decades between 1951-71, the number increased by 18,537. The influx of refugees following Partition is the only explanation for this disproportionate growth.

The population of Karimganj town in 1901 was 5,692. In 1951, it stood at 19,098 showing an increase of 13,406 over the population of 1901. The increase during the decade 1961-71, was 2,935 while during 1941-51 it was 11,285 and in the previous decade (1931-41) the same was only 2,212. As an explanation to this tremendous spurt, it is pertinent to mention here that Karimganj town before Partition was included in Sylhet district, and when after Partition, Karimganj was ceded to India, many refugees from Pakistan found it convenient to infiltrate into Karimganj and settle there.

The population of Hailakandi town in 1901 is not available. In 1911, it was 1,462. During the course of forty years, it rose to 8,219 showing an increase of 6,757. As in previous two cases, here also we find the increase during the decade in 1951-61 to be much higher than the increase of the previous two decades. The increase in the decade was 5,913 while in 1941-51, it was 5,135 and in 1931-41, the same was 1,082. The explanation for this increase is similar to the above ones.

From above it is clear that the increase of population in Karimganj town during the decades 1941-71 is much higher than the increase in other two towns. Table below shows that in Cachar nearly 6 % of people live in towns and the rest outside them. In Silchar Sub-division 7 % of its population live in the town, in Karimganj 6 % and in Hailakandi 5 %.

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The rest do not necessarily constitute village as there are several developed localities and tea-gardens whose inhabitants can hardly be treated as such.

The following table shows the growth of population in all the towns during the 1901-71 period.

Year	Lala	Lakhi	Silchar	Badar-	Karim-	Badar-	Haila-	Ramkri-
		pur		pur Rly	ganj	pur	kandi	shna-
				town				Nagar
1901	—	—	9,256	—	5,692	—	—	—
1911	—	—	8,785	—	6,512	—	1,462	—
1921	—	—	10,204	—	4,552	—	2,228	—
1931	—	—	13,069	—	5,691	—	2,002	—
1941	—	—	16,601	—	7,813	—	3,084	—
1951	—	—	34,059	—	19,098	—	8,219	—
1961	4,487	2,564	41,062	5,885	28,683	—	14,132	—
1971	5,536	2,941	52,596	7,163	31,618	12,537	16,644	6,657

None of these towns have grown into an industrial town. Silchar has got some amount of trading and commercial activities. Of the other two sub-divisional headquarters towns-Karimganj has brisk trading and commercial activities.

The population in rural areas of Cachar district in 1971 was 15,77,626. In Silchar Sub-division, such population was 7,67,978, in Karimganj 5,24,133 and in Hailakandi 2,85,515. The increase registered in rural areas of Cachar district, during the decades 1941-71, is 7,11,984 while the same in towns is 78,294. Rural-urban area wise comparative picture of population growth in the Cachar sub-division from 1951 to 1971 is shown in the following table.

Urban-rural population of Cachar Sub-division wise (1951-1971).

Year	Silchar		Hailakandi		Karimganj	
	Sub-division		Sub-division		Sub-division	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
1951	5,07,832	34,059	1,87,431	8,219	3,57,226	19,098
1961	6,20,725	43,626	2,30,308	18,619	4,30,630	34,568
1971	7,67,978	55,537	2,85,515	22,180	5,24,133	57,975

Due to the dearth of information, the growth of population in rural areas during the course of last fifty years or so could not be shown. For similar reason, the problem of drift, either from or towards villages remains undiscussed. But without much doubt it is plausible to assume that any drift, if it did take place at all, was of the nature of movement from villages to towns and not *vice versa*. The main reasons which lead us to arrive at this conclusion are (1) the spread of education in villages and the lack of commensurate employment opportunities in them for the educated, (2) growing dislike among youngsters for manual labour, (3) declining capacity of land to absorb more hands and (4) lack of proper marketing facility for products of home industry causing gradual extinction of cottage industries which would have kept people tied down to their ancestral homes. Nevertheless, there did take place a drift towards villages during the decade 1941-51. But it was a drift not from towns of Cachar to villages of Cachar. It was a drift of refugees from East Bengal across the border to villages of Cachar. And we have every reason to believe that these 'drifting' refugees were formerly villagers and not the other way round.

(iii) Displaced persons: According to a statistical survey the total number of displaced families in Cachar in 1955-56 stood at 32,619. Out of 32,619 families 8,033 lived in urban localities and 24,586 in rural areas of the district. In Silchar sub-division, there were 3,257 families in urban areas, and 8,924 families in rural areas; in Hailakandi sub-division, there were 3,822 families in urban areas and 12,207 families in rural areas. The following table will show sub-division wise distribution of refugee families between rural and urban areas.

Number of refugee families in 1955-56

Sub-division	Rural	Urban	Total
Karimganj	12,207	3,822	16,029
Silchar	8,924	3,257	12,181
Hailakandi	3,455	954	4,409
Total	24,586	8,033	32,619

Number of persons in 1951 was 93,177 and in 1958, it increased to 2,40,823 recording more than 258 % increase. In 1951, nearly one fourth of the refugees, that is 22,185, were found to be in the three towns of Silchar, Hailakandi and Karimganj. The rest 70,322 were scattered in the rural

areas. Out of this number, Karimganj and Badarpur accommodated 19,732, while Patharkandi, Ratabari, Katigora, Barkhola-Udarband rural Silchar, Hailakandi-Katlicharra and Lakhipur, Sonai accounted for 17,897; 11,745; 8,251; 6,625 and 6,072 respectively.

Almost all the refugees were from the erstwhile East Pakistan (Bangladesh). Visibly major part of the refugees entered Cachar in four successive waves. Their first infiltration began after the Noakhali riots of October, 1946. The second one took place as a result of insecurity and political turmoil prevailing in Pakistan just after its emergence. The third one occurred in 1950 following communal riots in February and March of the same year. The fourth being during liberation movement of East Bengal in 1970. But the statistics show that during 1951-53, maximum number of persons from East Bengal (present Bangladesh) came to India in search of livelihood and land. This flow is still there due to the reason that most of the refugees from East Bengal (Bangladesh) left their relatives and friends there and they helped them to infiltrate into Assam in a bid to settle them here with job, land, and occupation.

The reasons for large influx of refugees into Cachar are many. Two of them are; first, Cachar is contiguous to the erstwhile East Pakistan (Bangladesh) and secondly, the culture and language of the majority of the Hindus of Cachar who started migrating from Sylhet and East Bengal as far back as in the seventeenth century, are same with those of the in-comers.

Nearly 40 % of the refugees in the district are agriculturists. The rest are weavers, hawkers, tailors, goldsmiths, carpenters, fishermen, blacksmiths, doctors, teachers, Kaviraj and other job-seekers.

(B) Language: Regional distribution of population on the basis of mother tongue and bilingualism: The spoken language of Cachar, from phonological and grammatical point of view, is more akin to old *Kamarupi* language (Assamese). The dialect, used in Cachar district of Assam and also in some of the north-eastern districts of Bengal and Sylhet, which has been classified as Eastern Bengali and *Bahe-Rajbongshi* branch of Bengali language (*Banga Bhasha*) by Grierson, can be called more Assamese from the phonological, morphological and grammatical point of view. "In Assamese and Eastern Bengali, this dislike to cerebral sound is carried to an extreme and every letter of that class is commonly pronounced as if it was a dental..... The further east (of Bengali) we go, the greater is the tendency to pronounce a Ch, as if it were *ts* or *s*, a *chh* as if it were *s* and a *j* as if it were *z*".⁷ This peculiarity

7. G.A. Grierson: *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. V., Part-I, Introduction p.6

of pronunciation which is invariably present in the dialects of Eastern Bengal, Cachar and Sylhet is more marked in Assamese language.

In his introductory discussion into the *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. V, Indo-Aryan family Eastern group, Part-I, Mr. Grierson remarked that the Bengali language "also occupied the Assam districts of Sylhet and Cachar, which formerly counted portion of lower Bengal".⁸ In fact, till the 12th century A.D., *Kamarupi* dominion extended upto the Karatoa covering Mymensing, Koch Bihar, a part of Rongpur, Jalpaiguri, Sylhet, and Cachar - on both the sides down the Brahmaputra up to its juncture with the Karatoa. It is Koch Bihar where the most outstanding Assamese literature of Ahom period was produced under the patronage of Koch king Naranarayan. It is very much evident that the people who used the old *Kamarupi* (Assamese) dialect in the area situating to the east of the Karatoa and the Brahmaputra-Ganga confluence, during the Mughal and Pathan rule in Bengal, lost contact with Assamese language and gradually adopted some Bengali characteristics due to socio-economic and political influences as it happens with every living language and culture.

The regional distribution of population on the basis of mother tongue in 1951 was approximately in the following manner.

Region	Total Speaker	Mother tongue	Percentage
Silchar(Rural)	1,50,645	Bengali	70
		Hindi	17
		Manipuri	9
Lakhipur	1,94,032	Bengali	62
Sonai		Manipuri	17
		Hindi	9
		Hairamba	2

8. G.A. Grierson : *Lingnistic Survey of India*, Vol-V, part-1 p.p.201-202.

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Region	Total speaker	Mother tongue	Percentage
Katigorah,	1,63,105	Bengali	81
Borkhola,		Hindi	6
Udarband		Manipuri	4
		Hairamba	1.5
		Mundari	1.5
Katlicherra,	1,87,341	Bengali	84
Hailakandi		Hindi	8
(Rural)		Manipuri	3
Badarpur	1,83,433	Bengali	97
Karimganj(rural)		Hindi	0.9
Patharkandi		Bengali	60
Ratabari	1,75,793	Hindi	22
		Manipuri	0.8
Silchar,		Bengali	89
Karimganj and	61,376	Hindi	6
Hailakandi Towns			

It shows that the highest percentage of Bengali speakers is concentrated in Badarpur- Karimganj (rural) tract while the lowest percentage is concentrated in Patharkandi-Ratabari tract. At the same time, the latter records the concentration of the highest percentage of Hindi speakers while the former the lowest. The percentage of Manipuri speakers in towns as well as in Badarpur-Karimganj (rural) tract is insignificant. Lakhimpur Sonai tract reveals the concentration of the highest percentage of Manipuri speakers. Hairamba speakers are found mainly in Lakhimpur-Sonai and Katigorah- Borkhola-Udarband tracts. Hindi speakers are found in almost every tract. This is due to the presence of the garden and other manual labourers.

In Cachar number of Bengali speaking people increased gradually with immigration of a huge number of people from East Bengal in succeeding years. In 1951, there were nearly 77 % of people whose mother tongue was Bengali. The percentage of people whose mother tongue was Hindi was only 10. In 1961 and 1971, the percentage of Bengali speaking population in Cachar were 78.73 % and 77.76 % respectively. The next larger linguistic group of Cachar i.e. Hindi, constituted 10.33 % and 11.28 % of the district in 1961 and 1971 respectively. Besides, there are several other mother tongues such as Manipuri, Oriyas, Hairamba, Khasi, Mundari, Assamese, in the order of importance which deserve mentioning. The following table will show the total number of speakers mother tongue-wise in 1951:

Mother tongue	Total speakers.
1. Bengali	8,60,772
2. Hindi	1,16,725
3. Manipuri	81,127
4. Oriya	10,538
5. Hairamba	8,224
6. Mundari	4,602
7. Assamese	3,462
8. Khasi	4,830

In 1951, of the total Bengali speakers 24, 961 could speak other than Bengali of which 23,014 could speak Hindi. Of the total Hindi speakers 44,644 could speak other than Hindi of which 44,576 could speak Bengali. Of the total Manipuri speakers 41,273 could speak other than Manipuri of which 38,763 could speak Bengali. Of the total Hairamba speakers 5,696 could speak other than Hairamba of which 5,693 could speak Bengali.

In 1971, number of Assamese speaking population in Cachar was 6840 while it was 4542 in 1961.

Difference in dialect within the linguistic group: Bengali or to be precise the Eastern Sylhet dialect of Bengali is the principal language of this district. This dialect is, according to Grierson, one of the sub-groups which has been called the Vanga or South- Eastern dialects of Bengali. Like Assamese, it is derived from a local form of the late Magadhi Aprabhransa and have 'dental' and 'aspirated' pronunciation of 'cerebral' and 'sibilant' letters. But then it has many common characteristics both with the other dialects of Bengali as well as with Assamese mainly due to Sylhet's peculiar geographical location.

Disaspiration of consonants, transformation of sibilant and absence of true dental and palatals which are the main phonological characteristics of Assamese language, are also the peculiarities of Cachar dialects.

The stress system also is the same with Assamese where no initial stress in large number of words is maintained.

Morphologically, declension of nouns and pronouns with number

and case variations and conjugation of verb with change of tenses also happen in the same and similar way in Assamese language and dialect of Cachar.

As in Assamese, a study of the toponymy of the district reveals a large influence of Tibeto-Burman Languages. Similarly, a large number of nouns used in this dialect would reveal such an influence. Many words of this dialect are common with Assamese whereas the standard Bengali equivalent is entirely different. These words would indicate a common source for both. Lastly, as in the Brahmaputra valley, in Cachar also the large Muslim population seems to have considerably influenced the vocabulary of the others which is a very noticeable feature. A large number of Persian words seem to be used as such, especially by the villagers living near Muslim and others, e.g., *asman* (sky) for the usual '*akas*'. Example are numerous.

Religious communities: Hindu and Muslim are the two principal communities of Cachar. There are also several other communities such as Christian, Jain, Buddhist, Sikhs, etc., besides these. But the number of people comprising these communities is so small that they hardly deserve any mention. Christian community with 15,178 persons as against 7,89,348 Hindus and 5,39,457 Muslims as per 1961 census resembles a small island in the midst of a wide ocean.

As a whole nearly 60 % of the population of Cachar are Hindu and nearly 38 % Muslim. Barring Karimganj-Badarpur and Hailakandi - Katlicherra tracts, where the percentage of Muslims is higher than Hindus, and all other tracts, we find the reverse to be true. Another notable feature is that most of the town dwellers of Cachar are Hindus. The tables I and II below will give the real picture as per Census of 1961 and 1951 respectively.

In 1971, there were 308 Buddhists, 141 Sikhs, 800 Jains, 22,686 Christians, 6,83,387 Muslims and 10,05,995 Hindus as enumerated in Cachar.

Table I and II are the Statements showing the number of people following the principal religions in the rural and urban areas of different P.S. within Cachar district as per 1961 Census.

Table-I

Year	Police Station	Buddhist	Christian	Hindus	Jains	Muslims	Sikhs
1961	Katigora (R)	2	921	51,825	8	39,783	—
	Barkhola (R)	—	606	29,678	—	16,889	—
	Udharband (R)	12	1,918	41,847	16	10,316	2

Year	Police Station	Buddhist	Christian	Hindus	Jain	Muslims	Sikhs
1961	Lakhipur (R)	3	4,966	84,859	nil	25,305	5
	(U)	nil	nil	1,978	15	561	—
	Silchar (R)	1	1,180	1,20,196	—	65,889	5
	(U)	26	315	35,608	161	4,860	—
	Sonai (R)	—	1,204	70,838	—	51,634	17
	Karimganj (R)	1	370	55,973	—	86,513	—
	(U)	10	180	25,042	140	3,204	—
	Badarpur (R)	9	502	49,397	5	33,101	nil
	(U)	44	37	16,256	—	43	1
	Patharkandi (R)	15	568	37,456	28	42,394	—
	Ratabari (R)	4	803	77,850	9	34,876	—
	Hailakandi (R)	4	458	65,610	9	90,357	9
	(U)	5	18	14,814	35	3,674	—
	Katlicherra (R)	175	1,132	42,372	11	30,058	—

Note: Abbreviations- R = Rural under the particular P.S.

U = Urban area under the particular name of the P.S.

Table-II

Year-1951

Tract	Total Population	Hindus	Percentage	Muslims	Percentage
Silchar, Karimganj and Hailakandi Town	61,376	55,322	80%	5,400	8%
Katigora, Borkhala and Udarband	1,63,105	1,06,487	65%	54,371	33%
Lakhipur, Sonai	1,94,082	1,29,875	65%	60,227	31%
Silchar (R)	1,50,645	94,936	63%	55,175	36%
Patherkandi-Ratabari	1,75,793	1,14,818	65%	60,152	34%
Karimganj-Badarpur	1,83,433	86,011	46%	97,517	53%
Hailakandi-Katlicherra	1,87,431	90,091	48%	96,615	51%
Cachar	11,15,865	676,540	60%	4,29,457	38%

In 1971, the Hindus constituted 58.71 % of Cachar's population while the Muslims and the Christians Constituted 39.89 % and 1.32 % respectively.

Caste: The Kacharis, Manipuris, Bengalis, both Hindus and Muslims, and the Assamese, mainly Hindus, are the principal inhabitants of the district of Cachar. There are a certain number of Brahmans and Kayastha, but the bulk of the Hindu population is composed of Scheduled castes. The one most strongly represented is the *Patni*, a fishing and boating caste who have largely taken to agriculture; then come the Manipuris, who style themselves *Kshatriyas* and the *Namasudra* another fishing and boating caste who also have taken to the plough. The *Jugis* have settled in strong forces in strong force in the district but they have abandoned their traditional occupation. The *Coolies* are most strongly represented by the *Bauri Bhuyas*, *Chamars*, *Mundas*, *Musahars* and *Santals*. The great trading caste of Sylhet, the Shahas, and the great cultivating caste of that district, the Das, are also settled here. Majority of the Sylheti migrants who are not Brahmins and above the rank of the Schedule Caste call themselves Kayasthas.

Nagas: Most of the Nagas in Cachar live in northern part of the district and belong to the Kachha Naga tribe. They are not a migratory people and though they shift their *jhums* every second and third year they seldom change their village sites. Their houses are built of planks and thatch, the side walls are brought down from the side of the roof side almost to the ground. Like most of the other hillmen they are very partial to rice beer as already pointed out in the old District Gazetteer of Cachar, 1905. Child Marriage is unknown. Adultery is almost unknown amongst the Nagas. The girls are seldom unfaithful to their marriage vows.

The Kukis: The Kukis are divided into four tribes; the Rangkhols with their allied tribes, the Bietes, the Jansen with their allied tribe, and the Thados. The Rangkhols and Bietes originally lived in the hills now inhabited by the Lushais. Further south were the villages of Jansens, who moved north wards into the country of the Rangkhols and compelled them to fly across the Surma Valley into the hills of the North Cachar. Subsequently, the Bietes were also compelled to follow the Rangkhols; "and the Jansens and Thados were left in occupation of the hills to form

the southern boundary of Cachar. The migration of the first band of Kukis, the 'Old Kukis' as they are sometimes called, is said to have taken place at the end of the eighteenth century. But the northward movement of the tribes had not yet spent itself and in course of time the Jansen and the Thados were themselves driven out of the Southern hills and were compelled to follow the Rangkhols to their retreat in North Cachar. This second migration of the 'new Kukis' took place in 1851-52. Though loosely referred to under the one of the generic term of Kuki, there is a marked difference between the *Rangkhols* and the *Jansens*. The former were a democratic community and the affairs of the village were managed by a group of village officers, the *Galim* or head man, the *Gabur* or his assistant and two subordinates, the *Chapiagalim* and a *Chapia gabur*. These offices were not hereditary, and a candidate for public service had to begin at the bottom of the ladder as a *chapia gabour*..... The *Kukis* generally build their villages on the tops of the hills, the houses being placed on either side of a long street. The houses are built on platforms with a veranda in front and are partitioned off into separate cubicles. The peoples are short and have sturdy well developed limbs. They have high cheek bones and flat noses..... The Rangkhols work for their wives and are generally required to render three years service to their father-in-law before marriage and two years after marriage. This excuses them from the bride price which the Jansens generally have to pay, but their terms are exempted from any terms of service.^{8A}

Kachari: Though belong to the same stock of Bodo-Kachari the Kacharis of Cachar distinguish themselves by the name Dimasa Kachari. In Cachar plains they are generally known as Barmans. "They generally live in the valleys that intersect the hills. The houses in their villages are placed in two lines facing one another and in the centre there is the 'young men's Club' or '*Nodrang*' which is so common a feature in the valleys of the hill tribes of the North East Frontier. The houses are built on the ground and are divided into three compartments. Men and women alike are fairly tall and muscular. Men wear a waist cloth, shawl and turban. Women wear a *Rigu* reaching from the waist to the knee and another *rigampoi* to cover the upper portion of the body. The Kacharis in the valley and the plains portion of the district grow wet rice and in the hills they follow the shifting system of cultivation known as '*Jhum*'.^{8B} Two

8A. B.C. Allen : *Assam District Gazetteer*, Vol. I. Cachar, Calcutta, 1905, pp. 51-2

8b. Ibid, p.50

sections of Kacharis call for special mention. The Barmans are Kacharis who are not only Hindus but also wear the *Sacred* thread. The *shemshas* are a cross between the Kacharis and the Nagas whose headquarters are situated in the the Shemkor village which overhangs the Lanting river. The *Shemshas* were originally a regiment of soldiers under the Kachari king. When the Kachari capital shifted from Dimapur to Maibong, the *Shemshas* were granted this present place to settle in. They married Naga maidens and converted them to Dimasa. They thus speak Dimasa with a slight Naga accent. and can communicate in Naga language too, due to the proximity to other Naga villages. But their social customs and traditional garments are those of the Dimasa. During the kings rule, they used to provide salt for the kingdom from a salt rich well in the village. "Salt", in the Dimasa language is "shem" and hence they were called "*Shemshas*". The well exists in the village to this day but put to use no longer.

Social life: The Barmans in Cachar are also known as Kacharis. They also call themselves as Dimasa. They are one of the branches of the Kachari Community of Assam. After the fall of Kachari Kingdom at Dimapur, the Kacharis gradually migrated to Cachar and established 'Hiramba Rajya' with their capital at Khaspur. Till the advent of the British Rule in Cachar in year 1832. A.D. the Dimasa Kachari were the ruling race in Cachar. After coming to Cachar, the social life of the Dimasa Kacharis has undergone a great change. They adopted 'Hindu' religion and accepted most of the Hindu rites and customs but maintaining at the same time their original rites and customs which are beneficial to the society. The title "Barman" was conferred upon them as a recognition of their entry into the Hindu fold. So the present system of the social life of the Barman in Cachar is a harmonious mixture of Hindu social system as well as the aboriginal system of social life of the Kacharis

Some illustrations of the social life of the Barmans (Kacharis) are given below.

(I) Property and Inheritance: The Barmans generally live in joint family with their wives, sons and unmarried daughters. But after the death of both the parents, the sons separate themselves and form separate families. Their families are patriarchal and not matriarchal. After the death of the proprietor, the property devolves on his widow and sons according to the Hindu Law. But the personal property of the mother devolves on her daughters.. Transfer of property through will is very rare. The Hindu Laws regarding the inheritance of property by daughters, divorce, marriage, etc. are not applicable to the Barmans and not favoured by them.

(II) Marriage and Morals: The Barmans are monogamous and not polygamous or polyandrous.

There are 40 (forty) clans known as '*Sengfongs*' among the males

and 42 (forty two) clans known among the females as '*Zulus*'. The same male clan or same female clan cannot intermarry however distant their relations may be. The parents of the bride and the bridegroom of a marriage must be of different clans. There can be no marriage with maternal uncle or his sons or daughters though they be of different clans.

Inter-caste marriage is very rare among the Barmans. There is no civil marriage. Marriageable age of the Barmans is generally 25 to 35 years in case of male and 18 to 28 years in case of females. There is a custom of divorce among the Barmans though divorce rarely occurs. Both males and females among the Barmans can equally earn their livelihood. The females can earn their livelihood by spinning, weaving etc. just as males can earn their livelihood as cultivators and labourers. The place of males and females in the society is equal.

Prostitution, traffic in women, gambling etc. are quite unknown among the Barmans. But the custom of drinking country liquor on ceremonial occasions are still prevalent.

Marriages, customs and rituals: First of all, the bridegroom's guardian approaches the bride's guardian with an informal proposal for marriage. If the bride's guardian agrees to accept the proposal, the bridegroom's guardians then go to the bride's house and offers a bundle of betelnuts to the guardian of the bride as a sign of formal proposal for marriage and the latter accepts the bundle of betelnuts as a sign for formal acceptance of proposal. This ceremony is called '*Gualzea riba*'. The bundle of betelnut is kept with care by the guardian of the bride till the next ceremony known as '*lao-tai-tangba*' on which occasion the bridegroom's guardian and relatives go to the bride's house with country liquor and cakes. The village elders of the bride's village assemble in bride's house on that day, and take share of the country liquor and cakes brought by the bridegroom's relatives. The bridegroom's relatives then make the formal proposal for marriage known to all the members of the assembly. The village-elders after some formal queries regarding the bridegroom, advise the bride's guardian to agree to the proposal. The bride's guardian then accept the proposal for marriage. Then the dowry for the bride and the date of marriage are also formally fixed. The proposal for the marriage is thus finally settled on the date of '*Lao-tai-tangba*' ceremony. But before this, the bride's guardian has the right to recede the proposal and if he recedes he has to return the bundle of betelnut to the bridegroom's guardian.

On the date fixed for marriage all the ceremonies of marriage are performed with the help of Brahmins according to Hindu rites. On the date fixed for marriage, the guardians of both the bride and bridegroom

offer ablution to their deceased predecessors. Both bride and bridegroom remain fasting till the marriage ceremony is over. On the auspicious moment the bridegroom with his friends and relatives starts for the bride's house. After reaching the bride's house, the bridegroom and his party are cordially received and entertained with dinner. On the auspicious moment for marriage the bridegroom takes his seat on decorated stage encircled with plaintain trees and the bride comes out and goes round the bridegroom seven times and then garlands and rings are exchanged between the bride and the bridegroom after the '*homa*' ceremony is performed by Brahmins. Then bride's guardian formally hands over the bride to the bridegroom who accepts her with oath to maintain and protect her all through his life. The main function of marriage ceremony is thus over. On the following day the bride groom takes the bride to his house.

(iii) **Home life:** The Barmans generally reside in places of hill slopes near the river banks and forest so that they get the facilities of sufficient paddy fields above flood level on one hand and the drinking water, fuel and house building materials on the other.

The average number of houses in a Barman village is more or less 50. Generally they are arranged along the course of a river bank and facing towards the east though there is no regular or fixed pattern in the order of houses. They live in permanent settlement generally in distinct part of a village.

There are generally three houses in the compound of a Barman family. The houses are generally of rectangular shape made of wooden posts, bamboo and thatch roofs and '*Ikra*' or bamboo made walls. The main dwelling house generally situates on the western *bhit* and consists of two rooms one for kitchen and the other for bedroom. A separate house called '*Maro*' is built on the southern or eastern *bhit* for the accommodation of guests and outsiders. The granary known as '*Maiko*' is built generally on the northern *bhit*. The eastern *bhit* is generally kept open. The cow-sheds or buffalo sheds are generally built outside the compound. The compound is generally surrounded by trees. The houses of the village are very simple having very little furniture. One or two bedsteads made of wood, some bamboo made mats, basket, some seats known as '*Kamplai*' made of wood and beautiful temple-shaped cane made baskets known as *kailim* for keeping new cloths, handloom instruments and paddy husking instruments known as '*Tengi*' are the furnitures that are found in every family of the Barmans.

There are some distinct features in the dress, decoration and ornaments of the Barmans. The females of the Barmans generally wear three pieces of clothes known as *Rigu*, *Rijampai* and *Rikansa*. *Rigu* and *Rijampai* are made by Barman families themselves. These clothes bear fine and artistic borders. The *Rigu* is the main garment which is worn on the breast. The *Rijampai* is worn on the waist and placed on the *Rigu*. The *Rikansa* is worn on the head. Now-a-days blouse and sari are also used. *Khadu*, *Kamaotai* and necklaces made of silver, gold are main ornaments used by the Barman family.

The *Khadus* which are used on the wrist are made of silver. They are generally of 2.05 cm in breadth, 1.25cm in thickness, coneshaped and weighing about 1/2 kg each. *Kamoutais* which are worn on ears are made of gold. It is a round shaped gold bar 3.8 cm in length and 1.25 cm to 2cm in diameter. Now a days chains, ear-rings etc made of gold or silver are also used.

Food: Rice, dal, vegetables, meat and fish are main items of food. Oil, onions, salt, spices are used in preparing curry. Alkali '*Khari*' made of ashes of driedup plaintain trees is also used in preparing some sort of vegetable curry and dal.

Festival and amusements: (1) '*Bishu*' observed in the middle of October (i.e. on the last day of *Ahin*) is the festival of joy and merriment after the hard work of cultivating season. It may be called the *Kati Bihu* as observed by the Assamese.

(2) '*Uttarayan Sankranti*' observed in the middle of January (i.e. on the last day of *Puh*) is a festival of feasts after the end of harvesting season. It is the *Bhogali Bihu* of the Assamese.

(3) '*Gerba*' observed during the February and March is a festival of the worship of God for the protection from diseases and welfare of the villagers.

Durga Puja, Lakshmi Puja, Saraswati Puja are also observed by the Barmans like other Hindus.

Besides the aforesaid festivals. '*Raslila*' dance is performed generally during January and February by the enthusiastic Barman Villagers.

(iv) **Communal Life;** The Barmans in Cachar have their own association known as '*Nikhil Cachar Hairamba Barman Samiti*' which holds its annual session every year generally in the months of March or April. During the annual session which generally lasts for 3 days, various cultural performances such as *Raslila* dance, *Baidima* dance, music are performed by different batches of villagers. This association has its branches in every Barman villages and keeps the whole community in close contact.

CACHAR DISTRICT GAZETTEER

Barmans have no separate pilgrim centres, but attend pilgrim centres at Bhuban Hills, Siddheswar pahar, Brindaban and other pilgrim centres of the Hindus.

(v) **Economic and professional group etc:** There is no division among Barmans on economic and professional basis. Each of them has equal right of social association however high or low his economic or professional status may be. Almost all the Barmans are cultivators.

Muhammadan: A great bulk of Muhammdans have moved into the district from Sylhet and almost all of them are members of the Sunisect. It is said that the ordinary villager is fairly well aquainted with the principles of his faith.

Many ancient Mosques and Tombs are also found in the district. The most important of which is the Tomb of Adam Khaki near Badarpur Town and another place of pilgramage near Hindustan paper Mill is Muquam of Mirul Arifin, situated on the west bank of Dhaleswari river, near Panchgram.

The mosques are used for five time prayer daily including congragational prayer on Fridays. Idgahs are used for congragational prayer twice in a year on the occasions of Id-UI-Fitre and Id-UI-Azha. Grave yards (Kabarsthan) plots of land reserved by the Muslims, are used for common burial of the Muslims.

The particular religious festivals observed by the Muslims of the District are Id-UI-Fitr, Id-UI-Azh, Muharram, Akheri Sahar-Sumba-, Sabre-Barat, -Sabe-Qadr, Fetaha-E-Duaz-Daham, Fateha-I-Iyaz-Daham, Sabe-Miraj, Ursi festival of Hazarat Shah Jalal Mujarrad, Shah Hatim Ali Badarpuri. Besides these, the Muslims pay a special attnetion towards the Shrine of Shah Adam Khaki by visiting it every thursday evening.

MARRIAGE, CUSTOMS AND RITUALS:

Marraige among the Muslims in Cachar is generally solemnized in accordance with the rituals prescribed by Islam in particular and social customs in general.

HOME LIFE;

The main dwelling house consists of one inner and one outer apartments and one that for kichen. Rich people make main dwelling house and separate kitchen room and separate guest house, called "Tangi".

PEOPLE

Brahmans: The Brahmin community in Cachar are comparatively late comer in the district. During the rule of the Tripura Kings there were certainly some Brahmins but no written record is available about them. During the Koch reign there were some Brahmins of Assamese stock. The Kachari sovereign Tamradhvaj who transferred the capital from Maibong, formally accepted Hindu faith. According to tradition Raja Tamradhvaj went on a pilgrimage to the holy places of Northern India and while coming back he brought with him several Brahmins from Mithila and Kanauj. The Brahmins of Mithila and Kanauj were held in high esteem and are still held in high esteem in Hindu society. These Brahmins were settled first at Dimapur then at Maibong and later in the plains of Cachar. The rulers of Cachar gave them land and they moved obviously with the rulers as they were the priests of the ruling classes and finally they settled at Khaspur, Haritika and Barkhala.

The descendants of the Brahmins of Mithila and Kanauj who came along with king Tamradhvaj are devided ultimately into 12 houses who are known as *Baroghar* today. The descendants of the 12 Brahman houses or families are the Brahmins of Cachar or Kachari Brahmins. Today these Brahmins, held in high esteem in Cachar, are very few in number. They are less than one percent of all Brahmanas of Cachar. In manners and customs, in dress and food, and in all other respects they are exactly like the Bengali Brahmins of Sylhet and East Bengal. They intermarry with the Brahmins of Sylhet and Bengal.

Most of them follow the priestly profession and their clients are Bengali Brahmins, Bengali Vaidyas and Kayasthas, Kacharis and other high caste Hindus of Cachar. Some of them are clerks, teachers, and Government officers. Land lord, industrialists, lawyers, doctors, and engineers are very rare.

The Manipuri Brahmins are more orthodox and conservative. Most of them use the Surname 'Sarma', but recently some of them have adopted the Bengali Brahmin titles like Mukherjee, Banerjee etc. They perform all the rites and ceremonies ordinarily followed by a common Indian Brhmin. The Manipuri Brahmins intermarry only amongst themselves and not outside their caste. In food and touch, they are more orthodox in the sense that a Manipuri Brahmin will not take food cooked by another High Class Bengali Brahmin. The Manipuries are all Vaishnavas.

Besides the descendants of the 12 houses of the Brahmans of Cachar, many Brahmans came and settled in Cachar from the adjoining district of Sylhet in the remote past. In food and dress, in rites and ceremonies, in manners and customs, they are exactly like the Bengali Brahmans of Sylhet. Since they came to Cachar in the remote past in search of land, service, and professions, they form a separate group.

The Brahmans from Sylhet, though small in number, are educated and enterprising. They are shrewd and resourceful. Being placed in the new environment they developed a strong sense of close fellow feeling and unity. In the towns of Silchar, Karimganj, and Hailakandi, where they mostly live, they formed some sort of a brotherhood and are very influential. They are flourishing in trade and commerce, in the professions and in the services. Though permanently settled in Cachar, their near and dear ones still live in Sylhet and they maintain their connections with their society in Sylhet.

In the tea gardens, in the railways, and in the Steamer services, the labourers are almost hundred per cent Hindustani coming from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Amongst them there are Brahmans called Hindustani Brahmans. Educationally they are backward and they are labourers just like other Hindustani labourers. Most of them have no connection with their ancestral homes in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Amongst themselves they speak in their own mother tongue which may be Maitheli or Bhojpuri dialects of Bihar. In food and dress, in rites and ceremonies they continued Hindustani customs, except that in food, most of them have become non-vegetarian.

Non-Brahmins: The *Kayasthas* and *Vaidyas* of Cachar are mostly immigrants from Sylhet or other parts of Eastern Bengal. They entered into Cachar in phases since the days of the Kachari Rajas. After the partition of India their number has considerably been increased. The other caste like Kamar, Kumar, Banik, Barai, Napit, and Tilli are inferior in rank.

Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes: The remaining castes of the *Navasakhas* group, viz., *Sadgup*, *Moyra*, *Tanti* and *Mali*, are less known in Cachar. The *Suklavaidyas* are washerman by profession. They are also not untouchable.

The lower castes, viz., *Patni* or *Mahishaya Das*, *Namasudra* or *Chandal*, *Muchi* or *Cobbler*, *Suvarna Banik*, *Saha*, *Nath*, etc., are untouchable in the sense that water and food touched by them are not acceptable to the Brahmans. Caste rules have softened in the course of the last 50 years and some of these castes have become educated and rich and therefore, quite respectable so that occasionally and in emergent cases, Brahmans will do priestly work in the families of these castes.

For doing priestly work, each of these castes has its own Brahmans. Thus, we have the Brahmans of *Patnis*, the Brahmans of *Namasudras*, the Brahmans of *Sahas*, the Brahmans of *Suvarna Baniks*, and the Brahmans of *Naths*. Each maintains its separate existence and is exclusive.

The *Naths* or *Yogis* are one of the listed Backward Classes of Assam. The Caste name of the *Yogis* is sometimes misspelt as 'Jugi', which is very much reserved by the people belonging to this community.

In Cachar, all the *Nath-Yogis* who have embraced Vaisnavism are followers of the Nityananda School of Chaitanya movement. Some Vaisnavas become what is called *Bhekdhari* (*Kevalia* in Assamese). They cut off all worldly connections and live on begging.

The priestly class of the *Naths* was originally a group of people selected from their own stock. They were called Mahanta in Cachar. By the lapse of time these people also assumed a superiority complex and cut off all matrimonial connections with the *Naths* and claimed themselves as of Brahmanical stock.

Marriage: Like the other Hindus of the Vedic culture, the *Nath Yogis* also observe the permissible and impermissible limits of relationship in marriage, as codified in the *Manu-Smriti*. Any deviation is punishable by excommunication. The pre-puberty marriage which was very scrupulously observed like pure Brahmins about thirty or forty years back, is now totally unknown being compelled by circumstances. Marriages are negotiated by parents. Ceremonies are performed strictly in accordance with the Vedic Grihya-Sutrya methods by *homa*, and the bridegroom goes to the house of the bride for the ceremony.

Dehan or Dheyman: During the Koch king Naranarayana, his valiant and able brother Chilarai, in course of his military campaign, defeated the Ahoms around 1562 A.D. and thereafter led an expedition against the Kacharis. The Kachari King realising his own weakness in military power offered peace and submission. Chilarai left some of his men there in Cachar and later on his brother Gohain Kamal was sent as Governor of Cachar and was stationed at Khaspur. These Koch people were called Dewan after Chilarai who was Dewan or General of Koch king Naranarayan and later on came to be known as Dheyman or Dehan. The Maibong Kacharis called them 'Khusuchs' and named their area 'Khusupur'. Thus the latter Kachari capital derived its name Khaspur.

Dehans are Hindus and they observe all the Hindu rituals. Originally they were *Saktas* but later on came under influence of Vaisnavites and took up their practices. Their dialect is Assamese. In their social life, they observe all the rites and customs of Assamese Hindus. Their dress and festivals are also all Assamese, though, in later years, they have been influenced by the modern trend of cosmopolitan Indian culture.

Meitheids: In Cachar, there live a large number of Manipuris who are mostly Hindus. A section of the Hindu Manipuris who has retained their regional characteristics intact is known as Meithei while such a Manipuri Muslim is known as Pangal. A small section of Manipuri Hindus known as Bishnupuriya also live in Cachar.

The Manipuris, according to tradition, were formally animists. But they took up Vaisnavism at the advent of Vaisnavite movement. So now all the Manipuri Hindus are Vaisnavas. Most of the Manipuris are cultivators and small traders. Land-lords and industrialists amongst them are rare. In Schools and Colleges and in the Government offices, they work as teachers and clerks, sometimes as administrators. Manipuri doctors, lawyers or engineers are not many. A Manipuri beggar or Manipuri domestic servant can never be seen in Cachar. The *Pardah* system is completely unknown amongst the Manipuris.

The family system as prevalent among the Meitheids is joint family system. But gradually they are adopting individual family system where the parent live with the youngest son and the original house belonging to the parents is allotted to the youngest son together with the land. The matriarchal system is non-existent among the Meitheids but the women generally enjoy equal status with men. The inheritance among Meitheids is governed by the Hindu Law of Inheritance. If a person dies without any male issue then the female issues equally inherit the property of the parents whether married or unmarried.

The system of marriage among the Meitheis is monogamous. Polygamy was practised among the Meitheis, but now a days, it is very much discouraged. The system of polyandry is totally absent in the community.

The Meithei community consists of over 100 *Sagains* or *Yumnaks*. These are sub-sections in the community. There are also Brahmins, *Kshatriyas* and *Sudras* in the community and marriage alliance is generally allowed only within the same class after consulting astrologers according to Hindu law. A Brahmin woman cannot marry a *Kshatriya*. Marriage also cannot take place between members of the same *Sagain* or *Yumnak* or *Salai(Yek)*.

The marriages are fixed by parents concerned of the bridegroom and the bride. Marriages are generally allowed between the age groups of 20/25 years for the male and 16/18 years for the female. Some near relatives of the prospective bridegroom visit the residence of the prospective bride and make the proposal of marriage. If the prospective father-in-law gives a favourable response then the parents or the near relatives of the prospective bridegroom visit the residence of the bride elect with some betelnuts and betel-leaves, banana, for marriage engagement. This is called '*Waroi pot*'. This is followed by what is called '*Haizabor*'. On this occasion the bride is offered ornament or any valuable thing before all present. Then on the day of marriage the ceremony takes place according to Hindu system. The bride is taken to the house of the bridegroom on the day of marriage or on a subsequent suitable and auspicious day as agreed upon between the parties. As is done on the eighth day of marriage in Assam, on the fifth day from the date, the bride and bridegroom along with some relatives of the bridegroom's party visit the house of the parents of the bride and there they are sumptuously fed. They are, however, to come back on the same date invariably according to Meithei customs. This is called *Magnawi Chakhaba*. Widow marriages are common in the community. Marriages are strictly confined among the different *Sagains* or *Yumnaks* (clans). Inter caste marriages are strictly prohibited in the community. To a considerable extent Meitheis are still conservative.

The dowry system does not exist among the Meitheis but the parents generally offer presents like fine dresses and other cloths, ornaments, utensils, boxes, bedsteads, etc., according to the capacity of the parents. Above all, one *Tareng* (spinning wheel) is essential as part of these presents, as women generally learn the art of weaving in the community from childhood and the weaving materials mainly are to accompany the bride in her husband's house. This has become ritual. Divorce is allowed in the community. The divorced woman can remarry any person except those men with whom marriage alliances are prohibited by religion and traditions. System of elopement also prevails in the community but this is rare now.

A divorced woman though physically separated continues to observe all the religious practices of the family from which she is divorced till she gets herself remarried to a new husband when such religious practices totally ceases and she then follows the religious practices of the new family.

Among the Meitheis men and women equally work hard for their livelihood though generally females are dependent on the male relatives. Beggers are almost nil in the community. Even the widows who do not remarry and have no relatives to depend on, can earn her livelihood by some sort of work.

Home Life; The main dwelling house consists of one inner and one outer apartment. There is a decorated wooden door between the two apartments serving as a passage. Two third of the house is covered by the inner apartment. The design of the house is rectangular in size. The size of the house varies according to the requirement of the family members. The walls of the house are mud plastered on some indigenous plants named *Singut (Ikora)*. There is earthen floor in almost all the houses. The posts of the houses are of good quality timbers. There are two doors in the house, one in the front and the other is in the northern side of the house. The outer apartment of the house is called *Imoong*. The houses are built facing the east and the entrance is generally in the east. Generally there are two windows on both sides of the decorated wooden door. Some houses have C.I. sheet roofing. Now-a-days dwelling houses are being constructed on modern lines with brick and concrete materials. There is an out-house in addition to the house just beyond the yard. This house is called *Maman-sangoi*. This is for receiving guests and for other purposes. The majority of the houses are ill ventilated.

The furniture consist of bed (wooden frame *chowki*), chair, table, Almirah, *Mura*, *fal* (low wooden seat), and benches. Flower and the other decorations are inscribed on the beams of the houses in the outer apartment. The Meitheis are specially fond of flowers.

The dress of the Meithei males are akin to other Hindus. The youngmen now prefer foreign dresses. Long pants, trousers, Hawai shirts, coat, etc., have become very popular among the Meithei youths of even remote villages. The female dresses of the 'Meitheis' have a characteristic of its own. Their dresses are very colourful. The dresses consist of three parts viz, *Fanek*, Full blouse and *Inafee* or *Kok-Khufee* (head dress). The dresses of the virgins and the married women are different. The females use full blouse of one colour preferably blue-black colour of velvet and other fine fabrics. These are, however, on the decline now. The females weave and embroider their own *Faneks*. *Fanek* is a multicoloured fine thick cloth. It is very widely used by majority of the women of the community. The Meithei women use *Pundarik*, *Hagrusaba* (a sort of necklace), earrings and bracelets made of gold as ornaments.

The food consists of rice, dal, fish, vegetables, sweets, betelnuts, fruits, milk, etc. Generally, the Meitheis do not take meat, eggs, and other things which is prohibited by their religion. Among common people a kind of curry is very popular which is known as *uti* and *Singjoo* (a kind of *chatni*) is also their favourite food. The *uti* is prepared with *kalai* (a kind of pulse) and soda without using oil and spices. The *singjoo* is prepared with chillies, dry fish, green vegetable leaves, spices, etc. *Howaichus* decomposed soyabin is also liked by many in the community.

The Meitheis are fond of amusements. In acts and dances, the Meitheis have earned name in the whole world. Its description in details is unnecessary here. *Mukhna* (wrestling), *Kangzai* (a kind of hockey) and other sports are also in vogue in the community.

Communal Life: Nabadwip, Brindaban, Puri, Mathura and other Hindu religious centres are annually visited by a large section of the Meitheis. As the Meitheis are orthodox Vaishnavas, the above religious centres are considered as sacred by them. *Yatras* and communal dances are prevalent in the community and various festivals are observed with great pomp and grandeur with varieties of amusements. Untouchability is wholly absent in the community and people are respected according to age.

This community is one of the original settlers of the Cachar district. The community is still very backward in the field of education. As per 1951 Census, the percentage of literates in this community varied from 4 % to 5 % only. This community has been declared as backward by the State Government.

Pangal : The Manipuri Muslims generally settle in this district just adjacent to the Meithei areas wherever they are found . The Manipuri Muslims are known as *Pangal* among the Manipuri community.

The joint family system is prevalent among the *Pangals* to some extent. The inheritance among the *Pangals* governed by the Islamic laws of inheritance. It is a usual custom among the *Pangals* that the youngest son lives with their parents and inherits the parental homestead.

Marriage and morals: The system of marriage among the *Pangals* is monogamous. The 'Polygamy' is not practised among the *Pangals* though it is allowed by the Islamic religion in special cases. The *Pangals* dislike this practice.

The *Pangal* community is divided into some 20 (twenty) *sagains* or clans. Marriage within the same clan or *Sagai* is strictly prohibited. Inter-clan marriage is widely practised. There is a particular community amongst the *Pangals* which is known as *Funga Naigi* (descendants of the converted Hill tribes). Marriage ties between the *Funga Naigis* and other *Pangals* are totally non-existent. There is also traditional bar to this kind of alliance. Among the near relations, marriage ties can only be established with maternal uncle's and paternal aunt's children. Except this there can be no marriage with other cousins.

The marriage of the *Pangals* are fixed and contracted by the parents concerned of the bridegroom and the bride. The parents or the near relatives of the prospective bridegroom visit the residence of the bride elect with 5 or 6 seers of betel nuts, betel leaves and banana. On terms of marriage being settled, the near relations of the bridegroom again visit the bride-elect's house with betelnuts, betel -leaves and bananas. This takes place just a day before the marriage ceremony. This practice of taking betel- nuts and betel- leaves is known as *Kua-Puba* or *Haizabot Puba*. These betel- nuts and betel-leaves are distributed among the bride's neighbours. The marriage ceremony is performed as per the Islamic customs.

The System of marriage registration is not practised among them. The system of civil marriage is repugnant in the eyes of the *Pangals*. Widow marriages are common in the *Pangal* community. Marriage alliances are strictly confined among the different *Sagains* (clans) of the *Pangals*. The idea of intercaste marriage is condemned by the society. To some extent the *Pangals* are a conservative community. In divorce, they follow the general *Islamic* rules.

The *Pangal* women are economically dependent on their male relatives as they are not earning members of their families. The women are respected in the *Pangal* society. As the *Pardah* system is prevalent among the *Pangals*, the activities of the women are confined to their household duties. The prostitution and traffic in woman are totally non-existent in the *Pangal* community. Drinking is strictly prohibited among them not only by religious imposition but also traditional restrictions are there. Gambling is also tabooed.

Home Life: The main dwelling house consists of one inner and one outer apartment. There is a decorated wooden door between two apartments serving as a passage. Two third of the house is covered by the inner apartment. The design of the house is rectangular in size. Many people maintain an out house in addition to the main house to receive guests and for various other purposes. The majority of the houses are ill-ventilated.

The furniture consist of bed (wooden frame *chowki*), chair, table, almirah, meatsafe, *Mura*, *Fal* (low wooden seat) and bench. Flower and other decorations are inscribed on the beams of the house in outer apartment. There are glass decorations also.

The dress of the *Pangal* males are akin to other muslims of Northern India. The young men prefer foreign dresses now-a-days. Foreign dress (trouser, Hawaii shirt, coat, etc.) have become very popular even among the *Pangal* youths of the remote villages. The female dresses of the *Pangals* have a characteristics of its own. Their dress is very colourful. The dress consists of three parts *khudai* (Head dress like *Dopatta*), full blouse and *Fanek*. The *Khudai* of the virgins are green and the married women use white *Khudai*, sometimes the *Khudais* are hand woven. They use full blouse of one colour preferably blue or black colour of velvet and other fine fabrics. The *Pangals* use hand woven multicoloured *Fanek* (a distinct female dress) as their dress. They weave and embroider their own *Faneks*. This cloth is used without stitching. Embroidered *Faneks* are preferred by the young girls. The *Pangal* women use necklace, earrings, rings and bracelets made of gold. They also use silver bracelets and rings.

The food consists of meat, fowl, fish, eggs and vegetables. Sweets, betelnuts, fruits and milk are their favourite food. They do not take any food which is prohibited by their religion. Among the common people a kind of curry known as *Uti* and *Sinjoo* is very popular. The *Uti* is prepared with *Kalai* (a kind of pulse) without using oil and spices. *Sinjoo* (a kind of *chatni*) is prepared with onion, chillies and dried fish.

Among the *Pangal* amusements are few compared to other communities. *Mukhna* (wrestling), *kangzai* (a kind of Hockey) and singing competitions are in vogue among them. Competitions are held for these sports and pastimes very often in the various *Pangal* villages. Their festivals are same with the Muslims of Northern India.

Communal Life: Mecca, Medina and other Muslim Pilgrim centres are respected and visited by the *Pangals*. *Yatras* and communal dances are not prevalent in the *Pangal* community as these customs are discouraged by their religion. There is no class distinction among the *Pangals* and they believe in social equality.

The *Pangal* population of Cachar is concentrated in Police stations of Silchar Sadar, Lakhapur and Sonai in the Silchar sub-division. This community is very backward in the field of education. The percentage of literacy in this community is 3 or 4 per cent. This community is one of the three sects of the Government recognised Backward Manipuri Communities.

BISHNUPRIYA: There is another group known as Bishnupriyas as referred earlier. According to Dr. K.P. Sinha "the Manipuries are divided into two groups namely, Meiteis and the Bishnupriyas. The Bishnupriyas are of Aryo-Mongolo-Dravidian origin. They are generally dark in complexion..... The Bishnupriya Manipuri language is of Indo- Aryan origin and is akin to Oriya, Assamese and Bengali. The Meitei language, according to the division adopted by G.A. Grierson is of the Kuki-Chin branch of the Tibeto-Burman group of languages. Apart from these factors, these two sections of people have a common stock of culture; their *kirtana*, dance, music, dress, etc., all are of the same type. There are of course a few exceptions. Thus, the 'Laiharaba' ceremony and the worship of various 'Umang Lais' or forest gods, are confined to the Meiteis, and the Kartika festival is confined mainly to the Bishnupriyas. There is no bar "(most probably among the Bishnupriyas)" to matrimonial relations between these two sections of people, although in actual practice it is of rare occurrence.... As regards the name Bishnupriyas, there is a story prevalent among the Bishnupriyas, which is also found in the *Khaumal Purana*. The story is stated thus:

During the reign of King Garib Nawaj (1714-1748 A.D.), Santadas Goswami, a wise saint and propagator of the Ramauti School of religion, came to Manipur from the West, probably from Sylhet. The king (who) was inspired by the teachings of the saint was converted to the school in no time and encouraged the people to embrace the new religious faith in place of their old one. The saint then advised the king to declare the new religion as the religion of the state. The king agreed and announced, as advised by the saint, that all the people of the country should assemble on a particular day on the bank of a lake named Nongkhrang and, after having their ablution in the waters of the lake, should get themselves initiated. All followed the declaration of the king, had their ablution in 'Nongkhrang', and were converted to the new faith. This bath prior to initiation in the lake Nongkhrang is known as Nongkhrang Iruppa or 'Ablution in Nongkhrang'. The king of the Khumals, who was a tributary

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chief under king Garib Nawaj, however, was advised by Kaireng Khullakpa, an intelligent and cultured person coming from Rangamati (in Chittagong) and taking refuge with him, not to follow the royal order on the ground that they were already purified by adopting Vaishnavism and needed no more purification. The Khumal king did accordingly, and from that time onwards, these people of the Khumal Kingdom were known as Bishnupurias, i.e. the darlings of Visnu and the language of this group of people was also known as Bishnupriya.

The name is also explained in another way which is more scientific and, therefore, more reliable. It is said that these people were followers of the Vishnu cult from very ancient times.

They installed the image of Lord Vishnu at a place in Manipur, which was given the name Bishnupur. As these people had their headquarters at Bishnupur, they are called 'Bishnupurias' or the inhabitants of Bishnupur. Their language was also, consequently named, 'Bishnupuriya' and 'Bishnupriya' is a contracted form of Bishnupuriya.^{8C}

This section of people is also known as Kala-chais or Kha-la-chais. In Manipur there is a large lake namely Logtak about 8 miles long and 6 miles wide with floating islands on it. The big lake is called kha-la- (Kha-closed water, i.e. lake and La-wide) by the Chinese. The Kha-la-chais, who called themselves Bishnupurias, are supposed to mean the children of the wide lake.^{8D} Their language is distinctly different from that of these Meiteis. The Bishnupurias are presently found living in parts of Manipur, Cachar, Tripura and Banglades.^{8E}

Assamese Community: A very small number of people living in Cachar enumerates as Assamese. From history we learn that the prior to migration of people from Sylhet, a part of British India, there were a number of Brahmins, Kayasthas, Naths and other castes belonging to the Hindu community in Cachar and all these people including the Kacharis and the Muslims used the Assamese language in literature and in Court. Translation of Sanskrit *Ramayana* into Assamese during the reign of Kachari Raja Mahamanikya or Mahamanikpha, writing of *Naradiya Kathamrita* in Assamese during the reign of Tamradhvaja, inscription in Khaspur temple of Cachar, and royal correspondences of Kachari Rajas with the Ahom kings testify to this fact. But gradually, with increase in the number of Bengali speaking caste Hindu immigrants from Sylhet, the Assamese element gave way to the Bengali element losing their separate identity. A section of Assamese people migrating to Cachar during the Burmese invasion has somehow maintained their identity. Rest of the people counted

8C. Dr. K.P. Sinha : *The Bishnupriya Manipuri Language*, Calcutta, 1981, pp. 1-3

8D. R. M. Nath : *The Background of Assamese Culture*, 1978, Guwahati, p-83.

8E. Sinha, Dr. K.P. Sinha : *The Bishnupriya Manipuri Language*, Calcutta, 1981, preface

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as Assamese are the people from Assam who stay in Cachar in connection with Government services.

Social Life: Property and inheritance: The Assamese people of the district of Cachar belong to patriarchal society. The head of the family is the seniormost male member of the family. Among the Assamese people there is the *Mritakshara* joint family system. For the inheritance of property the law of Succession Act of 1956 with some nominal variations is followed. Generally, after the death of the owner of the property, if his heirs want to divide their shares, the sons and widow of the deceased owner will take equally and the unmarried daughters will get the reasonable marriage expenditure. The right of inheritance is acquired by male children at the moment of their birth but the wife's right of inheritance arises only after her husband's death. The transfer of property through will is present among the Assamese inhabitants of the district.

Marriage and Moral: Monogamy is the prevalent custom of marriages. Polygamy is not so restricted with regard to male, but it is totally restricted with regard to female and so polyandry is wholly absent among the Assamese people of the district.

The traditional restrictions of the marriage alliances and the Rigvedic rituals are followed in the marriages among the Assamese people.

System of divorce, marriage of widows, and subcaste marriage are present but dowry system and intercaste marriage is totally absent. When a sub-caste marriage takes place the girl loses her caste and she is to be converted to her husband's caste through proper religious ceremonies which the existing traditions and usages permit.

It would be noted that proposal for marriage may be made by either party. Generally, it is the guardian who has a marriageable ward (son) directly or indirectly proposes to the guardians who has marriageable daughter. When the proposal is accepted by the other party, the marriage takes place.

No woman has to depend wholly upon man economically. The causes of this are many. Over and above widow and unmarried daughters have shares in the property. Women occupy a very respectable status in the society.

Prostitution, traffic in woman, and gambling is absent among the Assamese inhabitants of the district, but in some villages the drinking is prevalent.

Home Life: Except in case of dress and ornaments, nothing is of special character. What is common among the other Hindu communities of the district is also common among the Assamese of the district.

But there are some special ornaments, i.e., for hand, - *Gamkharu*, *Patikharu*, for ear, - *Thuria*, *Karia* and for neck - *Galpata* and *Chandrahar*. Women wear Blouse, *Riha* and *Mekhala*, but for men there is no such specific dress save *Dhuti* and *gamocha*.

Community Life: Amongst the Assamese of Cachar there are cultural centres for holding *Yatras*, communal dances like Bihu dance, marriage dances, and communal festivals, i.e., *Bohag Bihu*, *Magh Bihu*, and *Kati Bihu*, etc.

There is no economic or professional group or groups, or class or classes among the Assamese people of the district.

In every village, there is at least one Namghar, i.e., the community worship hall as well as the village court where usually the disputes among the villagers are settled.

CHAPTER-IV

AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION

(a) Land Reclamation and Utilisation :

Cachar is primarily an agricultural district. Its climate and quality of soil are not much different from those of the Brahmaputra valley. This district is the second important crop region of Assam. In the later part of the 19th century a large area of Government waste land was reclaimed for cultivation in the district. In 1903-04, rice covered 66 per cent of the total cropped area, toa 19 per cent ; oil seeds 5 per cent ; sugarcane 2 per cent; and other food grains including pulse covered 1 per cent. Wheat, barley, gram and maize were cultivated in small patches. During the last fifty years period more waste lands were opened from time to time, to accommodate immigrants who are exclusively from East Bengal (Bangladesh). At the same time large tracts of waste land have been brought under cultivation of tea. The statement below shows the blockwise area reclaimed during 1969-70.¹

(In acres)

Dev. Block/Sub-division/district	By Bulldozer	By Tractors	By Manual labour	Area cultivated by tractors.
1	2	3	4	5
Sonai	—	—	72.00	20.00
Lakhipur	—	46.00	237.00	60.00
Narringpur	—	—	—	24.00
Udarbard	—	—	78.00	—
Rajabazar	—	—	12.00	—
Katigora	—	65.00	250.00	150.00
Salchapra	1.00	5.00	103.00	—
A. Total for Silchar Sub-division	1.00	116.00	752.00	254.00
Badarpur	—	200.00	—	210.00
North Karimganj	—	—	12.48	—
South Karimganj	—	—	55.81	5.00

1. Report of the Fact Finding Survey on Cachar District, Department of Economic Studies, United Bank of India, Calcutta, 1971.

1	2	3	4	5
Patharkandi	—	5.00	8.50	40.00
Ramkrishnanagar	—	13.00	98.00	15.00
B. Total for Karimganj Sub-division	—	218.00	174.79	270.00
Hailakandi	—	10.00	25.00	10.00
Lala	—	—	68.00	50.00
Katlicherra	—	—	7.00	88.00
C. Total for Hailakandi Sub-division	—	10.00	100.00	148.00
District Total	1.00	344.00	1,026.79	672.00

Thus a total area of 1,371 acres was reclaimed by these different means during the year, while 672 acres were cultivated by tractors.

The following table shows the number of persons working as cultivators and agricultural labourers in the district as per census of 1971.

	Male	Female	Total
Cultivators	2,18,570	25,222	2,43,792
Agricultural Labourers	30,120	2,304	32,428
Total	2,48,690	27,530	2,76,220

The following is the land utilisation statistics of the district.²

		(Area in hectare)	
		1968-69	1973-74
1. Total Geographical area			
according to	(a) Professional survey	6,96,205	6,96,000
	(b) Village papers (Reporting) area	6,91,852	6,64,000
2. Forest		2,44,130	2,70,000
3. Land not available for cultivation	(a) Land put Non-Agricultural use	60,108	45,000
	(b) Barren and unculturable land	79,406	68,000
	Total	1,39,514	1,13,000

2. *Statistical Hand Book of Assam*, 1971 and 1976, Department of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, Shillong and Gauhati, pp. 25-28 and 52-53 respectively.

4. Other uncultivated land excluding fallow land	(a) permanent pastures and other grazing land	7,190	5,000
	(b) Land under Misc. tree crops and groves not included in net area	32,040	33,000
	(c) Culturable waste	10,789	9,000
	Total	50,019	47,000
5. Fallow land	(a) Fallow land other than current fallow	32,226	30,000
	(b) Current fallow	27,887	21,000
	Total	60,113	51,000
6. Net area sown		1,98,076	2,13,000
7. Total cropped area		2,61,525	2,75,000
8. Area sown more than once		63,449	62,000

It is seen from the above table that fallow lands constitute about seven per cent of the total cadastral area in the district in 1973-74. The fallow land includes practically all unsettled lands which are either hilly or low lying areas not suitable for any cultivation. The cropped area is about forty per cent of the cadastral area of the year under review. About sixteen per cent of the cadastral area is not available for cultivation. Such lands are used for homestead, roads, factories, towns and villages and are also covered by rivers and ponds. Other uncultivated lands excluding fallows form slightly less than eight per cent of the total cadastral area. Of such land, 33,000 hectares are under miscellaneous crops and groves not included in the net area sown and 9,000 hectares are cultivable waste.

(i) Cultivable waste :

In 1973-74, the district had 9,000 hectares of cultivable waste land which excluded 5,000 hectares of permanent pastures and other grazing land and 33,000 hectares of land under miscellaneous trees, crops and groves not included in the net area sown. About 1,214 hectares of virgin soil had been reclaimed during the period 1948-58 by tractors and brought under cultivation.

(b) Irrigation :

(i) Irrigation Facilities : The district of Cachar is situated in a peculiar position as it is shut in by ranges of hills on almost every side and therefore, the air remains heavy with moisture in the rainy season during which rainfall is extreme. It is seen that Cachar experience very heavy flood during the early period of British rule in 1834, 1836 and 1837 as is evident from the letters of T. Fisher and I.G. Burns, Superintendent, Cachar, to the Commissioner of Dacca. This resulted in even reduction of land revenue rate from Rs. 5/2 annas for the first class land to Rs. 3/- and that of second class land from Rs. 2/12/ and Rs. 3/8/- to Rs. 2/8/- per acre.³

In subsequent years too Cachar was swept by heavy flood caused by the Barak in spate during heavy rain. This flood water drains off primarily through the Barak. The rainy season starts from the month of May and continues up to October and about 74 per cent of annual rainfall is received during these six months. The average annual rainfall in the decade 1951-61 was 3,796.05 millimetres. During normal rains the principal crops get sufficient rain water but in the high land of the district, rain water does not accumulate sufficiently for considerable time in the fields as the waters drains off from those fields. The farmers, therefore, generally raise bunds at certain points but the serious drawback is that the water so accumulated in the fields spills over at the time when its level exceeds the height of the bunds and drains away the waste. This problem of heavy flood during excessive rain and paucity of water in low monsoon has been aspired to be solved by constructing required minor irrigation works.

There are three principal agencies in the State engaged in the implementation of the Irrigation projects. The Agriculture Department takes up the projects which involve an expenditure of less than Rs. 10 lakhs. The Flood Control and Irrigation Department executes bigger projects. Subsequently, for the construction of Irrigation Projects, specially small and medium project, the newly created Flood Control and Irrigation Department takes responsibility. But for low irrigation works under the Minor Irrigation Programmes, the Panchayats are given financial aid for implementation of such works.

According to the Cachar District Census Hand Book 1961, the areas irrigated in the district by power pump were 700 acres in

3. D. Dutta : *Cachar District Records*, pp.180, 24-5, 40-2 and Hunter's *Statistical Account of Assam*, Cachar, Vol.II, Reprinted, 1975, p. 416.

the 1951-61 period. During the last decade the Government had incurred an expenditure of rupees seventy-seven thousand in the district, which brought about 485.633 hectares of land under irrigation.⁴ The cultivators also take indigenous methods of irrigation such as lifting of water by their indigenous means which are, however, too inadequate of the requirements. Lift irrigation constitutes the principal means of irrigation in the district. The following table shows the number of pump-sets with diesel engines distributed in Cachar during 1969-70 as well as the programme for year 1970-71 for their distribution.

	1969-70	1970-71 Target
Pump-sets with 40 HP Engine	3 sets	3 sets
Pump-sets with 20 HP Engine	2 sets	2 sets
Pump-sets with 18 HP Engine	1 sets	—
Pump-sets with 15 HP Engine	9 sets	9 sets
Pump-sets with 10 HP Engine	22 sets	20 sets
Pump-sets with 5 HP Engine	10 sets	9 sets
Pump-sets with 20 HP Engine	11 sets	—
DT-14 Tractor Pumps	1 set	1 set
Total	59 sets	44 sets

The following is the list of Minor and Medium irrigation schemes undertaken by the Irrigation Department in the district. These schemes have already been completed.

Name	Expenditure
1. Lift Irrigation scheme in Mitijuri area on the left bank of Katakhal	Rs. 4,11,000.00
2. Rajeswary Nala flow Irrigation Scheme	Rs. 6,00,000.00
3. Sewai Electrical lift Irrigation Scheme	Rs. 6,00,000.00
4. Sewai Extension Electric Lift Irrigation scheme	Rs. 2,11,500.00
5. Udarband Electric Lift Irrigation Scheme	Rs. 2,12,000.00
6. Udarband Electric lift Irrigation scheme	Rs. 2,12,000.00
7. Rajabazar Electric Lift Irrigation scheme	Rs. 1,30,000.00
8. Katigora Electric Lift Irrigation Scheme	Rs. 2,84,000.00
9. Salchapara Electric Lift Irrigation scheme	Rs. 3,52,000.00
10. Rajnagar Electric Lift Irrigation Scheme	Rs. 1,46,000.00
11. Lala Electric Lift Irrigation Scheme	Rs. 2,80,000.00

4. Census of India, 1961, *District Census Hand Book*, Cachar, page 14.

There are 24 irrigation schemes in the district, which have still been continuing besides 20 more such schemes proposed to be taken up in near future. A list of such schemes is given below :-

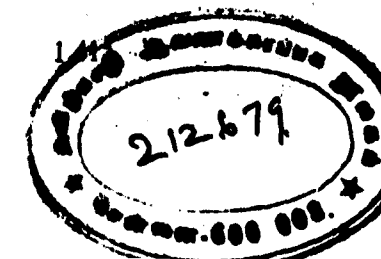
Irrigation schemes in Cachar District, Assam.

Sl. No	Name of the scheme	Sub-division Civil	Estimated cost in Rupees	Net average covered.
1	2	3	4	5
1.	Patharkandi electric lift irrigation scheme	Karimganj	Rs. 1,30,000.00	600 Acres
2.	Patharkandi extension lift irrigation scheme	-do-	Rs. 3,08,000.00	1200 "
3.	Ramkrishna Nagar electric lift irrigation scheme	-do-	Rs. 3,53,00.00	1350 "
4.	Kalagenj Jadutillah electric lift irrigation scheme	-do-	Rs. 4,38,000.00	1050 "
5.	Katakhal lift irrigation project	Hailakandi	Rs. 7,20,000.00	1800 "
6.	Nurulcharra flew irrigation project	Karimganj	Rs. 3,62,000.00	2500 "
7.	Lift irrigation scheme in Amgaghat area	Silchar	Rs. 21,82,000.00	11890 "
8.	Lift irrigation scheme in Kapatempur, Mongalpur area.	-do-	Rs. 20,20,000.00	2605 "
9.	Lift irrigation scheme in Tulagrem Pt. 1&11 in Dhanipur Mauza	-do-	Rs. 60,94,000.00	900 "
10.	Lift irrigation scheme from river Gumra in Kayaganj Maggram area	-do-	Rs. 4,69,000.00	800 "
11.	Lift irrigation scheme from river Grara in Hajeswarpur Madhaypur and araspur Mauza	-do-	Rs. 5,23,000.00	1200 "

1	2	3	4	5
12.	Lift irrigation scheme from river Barak in Borkhela area.	-do-	Rs. 3,03,000.00	346 "
13.	Lift irrigation scheme from river Surma in Chandinagar and Gaidpur areas.	-do-	Rs. 87,300.00	109 "
14.	Lift irrigation scheme from river Single in Gourerkha Dalu area	Karimganj	Rs. 86,450.00	160 "
15.	Storage of lift irrigation scheme in Gamaria area	-do-	Rs. 33,500.00	99 "
16.	Lift irrigation scheme from river lengai Ph. IV	-do-	Rs. 6,23,000.00	1,100 "
17.	Lift irrigation scheme from river Lengai ph. 111	-do-	Rs. 86,450.00	160 "
18.	Lift irrigation scheme from river lengai ph. 11	-do-	Rs. 6,08,000.00	900 "
19.	Lift irrigation scheme from river Kushiya and Sonai	-do-	Rs. 16,08,000.00	2,000 "
20.	Lift irrigation scheme in Ratanpur area R/B of Katakhal	Hailakandi	Rs. 89,900.00	160 "
21.	Lift irrigation scheme in Bharatpur area in R/B Katakhal	-do-	Rs. 91,000.00	160 "
22.	Lift irrigation scheme in Matijuri area in Barhailakandi area on R/B of Katakhal	-do-	Rs. 6,57,500.00	700 "
23.	Lift irrigation scheme in Kalticherra area on L/B of Katakhal	-do-	Rs. 5,23,500.00	1,000 "
24.	Lift irrigation scheme in Matijuri area on L/B of Katakhal	-do-	Rs. 5,23,500.00	1,000 "

Sl. No.	Name of Scheme	Sub-division	Estimated cost in Rs.	Net average covered in arcas
1	2	3	4	5
25.	Lift irrigation scheme for L/R of river Katakhal in Mahammedpur Sahabad area.	Hailla-kandi	Rs. 2,00,000.00	3,000 Acres
26.	Lift irrigation scheme in Nima- chanpur Matipuri area on R/B of Katakhal river	-do-	Rs. 14,80,000.00	5,000 "
27.	Lift irrigation scheme cum reclamation in Bowabeel area on L/B of Katakhal	-do-	Rs. 1,00,000.00	2,000 "
28.	Lift irrigation scheme is Bakri- near and Mahanpur area.	-do-	Rs. 17,65,000.00	6,000 "
29.	Dakhia Mohanpur electric lift and irrigation scheme	Silchar	N.A.	1,500 "
30.	Gimra Jalalpur lift irrigation scheme	-do-	-do-	7,000 "

1	2	3	4	5
31.	Lift irrigation scheme on L/B of Barak in Bas-kandi Singer bond	-do-	-do-	1,027 "
32.	Lift irrigation scheme on R/B of Barak in Bas-kandi area.	-do-	-do-	1,343 "
33.	Lift irrigation scheme on R/B of Barak in Naig-tam to Serisipur.	-do-	-do-	890 "
34.	Lift irrigation scheme in Sama-barighat on L/B of Barak.	Sil-char	-do-	1,250 "
35.	Lift irrigation scheme on L/B of Barak in Satharaksmdi Mauza	-do-	-do-	1,177 "
36.	Singirbond elect-rict lift irriag-tion scheme	-do-	-do-	2,100 "
37.	Lift irrigation scheme in Dha-nipur and Kaji-dhar Mauza	-do-	-do-	967 "
38.	Lift irrigation scheme of L/B of Sonai in Berakhal Nagdirgram.	-do-	-do-	1,580 "
39.	Lift irrigation scheme on L/B of Rukai Mauza	-do-	-do-	1,447 "



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1	2	3	4	5
40.	Lift irrigation scheme on L/B of Sonai at Dakhin Mohampur Ganagar area..	-do-	-do-	1,552 "
41.	Lift irrigation scheme on R/B of Rukai from Gajalghat ot Rakhal tush	-do-	-do-	1,365 "
42.	Lift irrigation scheme on L/B of Katakhal at Kuchailla Mahanpur area	Hailakandi	-do-	5,553 "
43.	Deep tube well irrigation scheme in Sarbeel area	Karimganj	-do-	10,000 "
44.	Flow irrigation scheme at Jaraitela from river Dhalcharra in Berkhela.	Silchar Rs.	15,00,000.00	---

(ii) Protective bunds : It has been noted that a large area of the district is subject to annual floods. All the rivers of the district finally find their way to the main river Barak which runs through the district. Embankments have been raised during the last two decades extensively to protect the riverine areas of the district from the ravages of floods. In 1957, the Government of Assam set up a Committee to review the embankment and drainage projects of this province. The committee then recommended drawing up of a detailed and comprehensive Master Plan for flood control in the State and making adequate provision for sufficient number of controlled openings wherever such embankments have been erected. The embankments protect the farming area and habitation but on the other way effect fertility very badly specially in the riverine

areas, where the depth of soil-cover over the substratum of sand is thin and the soil is light, being composed of fine river silt; as the annual inundation flood water is the major fertilising and regenerating agent from year to year. Naturally, therefore, when the river spill is prevented by erecting high embankments, from inundating the cultivable areas with silt laden flood water; the flood irrigation is denied to the crops and natural fertility of the land goes down as well. Such adverse effect of the embankments is corrected only by constructing adequate number of sluices of controlled openings in the embankments. If these measures are taken, the embankments practically benefit the large areas by providing protection against flood which damages crops etc., and also prepare some areas fit for double cropping and reclamation. Formerly *Ahu* paddy which is harvested in June-August was an uncertain crop especially in case of riverine areas. In case of early floods, *Bao* and jute seedlings were damaged. The Barak, the main river of the valley, flows in a very zig-zag way meeting many tributaries through the district. The floods of this river occur very severely and cause heavy damages to the crops on both banks. The embankments constructed on both sides and sluices therein have controlled the flood of the river and rendered the crops reasonably safe in the areas which were subject to the constant Barak flood. In the tributary basins also, reasonable protections have been given against such floods. The Barak flows for a length of about 137 kilometres within the geographical area of the district. The river has a number of tributaries like Jiri, Chiri, Badri, Modhura, Sonai, Katakhal etc, which create flood havoc almost in every year. Thus Cachar is a badly flood affected district where sufficient number of embankments and other flood control structures have been constructed to prevent floods. By means of embankments and sluices, flood is controlled to some extent but not according to the expectations.

Flood Control Schemes : The Karimganj Civil Sub-division has got mainly three river basins i.e. (i) Kushiya basin : (ii) Singla basin and (iii) Longai basin.

The river Kushiya is a tributary of the river Barak and the Singla and the Longai rivers originate from the Lushai Hills. In the monsoon season the flood water spills the banks and submerge the paddy fields as well as the homestead areas causing serious damage to the life and property of the people. The back flow water from the river Kushiya also enters in the country side through Kuchna, Ladurkhal and Nati-khal submerging vast areas every year. Heavy erosions also take place in the river banks at some reaches. To protect the flood affected localities one anti-erosion scheme had already been completed and some schemes

are proposed to be taken up. Two drainage schemes had also been completed and vast water logged areas have been reclaimed for cultivations. For administrative purposes of flood control works, the Karimganj Flood Control Division is divided in three Sub-divisions under one Executive Engineer with Headquarters at Karimganj. The sub-divisions are (i) Karimganj Flood Control Sub-division (ii) Patharkandi Flood Control Sub-division and (iii) Lala Flood Control Sub-division. These sub-divisions are under one Sub-divisional Officer in each. For better administrative purposes the Karimganj, Patharkandi and Lala sub-divisions are again divided into eight, eight and twelve sections respectively.

The statement below shows the name and other particulars of the embankment schemes undertaken under Karimganj Flood Control Division.

Sl. No.	Name of scheme	Location	Length	Benefitted area	Upto date expenditure Rs.
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Protecting the flood affected area of Kaliganj Ratabari Mouzas from flooding of river Kushiya phase I	Natikhal 1st Dam	0.61 km.	7500 acres	70,609/-
2.	-do- phase II	Kachua at chorgola	0.078 km.	7500 acres	38,092/-
3.	-do- phase III	Ladurkhal sluice & Kachua right bank Marginal embankment	Sluice I No. Embankment 2.5 km.	5000 acres	56,175/-
4.	Flood embankment along left bank of river Kushiya phase II	Karimganj town to Tillabazar	embankment 2.8 km.	3000 acres	6,42,7000/-
5.	Lockgate over river Kachua in Karimganj subdivision	At chorgola Approach road 900 m.	Gate I No	2500 acres	7,07,600/-

1	2	3	4	5	6
6.	Protection of Karimganj town from erosion of river Kushiya.	Karimganj town at Das-patty Tostemerghat	Spur-26 Nos. Revetment 0.488 km.	—	18,57,185/-
7.	Construction of embankment cum road along left bank of river Kushiya Kachua confluence to Karimganj.	Chorgola to Karimganj	6.9 km.	5,000 acres	Under construction.
8.	Const. of embankment cum road along left bank of river Kushiya from Tikkabazar to Lakshibazar phase I.	Tillabazar to Jagannathi	Embankment 6.78 km.	2,800 acres	Under construction
9.	Construction of embankment cum road along left bank of river Kushiya from Tillabazar to Kakshibazar phase II.	Jagannathi to Lakshibazar	Embankment 5.19 km.	2,700 acres	Under construction.
10.	Protecting the area from Phanairbond to Dullavpur from flooding of river Shingla.	Rupagram to Anipur	24.96 km.	10,00 acres	13,56,600/-
11.	Construction of dyke along with bank of river Shingla from Dullavpur to Kakra-khal	Anipur to Sonbeel	Embankment 19.08 km. channel 3.8 km.	15 acres	11,80,000/-

1	2	3	4	5	6
12.	Regrading & Resectioning Kacherra & Kaiyacherra channel for improvement of drainage facilities in Ratabari area	Anipur garden area & duhalia foot Hills	18.00 km.	45,00 acres	---

Lala Flood Control Sub-division :

(a) Construction of embankment along left bank of Katakhal river from Katlicherra to Sahabad : The length of the dyke is 7.027 km. along the river Katakhal. This protects parts of Alexanderpur Mouza and Vernerpur Mouza from followings of Katakhal. There are numerous sluices for facilitating out flow of rain accumulation. Benefitted area is about 6,500 acres. Total upto date expenditure incurred (upto 31.3.76)—Rs. 18,37,109/-.

(b) Construction of embankment along left bank of Katakhal from Sahabad to Mohammedpur : This dyke is of length of 4.60 km along the Katakhal protects part of Vernepur Mouza from the inundation of Katakhal river. This part was regularly inundated by spill of Katakhal and thereby damaging the crops and inhabitants. Some sluice culverts were constructed to check the inflow of flood water but to allow out flowing of excess water in the country side. This project will benefit 5,000 acres. Estimated amount Rs. 25.78 lakhs.

(c) Construction of dyke along left bank of Katakhal from Mohanpur to confluence : This dyke is of length of 17.08 km. constructed in the year 1964 along the Katakhal river. This protects Bakri hoar Kalinagar Mouza from the inundation of Katakhal river. There are some sluice culverts in the embankment to flush back the accumulated water in the country side while blocking the inflow of flood water from river.

Benefitted area—14 sq. miles.

Expenditure incurred upto-31.3.75

Rs. 13,97,326/-

(d) Construction of Ring bund along right bank of Katakhal at Lalamukh T.E. : This embankment was constructed along the Katakhal river in the year 1969 and is of length 3.00 km. This protects the Lalamukh T.E area from inundation from Katakhal river. Benefitted area—3,000 Acres.

Total upto date expenditure incurred Rs. 3,86,806/-.

(c) Improvement of Dhaleswari and Katakhal drainage Basin Phase-I : This scheme comprises of a sluice culvert across Lalatol channel at right bank of Katakhal river. Prior to the construction of the sluice Katakhal used to bank-flow along the channel "Lalatol" resulting submersion of entire hinterland causing wide spread extermination. Benefitted area—40 sq. miles. Total expenditure upto date incurred Rs. 93,323/-

(f) Improvement of drainage facility in Ratanpur area of right bank Katakhal in Hailakandi civil sub-division (C.P. Scheme) : This scheme was executed in 1964 and a sluice was also constructed across Moragang streamlet. This channel also like Lalatol channel used to carry lot of back flow of Katakhal river causing untold miseries to the public of that area. Benefitted area-5000 acres. Total expenditure incurred upto 31.3.75 Rs. 3,37, 706/-

(g) Improvement of Drainage system in Dhaleswar and Katakhal Basin Phase-II : This scheme includes one sluice across Boroitoli channel and regradation of Pola channel. Pola, a channel which ultimately falls in river Barak forms the Secondary drainage system of the valley through Bakri Hoar. Benefitted area 40 sq. miles. Estimated amount Rs. 6,83,700/-.

(h) Flood Protection and Drainage in Bakri Haor area in Hailakandi civil sub-division : Bakri haor is the valley-storage of Hailakandi sub-division, 'Haor' is the term in the local language which stands for low lying area where water stagnates throughout the year. It is like a detention reservoir. To reclaim this haor one scheme was initiated to flush this haor with flood water of Katakhal. The idea was that, since the flood water of Katakhal is highly impregnated with silt the bed level of haor will be automatically raised due to deposition of silt and thereby discouraging accumulation of water. But this did not meet with the approval of local populace because this is a time consuming process and more so because this area will remain inaccessible for cultivation for a number of years. Thereafter one dyke was constructed along left bank of Katakhal upto confluence and thereafter along the left bank of Barak to ensure stoppage of influx from Barak.

(c) Agriculture including horticulture :

(i) Soil : The soils of the district of Cachar falls into two sharp divisions, old alluvium and lateritic origins. The character of the soil is calyey and clay loam having large percentages of organic matter, the soil is generally fertile with fine texture. The *tilla* soils are red having a stuff of red sub-soil with gravel and stones and sandy strata. The *beel* soils having

a high contents of organic matter are eminently suitable for *Boro* cultivations. The soils of the low lying inundating tracts of flat areas are with less acid and slightly alkaline, whereas *becl* soils are markedly acid. The following brief statement shows the analysis of the soils as found in the district.⁵

Texture/types of soils	Acidity PH. value	Availability of Nitrogen (N)%	Availability of phosphatic Acid $p_2 \cdot 5\%$	Availability of potash K_2O (%)
Clay to fairly heavy clay	Acidic of highly acidic	High	Fairly high	Low

In this context it may be noted that the Soil Testing Laboratory at Silchar put up a highly satisfactory performance during 1969-70.

A study was also conducted during the year 1969-70 on the response of crops to chemical fertilizers applied on the basis of soil test results. Findings in respect of *Ahu* (*Aus*) crops indicated that the farmers could take up improved agriculture as a business proposition especially when fertilizers are applied on the basis of soil tests. It was found that, assuming other factors affecting production favourable, farmers could get back as much as six times their investment in the form of fertilizers based on soil tests in raising highyielding varieties of paddy. Profits were also found to be higher on this basis in respect of local varieties of paddy.

Major portions of the flat land of the district are suitable for growing paddy of *Ahu* (*Aus*), *Sali* and *Asra* class. In hill areas *Boro* paddy grows. In the high level of land, Mustard, Pulses, Tobacco and other oil seed crops as well as vegetables and potatoes are abundantly grown. Sugarcane is cultivated generally on the *tilla* and high flat lands.

The rivers of the district raise their *beels* above the level of surrounding regions and this condition leads to regular flooding of the nearby areas and they remain water logged even after monsoon. Hence the agriculture is mainly confined to the high lands during monsoon. In winter, these depressions grow excellent crops like pulses and soil seeds. The soils are fertile due to annual depositing of silts.

(ii) Crops : Paddy, Jute, Sugarcane, Mustard, Pulses and Tea are the major crops and tobacco, potato, vegetables and fruits of varieties like mangoes, oranges, cocoanuts, bananas, pine-apples, papaya, Jack-fruits, Kagzi, Lemons etc, are subsidiary crops. Besides linseed, til seed and

(5. *Agricultural Guide Book*, 1975-76 page 100)

fibre crops are also grown in the district. Rice is the staple food for the people of the district. In 1973-74, paddy (Autumn, winter and summer rice) was grown over 2,08,511 hectares comprising nearly two-thirds of the total cropped area of the district. The following table shows area under rice, average yield etc, for the years 1970-71 and 1973-74.⁶

Name of the crop	Area, average yield, production	1970-71	1973-74
1	2	3	4
1. Winter Rice	Area Average yield Production	1,51,650 1,258 1,87,838	1,46,911 1,074 1,55,415
2. Autumn rice	Area Average yield Production	39,000 974 37,378	49,400 1,525 74,159
3. Spring rice	Area Average yield Production	12,950 1,320 17,094	12,300 1,600 19,680
4. Rape and Mustard	Area Average yield Production	1,420 376 534	1,300 736 957
5. Jute	Area Average yield Production	852 1,805 5,977	730 1,770 5,564
6. Sugarcane	Area Average yield Production	(bales) 4,250 19,132 8,546	4,010 35,403 13,458
7. Potato	Area Average yield Production	2,200 1,881 4,138	2,400 1,730 4,152
8. Maize	Area Average yield Production	120 510 61	150 510 77

6. (i) *Agricultural Guide Book* 1975-76, Department of Agriculture, Assam.

(ii) a. *Statistical Hand Book of Assam*, 1971, pp. 32-33

b. *Statistical Hand Book of Assam*, 1976, pp.65-66

1	2	3	4
9. Wheat	Area	180	180
	Average yield	492	1,155
	Production	N.A	208
10. Gram	Area	140	250
	Average yield	492	499
	Production	69	123

Note : Area in hectares, average yield in kilogram and production in metric tonnes. 1 bale = 180 kgs.

Flood, rainfall, textural peculiarities of the soil and above all the farming practices are the factors upon which production of crops largely depends. Season-wise there are two types of crops namely *kharif* and *Rabi*. In Cachar, the Kharif season cropping is by far the main practice. Rabi crops are grown on a very small scale and are of minor importance from the economic points of view. Among Kharif crops, paddy occupies about 70 per cent of the total cultivated area and 90% of the cropped area during the Kharif season. During the rainy season all the high lands are covered with paddy. Apart from the availability of water, the natural enclosures by drains and channels gives protection to crops from damage by animals. In winter rabi crops are protected by fencing from the cattle, goats etc. During this period water recedes to low level and minor irrigation projects have taken up to augment the water supply to some areas. A brief account of cultivation of some of the crops is given below.

Paddy : It falls under four main divisions *Ahu* or *Aus* which is an autumn and summer rice sown on higher flat land ; *sali* is transplanted in medium low land ; *Asra* is sown in lands still at lower level than *sali* land and Boro, the spring rice is grown in *beel* areas. Again *Sali* and *Asra* (winter rice) rice occupies the important place among all classes of paddies and it also covers more than three-fourths of the total area under paddy in the district. *Sali* is also grown in fields where from *Ahu* or *Aus* and jute have already been harvested.

The principal varieties of paddy recommended by the Agriculture Department, Government of Assam are *Lati Sali*, *Swarna sali* which are widely popular among the peasant class. Other improved varieties of better yields are *Karrasali*, *Prosudbhog*, *Badda Bhog* and *Handique Sali*. There

are also local varieties under many names such as *Temabali Sali*, *Moina sali*, *Choiramara sali*, *Latma sali*, *Jaria sali*, *Kartik sali* etc. The crop is always transplanted. Seed beds are prepared in a higher land. The beds are ploughed thoroughly at least 7-8 times and mixed with cowdung or compost till the texture is a fine puddle of mud. Seed are sown in the months of June and July. The size of the nursery varies with the area to be transplanted, but generally, 6-6 metre wide with channels to one or less metre wide in between and all round the seed beds. The best quality seeds which have been selected from the previous years crops are sown broadcast over the bed.

After the lapse of 4-5 weeks, these become ready for transplantation when these are pulled out carefully from seed beds without injury to roots. In the prepared field, a bunch of three or four seedlings of plants are planted at different spaces. Transplanting goes on from July to the end of September or sometimes upto the first part of October and harvesting of paddy commences from November and continues upto the first fortnight of January.

The table below shows the type of grain and duration of the crop variety of *Sali Paddy*.

Name of the variety	Grains	Colour of kernel	Duration of crop (in days)	Yield per hectare
1	2	3	4	5
<i>Monohar sali</i>	Coarse	White	165	4,500 kg.
<i>Hati sali</i>	"	"	168	3,000 "
<i>Lati Sali</i>	"	"	165	2800,000 "
<i>Lau Dumra</i>	"	"	165	-do-
<i>Prasad bhog</i>	Medium	"	157	-do-
<i>Badsah bhog</i>	Fine	"	170	-do-
<i>Joha</i>	Fine	"	160	3,000 "
<i>Joya</i>	Medium	"	128	5,000 "
<i>Pusa 2-21</i>	Medium	"	105	4,500 "
<i>Ir-8</i>	Coarse	"	135	5,000 "

With the onset of the nonsoon the seed-beds for *sali* paddy are prepared with manures like cowdung and compost. Extensive and liberal use of organic manures and fertilisers are not practised due to many reasons. Use of ammonium Sulphate or urea in seed-beds is rather rare. The proper area borne by the seed-beds and the area to be transplanted varies according to the fertility of soil, time of transplanting, and such other factors. The seed is generally 300-400 grams of seeds per 9.29 metres

of puddle land. Ploughing of land is started after the reception of water over the field and the ploughing is repeated till the field turns into puddle of mud. Before transplanting the field, it is divided into some small plots and each plot is surrounded by a small embankments (ali) a few centimetres high with intention to retain water therein so that seedlings grow well. Protection of paddy field from stray cattle is secured putting up split bamboo fencing where necessary. To avoid damage by flood, late transplanation is done in the low-lying areas but the yield in this case is poor. Local method of transplanting is 4-5 seedlings per hole. The spacing and the number of seedlings for each planting depend on the type of the soil, time of plantings, water supply, weather conditions, etc. In case of late transplantation and transplanatation of comparatively aged seedlings, the number of seedlings per hole is increased. Lifting of seedlings from nursery and transplanting operation are done by both male and female. The work is of arduous type and involves stooping for hours in a field of mud under the rays of the burning tropical sun.

In order to carry out the subsequent interculturing and weeding operations conveniently and quickly in the field, planting is done now a days in lines which include one of the improved methods of cultivation. This is easily done with the help of a straight bamboo marked with coaltar or any visible colour and placing it straight across the field and transplanting the seedlings at the marking points which are equi-distant from each other. Harvesting starts from the middle of November to the end of January and is done by human labour. The crop is cut about 30 centimetres below the ears and tied up with a piece of straw. These handful are tied and made up into bundles which are carried with the help of bamboo plocs to the thrashing floors.

Asra : Asra is sown broadcast about the middle of April, the fields having been previously prepared by five to six ploughing and laddering repeatedly. It is also grown by transplanting the seedlings which are raised in seed beds like *Sali*. The seedlings of six weeks old are transplanted in the month of May in 23×23 centimeteres spacing, putting 3 or 4 seedlings per hole. It is grown in such low areas where water level rises upto 2-3 metres approximately. The embankments (*Alis*) are made smaller than in case of *Sali*. Harvesting of crops continues from the middle of November to the end of December by human labour *Sali badal*, *Dhola badal*, are the varieties of high yield and recommended by the Agriculture Department.

Ahu or Aus : It is generally grown on land of higher level near the villages, on the bank of river and sometimes on the *Sali* land as double cropping. Ploughing usually begins, when the ground has become

soft by the rain of March and continues for 7 or 8 times. The seed is sown broadcast in April and the plant grows rapidly only in sufficient rains. The crop is ready for harvesting in July. There are transplanting varieties of *Ahu* or *Aus* and is generally followed by a crop of *sali*. *Kala Dumai* and *Lal Dumai* ripe in 60-70 days. *Mural*, *Koimurali* which are sown on low-lying areas become ready for harvesting in about 4 months. Sowing begins at the beginning of February and the harvesting is done in the middle of June.

Boro : It grows in low-lying areas which remain 30 to 60 centimetres deep in water at the time of transplanting. When the field becomes dry, artificial irrigation by power pump is required and considered to be cheapest and effective means in larger and compact areas. Towards the end of October, the fields are cleared and the nursery bed is prepared. The seeds are soaked in water for 4 hours and then kept in a cool place for a day. After washing the seeds once again, the seeds are left uncovered under pressure till the grains begin to sprout. Then the seeds are sown broadcast on the nursery and left there for 5 to 6 weeks. At the time of transplantation the seedlings are carefully pulled out and kept in a muddy place for two days allowing the roots to develop. Generally the Boro transplantation takes place in the month of January. In the prepared fields 3 seedlings together are planted per hole at 15 centimetres apart. After transplanting atleast 6 irrigations are given to the crop to get a good yield. Interculture is done by weeding and stirring the soil round the base of the plant by hand in order to facilitate acceleration of more tillering. The crop takes about three months to be ready for harvestation.

Sugarcane : The area under sugarcane is increasing yearly due to heavy yield and better profit as compared to other crops. Areas covered by sugarcane in Cachar district in the years 1970-71 and 1971-72 were 4,250 and 4,500 hectares respectively. These areas were spread out both continuously and also in patches in the district. Hailakandi and Karimganj sub-divisions have more compact and continuous areas which are mostly of the *tilla* type lands and in some places on higher flat lands. The old local varieties are *khagra* and *Bombal* which have been completely replaced by hard and high yielding strains of Coimbatore varieties. These varieties are not liable to damage by Jackals and contains high sucrose. The lands for its cultivation are ploughed till they reduce to a fine tilth and the tops of the sugarcane are planted in small trenches between March and May. Sufficient quantity of cowdung and oilcake are applied in trenches and mixed with earth before planting the tops. When the crop grows one metre and more high, it is hoed, weeded and earthed up at the base of the plant. It requires 8 to 12 months for maturing

and harvesting begins generally from December to March. The sugarcane after harvest are crushed in the crushing machine pulled by either bullocks or buffaloes and the extracted juice is boiled in the big iron pan or furnace. Thus *Gur* is prepared and stored in earthen pots or in tins.

Oilseeds : Under oilseeds come Mustard, Linseed and Sesamum (*Til*). The total area under oilseed was very small and in 1973-74, only 1,300 hectares were under Rape and Mustard, 195 hectares under Linseed, and 3 hectares under Castor in the district. The mustard is generally grown in high land on the banks of rivers or in *hoars* after recedence of flood. The lands for this seed are ploughed 6 or 7 times and manured with cowdung. The seeds are sown from the middle of October to the middle of November. The crop is ready to be pulled out from middle of February. It is generally left to dry for a few days and then thrashed either in the field or at homestead. The yield from 0.404686 hectares of mustard crop is not more than two and half quintal of oilseeds.

Linseed : Like mustard, it is grown on high land near the village as well as in *hoars*. The ground is prepared by ploughing 4 or 5 times and seeds are sown broadcast. When matured the plants are pulled out and dried and trodden by cattle and finally winnowed. The crop is ready for harvest generally towards the end of March.

Til : It is grown generally near the village. The land is ploughed five to six times and the seeds are sown broadcast. When the plants are approximately 15 centimetres high they are weeded carefully. It is ready for harvest in May and the plants are dried and treated in the same manner as linseed.

Pulses : Pulse is grown mainly in alluvial flat lands. Several kinds of pulses are grown in the district but the area under the cultivation is not much. Only 2,990 hectares were under various pulses in the district during 1973-74.

Fibre crop : Fibre crops in the district are grown rarely and 730 hectares were under jute and 58 hectares were under cotton cultivations during 1973-74. Jute is sown in higher lands on the bank of rivers. The land for this cultivation is ploughed and harrowed to a fine tilth. Sowing of jute seeds is completed before the rain starts in March. *Capsularies* varieties are grown on high and medium land while *ollitorius* is grown on high land after the middle of April. *Capsularis* IR 212 variety is suitable for all types of land and can be sown from February onwards. Other variety of *Capsularis* is suitable for low land and can be sown from February to second week of March. But *Capsularies* D-154 variety is suitable for midland exposed to flood and water logging and can

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be sown from first week to last week of March. At least three or four times weeding are carried out to the plants and operation is done to keep the plants separate from each other at a certain space. Manures like cowdung, compost, etc, are applied for good crop. The crop is ready for harvest in the months of September and October. The crops are cut almost at the ground, tied in bundles and left in the field for several days for falling of the leaves. The bundles are then put in stack (*Jak*) in water for a fortnight and so, and then fibres are pulled out from the stem by hands. Then fibres are washed out well and dried in sunshine. The dried fibres are tied in to bundles and made ready for sale. Another important fibre of Rhea (*Bochnaria nivea*) is grown in the gardens. The fibre of Rhea is very strong and durable and is used for making fishing nets.

Garden crops : Fruits and vegetables: Cultivation of all types of fruits and vegetables occupies an important place both in respect of area under cultivation and also of economic value in the district. Among fruits: Banana (*Kal*), Papaya (*Amita*), Guava (*Madhuri*), Jackfruits (*Kathal*), Pineapples (*Anaras*), Oranges (*Kumala*), Lemons (*Nemu* or *Kagji*), Lichi, Mango (*aam*), Coconut (*Narikal*), etc, are some common fruits of the district. Fruits trees are almost planted around the homesteads although they are grown in the high land like *tillas*.

Banana: (*Musa sapientum*) : It is grown on the hills and plains as well and bears fruits throughout the year. Banana is known as *Kal* in Assam and there are varieties of this crop important of which are *Malbhog*, *Athia*, *Chenichampa*, *Champa*, *Dingamanik*, *Kachakal*, *Sail* and *Jahaji*. *Kachakal* is used as vegetables. *Chenichampa* is the high yielding variety and sweet, *Malbhog* is midium yielding variety and of very pleasant taste and flavour while *Athia* is cool, energetic and wholesome. The cultivated varieties of banana do not contain viable seeds. Propagation is, therefore, done by suckers which arise at the base of the plants from the underground stem of rhizome. The suckers usually used are of two or three months old.

Orange: Orange is a small evergreen tree armed with small straight thorns. The Assamese people call it *Sumathira*. The cultivation of orange is carried mainly on hillocks. It is also cultivated on the low foot-hills. Generally, orange is grown from seed and plantation is done in rainy season. The trees bear fruits in the fifth or sixth year after plantation and take 3 years more to come in to a profitable bearing. Proper attention in interculture, pruning, proper manuring, after care on account of the attack of various pests and diseases will make this cultivation economically profitable to the district.

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Limes and Lemons : These are small trees. The lime fruits are of round and oval shape but the lemons are mostly oval. Both varieties are widely found throughout the district. It is found almost in every household mainly in the rural areas. Propagation of the plant is done generally from seeds. But raising the plant from seed delays in bearing fruits. The plant bears fruits throughout the whole year but the heaviest crops are obtained during the summer season, i.e., from June to October.

Pineapples: Though wide range of soil is suitable for pineapple, it is generally grown on *tillas* under semi-shaded condition in order to protect from excessive heat. The planting of pineapple is done from April to September. The fruits mature from June to September.

In this context, it may be noted here that there is a Government Fruit Preservation Industry at Silchar which was established in 1954. It was handed over to the Assam Agro-Industries Development Corporation Ltd. in 1978. Fruit products manufactured here are squashes from oranges, pineapples and lemons; Jame, Jelly, canned fruit; and juice from pineapple.

Arecanut: Arecanut (*Tamol*) is grown almost as universally as the banana and with the bamboo, forms the great trinity of trees among which houses of the Assamese are usually imbedded. The plantation is hoed up and kept clear of weeds and the trees are most liberally manured with cowdung.

Besides the fruit crops mentioned above, there are other common fruits in the district, of which mention has been made above. Mango trees are not much in the district and whatever is found, is less sweet and damaged by insects. The cultivation of coconut in the district is increasing rapidly. Both the Jackfruits and Papayas are taken green and ripe. The green fruits are used for curry.

Other Vegetables : Cultivation of vegetables is seen every where in the district. In winter season, beans, french beans, peas, carrot, reddish, turnip, spinach, broodleaf, mustard, cabbage, cauliflower, Kholkhol, tomato, onion, potato, etc. are grown extensively both in kitchen garden as well as on larger scale. Bitter-gourd (*Kerela*), sponge-gourd (*jika*), pumpkin (*Rongalao* or *Mitha Kumra*), white-gourd, (*Komora*), bottle-gourd (*Lao*), red-pumkin, (*Ranga-lao*), cucumber (*Tiyah*), ladies-finger (*Bhendi*), brinjal (*Bengana*), and different kinds of arum (*Kachu*) and sweet potato (*Mitha Aloo*), also are grown in the district.

Miscellaneous cash crops : The miscellaneous crops like tobacco (*Dhapat*), spices (*Masala*), condiments, betel-leaf (*Pan*), etc., are not much important in the agricultural economy of the district. These are

generally cultivated in small scale here and there in the village fields and homestead gardens.

Tea : Tea also is produced in Cachar district. The district has attained the 4th position as tea growing area in the state of Assam as per 1971 census. The tea industry in the district has been gradually expanding since the time of the British occupation. The table below shows the area and production of the tea gardens in the district.

Year	Area in Hectares	Production in thousand kg.	Year	Area in Hectares	Production in thousand kg.
1951	30,445	19,827,000	1968	30,331	28,302
1956	29,634	13,563,000	1969	30,527	21,360
1961	29,924	20,181,000	1970	30,854	22,818
1962	30,019	16,747,000	1971	30,018	23,606
1963	29,713	17,649,000	1972	31,259	24,816
1964	29,869	19,515,000	1973	31,231	25,751
1965	30,111	19,228,000	1974	31,422	28,286
1966	30,181	19,374,000	1975	31,496	27,574
1967	30,019	21,608,000	1976	30,853	31,507

Note : Figures of 1976 are provinsional.

Source : Directorate of Economics and Statistics Assam.

There were 114 tea gardens in the district in 1962 and 113 in 1970. The above table shows that the area under tea was more or less constant but the production was increasing steadily and in 1971, the district produced 23,606,000 kgs. of tea and secured the fourth position in the State of Assam as a tea producing district. The average daily number of labourers was 49,364 persons and the percentage of labour per hectare was 1.60.

Methods of tea culture and marketing vary widely throughout the world. The tea plant being perennial, its culture must inevitably be different from ordinary farm practices where annual crops are raised. The tea plant, bush or tree is an over-green of the 'Comellia' family, which flourishes in warm, rainy regions of the tropic and sub-tropic. Although tea is a hardy plant which grows under diverse conditions, the climate considered most favourable to tea culture is characterised by a small daily rise in temperature, generous rain throughout the year at least 7.52 to 2.03 metres annually and the absence of strong day winds and freezing temperature. Similarly, soil on which tea is grown has a strong influence on the quality of the tea. Clay soils tend to give a

strong scent but poorer colour to tea. Black organic soils in damp areas tend to produce a leaf giving a sweet taste but a poor aroma. Loose sandy loams usually give a favourable balance of taste and aroma. Practically all tea soils must be fertilised if the tea plant is to thrive. The luxurious growth of a tea plant depends upon general care in cultivation, pruning, plucking, and control of pests and diseases.

The plant yields crops for eight months and in some cases, for the whole year. As such, need for proper cultivation is of utmost importance and growth of all kinds of weed and other plants are to be checked. Tea cannot thrive in a water logged soil or in one which is subject to frequent and lengthy periods of flooding. The tea land must be properly drained in order to maintain the soil at its optimum water content for as long a period as possible throughout the year. Further, the harmful effect of prolonged dry spells resulting in low water content of the soil, is equally well recognised.

In its natural state in the forest, the tea grows to a height from 4.57 to 9.14 metres or more, a height and an extent of foliage under which it is unfit for rapid production of leaves in successive 'flushes' while its shape as well as height would render the labour of gathering the leaves both difficult and expensive. Hence, the primary object of pruning is to change the form which the plant would naturally take, and turn it into a low bush instead of a tree. Further pruning is necessary to encourage the bush to produce leaves rather than wood, and to spread into a ramification to twigs, giving a large plucking surface, and yet not so dense as to obstruct the free passage of light and air to the leaves everywhere, which is a condition essential to the healthy life of the tea plant.

As the plant matures, it becomes necessary to remove dead leaves and branches and to thin out unproductive shoots where growth has become too dense.

In all questions of pruning, as well as other operations, the continued robust health of the plant must be reckoned as of primary importance, and when properly done, pruning can be a distinct aid rather than a hindrance to health. There are many methods in vogue for pruning young tea plants. After the young plant has been four to five years in the ground, and has been pruned judiciously, its frame will be formed, sound and well balanced. Subsequent pruning methods will depend to a great extent on climatic and economic conditions, compatible with maintaining a sound health and steady yielding bush. Frequency of pruning whether annual, biennial, or at longer intervals, and the amount of growth removed in pruning, are the two chief factors in pruning which chiefly influence crop and quality.

The need for replanting in certain area arises when an area of tea has become unproductive for one of these reasons, (a) extreme age of the tea, (b) death or debility through disease, improvement of soil or bad cultural methods of a large percentage of the bushes.

Having selected the area for replanting, the first operation is to be directed towards the preparation of nurseries. After old tea plant has been uprooted and the land hoed up, it is customary and a very good plan to leave it under green crop such as *Tephrosia Candida*, *Crotolaria anagyroides*, *Desmodium gyroides* and *Indigofera taysmanii*.

The object of manuring of tea gardens is to maintain in the soil a sufficiency of materials necessary to maintain the growth required to produce a certain level of crop, without detriment to the plant itself. Adequate manuring of young plant is of the greatest importance in the production of vigorous healthy plants with a well formed permanent frame and in bringing them into economic bearing as soon as possible.

The use of inorganic fertilisers at the time of planting out from the nursery is not recommended. Dry well-rotten cattle manure at the rate of 101 lbs. and 1 oz. of ordinary superphosphate per pit should be used. In case cattle manure is in short supply, oil cake at the rate of 8 to 12. ozs. per pit may be used as substitute. Sterilized animal meal (without any inorganic additive) is a valuable alternative to either cattle manure or oil cake, and should be used at the rate of 6-10 ozs. per pit well mixed with the soil. Following planting, five months later in April planting and twelve months later in Autumn planting, inorganic manure mixture of NPK in the proportion of 1:2:2 is recommended, until such time as the young plants root and cover the ground. Manures should not be applied after pruning which increases the incidence of rimblight until most of the new shoots occur. In droughty areas manures should not be applied before the early rains have moistened the soil. In case of mature tea, cattle manure is no longer lasting than the supposedly quick-acting short-lasting artificials.

In order to enrich the tea soil with nitrogen and to increase its fertility, shade trees and green crops belonging to the family *leguminosae* are grown with great advantage. Besides, they serve to supply shade to the tea bushes, reduce soil wash, suppress weed growth and also act as wind breakers and serve as protection against hailstorm etc. The shade trees like *Albizzia procera*, *Alebbel*, *Asinensis*, *Aodorotis Simiam*, *Amoluccana*, *Dolbergia assamica*, *Derris robusta*, etc. and green crops like *Crotolaria anagyroids*, *Tephrosia Candida*, *Indigofera Taysmanii*, *Desmodium gyroides* etc., are usually grown in tea garden with specific purposes. Green crops

should however, be used only in young tea, cut back tea, and tea which has not sufficient spread to cover the soil well.

The bush is grown with the sole object of producing leaves. The process of building up a new growth is quite interesting and shows that the leaves are the more important part of the plant than any other part of its structure. To a great extent the food supply available to the bush must determine the extent to which a bush can be plucked without deterioration. The most efficient method of plucking the crop from the tea bush will be that which obtains the crop of the highest quality for an indefinite period of years. The growth of the tea plant, like other plants, is not maintained at a continuous rate; but periods of rapid growth alternate with periods of dormancy. The new shoot which a bush produces in the spring makes a certain amount of growth and then becomes dormant. The terminal bud at this stage being small and thin is commonly termed as '*Banjhi*'.

The plucking of tea leaf for manufacture is usually begun after the bushes are about three years old, though a certain amount of light plucking is also carried on even before they attain this stage. In the first flush of leaf after pruning the extreme tip of the growing branch consisting of the unopened leaf bud together with one or two leaves is plucked, and two or three leaves lower down, which are older are left standing. Following this operation, eventually another branch springs from the axile of the leaf lower down and grows out. Two or even three, may spring from the same axile and simultaneously a branch may spring from the leaf axile immediately below. All these constitute the second flush. The extreme tip of this flush is now picked, leaving at least one fully developed leaf to remain on each branch. After the second flush is over, a third flush breaks out in its turn in the same manner. The flushes continue to come and there may be ten or even fifteen flushes in the year. Not all the branches flush at the same time, and the shoots are therefore, not ready to pluck all at one time. This necessitates a large number of plucking and the bushes are gone over thirty or more times in the year.

Plucking is broadly classed as fine, medium and coarse. The plucking of the tip with one or two leaves is called fine; that with the tip and three leaves is called medium; and that with the tip and four leaves is called coarse. When high quality is the object, fine plucking is resorted to and when quantity is the object, medium and coarse pluckings are adopted.

The manufacture of the green tea leaves into tea of commerce is conducted in large tea factories. The processes are mainly four in number : (i) Withering (ii) Rolling, (iii) Fermentation and (iv) Drying.

The withering merely consists of in allowing the freshly picked leaves to dry somewhat until they lose part of their moisture during which process they become tramped and somewhat tough and assume a twist in shape. If the leaves are spread in a thin layer in a well ventilated room overnight or approximately for eighteen hours, the withering is generally completed to the degree required. The withering really prepares the leaf for the next process of rolling.

The rolling process consists of brushing the leaves withered in the above manner, by subjecting them to the grinding or pressing action of two hard surfaces, one moving over the other. The leaves are crushed and bruised, the leaf cells are broken and cell contents including the much prized oil, flow over and wet outer surface of leaves there to undergo the fermentation or olivation of the next stage more thoroughly.

The rolled leaves are now subjected to fermentation. A yellowish copper colour is taken as a good indication of correct fermentation while a black colour indicates overfermentation. All the 'CUP' qualities of tea, colour, pungency, strength and flavour depend a great deal upon correctness of this stage.

The next process is the stopping of any further fermentation, the killing of the ferment and precaution of all further organic changes, and then the slow desiccation or drying out of the leaf. The tea leaf at this stage is crisp, dry and brittle and can be rubbed between the hands into a coarse powder.

The subsequent processes consist merely in shifting the tea and sorting it into the different grades already mentioned by appropriate sieves and packing them in the airtight containers, usually wooden chests lined with aluminium sheet.

The tea bushes are quite often attacked by different kinds of pests and diseases. Some of the major pests are Loopers, Caterpillars, Red Slug Caterpillars, Bunch Caterpillars, Red Borers, Tea Mosquitoes, Tea Leaf Hoppers, Red Spiders, Crickets, Termites, Root-Rot, Nematodes, etc. The disease which occurs in tea bushes are primarily fungus although Bacteria, virus and non-parasitic diseases other than fungus are also prevalent. A few major diseases are Charcoal Stump Rot, Brown Root Rot, Violet Root Rot, Branch Canker, Thorny Blight, Thread Blight, Blister Blight etc.

(d) Progress of Scientific Agriculture : (i) Agricultural implements : The plough made out of some light as well as hard wood is the age-old implement which is commonly used in the district. In local language it is called *Nangal*. It consists of three parts, the handle and body which are usually all in one piece of wood, the pole which joins the plough

at the junction of the handle and the body, and the yoke which is merely a piece of wood fastened by rope at right angles to the pole, with pegs affixed to it to keep it from sliding from the necks of the bullocks. The *phal* (spear) affixed to the sharp end of the front portion of the body pierces the ground. This piece of iron is the only portion of the plough which the farmer has to purchase. The rest he makes himself sometimes in collaboration with his cultivator friend. The tith attained by wooden plough is generally 0.07 to 0.10 metres. Not more than the area of two-fifths of an acre can be ploughed in one day with the wooden plough and a good pair of bullocks.

The harrow (*mai*), which is generally used to crush the clods after ploughing the land is about eight feet in length. A man stands on it as it is drawn across the field by a pair of bullocks. Two pieces of bamboo are clogged together in the shape of a ladder. Bullocks are tied with yoke and the harrow is attached to the yoke with the help of a rope. It is prepared by the cultivator himself, from the bamboos growing in his garden. The harrow is mainly used as secondary tillage implement. It supplements the work of a plough for preparing the seed-bed for crops and for covering the seeds after sowing. The object of harrowing is to obtain a proper tith of soil. The hoe (*Kor* or *Kodal*) occupies a very important place among the indigenous agricultural implements. It is used to trim the embankments (*alis*) which help to retain water. It is also used in upturning the soil of such fields which plough cannot easily move, and to culture that part of the field where plough cannot go. It is a multipurpose implement used for any agricultural operation, such as forming ridges, bunds, water courses and channels, preparing small seed beds and removing stumps of crops, harvesting roof crops etc. Sickles (*kachi*) are used for reaping paddy. This implement is to be purchased. In *ahu* or *aus* cultivation a large wooden rake (*Bindha*) with teeth nearly one foot in length is dragged over the crop by a bullock when the plants are about six inches high. The *nirani*, a kind of trowel with a longhandle is used for weeding *aus* rice.

The bullock carts are used to carry harvested paddy or pulses from the fields and at times to carry manure to the field although its chief use is to carry merchandise to and from the market.

Except in tea gardens, the use of improved agricultural implements in the districts of Assam is rather infrequent. In some areas tractors have been used to reclaim waste lands. However, this does not find favour with the ordinary cultivators for several reasons like heavy capital investment and paucity of large blocks of land due to repeated fragmentation of agricultural holdings. Among the improved agricultural implements

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used in the district following are important ones : (i) iron plough (ii) improved harrows, (iii) improved seed drills, (iv) improved threshers, (v) rotary chaff cutters, (vi) sprayers and dusters, (vii) sugarcane crushers worked by power, (viii) diesel oil engines with pumps for irrigation purposes and (ix) electric pumps for irrigation purposes.

But all these instruments are not easily available to the needy cultivators as such, even now-a-days the wooden plough is the common instrument which is usually seen among the cultivators.

The following table shows the number of agricultural machineries and implements in the Cachar district as in 1965.

1. Plough	(a) Wooden	—	127,942
	Iron	—	26
2. Cart	—	—	327
3. Sugarcane crushers	(a) Power driven		Nil
	(b) Others		1,316
4. Electric pump for Irrigation purpose	—	—	2
5. Ghanis	—	—	32

The following two brief statements show the distribution of agricultural implements in 1969-70 and targets for distribution of the same in 1970-71.

Table-1

Distributions of agricultural implements in Cachar 1969-70.

Sub-division	M.B Ploughs	Jap weeders	Tractors	Power tillers
1	2	3	4	5
Silchar sub-division	180	101	—	6
Karimganj subdivision	96	101	1	5
Hailakandi sub-division	37	118	—	—
District total	312	320	1	11

* Source : Office of the Administrator, IADP, Cachar, Silchar.

Table No. 2

Targets for distribution of agricultural implements during 1970-71 (in number)*

Sub division	Seed drills	M.B. ploughs	Weeders	Hand sprayers	Hand dusters	Power pumps	Power tillers	Power Sprayer cum dusters.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Silchar	5	1,700	835	161	60	49	3	3
Karimganj	5	541	498	145	65	10	5	—
Hailakandi	—	498	380	69	61	5	—	—
District total	10	2,779	1,713	375	186	64	8	3

In 1973-74, 11 seed drillers, 139 iron ploughs, 98 weeders, 1 power-pump, 42 dusters, 306 sprayer, 16,105 kg. chemical fertilizer and 12,843 kg. of pesticides were distributed in Cachar district.

(ii) Fertilizers : As in other districts of Assam, in Cachar too, fertilizers were not commonly used in the past. Only in recent years different kinds of fertilizers have been used by the cultivators at the initiative of the Department of Agriculture and other agencies.

Artificial fertilizers namely Sulphate or Ammonia, Supperphosphate, Muriate of potash, Ammonium Nitrate, Urea, M.F and Oilcake have been recently introduced. The method of application, the doses required for different crops are yet to be decided on experiments. Nevertheless, a healthy trend has been noticed in the consumption of fertilizers over the years. Facilities in the form of short-term loans and demonstrations had led to a great spurt in fertilizer consumption in the early period of the IADP and the peak of 4,743,521 tonnes was reached in 1965-66. Although there were certain unfavourable factors operating in 1970, viz, discontinuation of the short-term loan scheme, inadequate distribution of the Assam Agro-Industries Development Corporation, unfavourable weather condition, etc. the consumption of chemical fertilizers during the year (1970) was of the order of 1,486.109 tonnes compared to 1,091.056 tonnes a year earlier. The major portion of the fertilizers used was for the high yielding varieties

* Source : Office of the Administrator, IADP, Cachar, Silchar.

of crops. As far as the attitude of Cachar's cultivators in general towards the use of fertilizers is concerned, it is found that 43 per cent of the cultivators used fertilizers for raising crop yields in 1970-71, while the remainder did not use them for reasons like floods and droughts, high cost of fertilizers, weak supply line, misgivings regarding the long-run effects of fertilizers on the land, fertility status of soil etc.

The following two statements at A and B show the consumption of chemical fertilizers in the district in 1969-70 and targets for distribution in 1970-71 respectively.

Statement-A—for the year 1969-70 (In tonnes)

Sub-division	Nitrogenous	Phosphatic	Potassic	Total
1	2	3	4	5
Silchar Sub-division	200.163	147.498	37.208	384.859
Karimganj Sub-division	123.328	91.995	25.045	240.368
Hailakandi Sub-division	82.581	53.791	12.209	153.581
District Total	406.062	293.284	79.462	778.808
Distributed by Agro-Industries Development Corporation	446.534	185.743	75.024	707.301
Grand Total	852.596	479.027	154.486	1,486.109

Statement-B—for the year 1970-71 (in Tonnes)

Sub-division, District	Nitrogenous	Phosphatic	Potassic	Total
1	2	3	4	5
Silchar Sub-division	4,858	4,656	1,254	10,768
Karimganj Sub-division	1,894	1,751	509	4,154
Hailakandi Sub-division	1,251	1,242	331	2,824
District Total	8,003	7,649	2,094	17,746

Till very recently the use of fertilizers was confined mainly to the tea gardens. The Assam Agro-industries Development Corporation has started supplying of fertilizers since 1967-68. But the Agriculture Department started distribution of fertilizers well ahead.

(iii) **Distribution of improved seeds** : Cultivators usually preserve a portion of their crop to be used as seeds for the next sowing. Needy cultivator can also buy at moderate rates improved seeds of paddy, jute, mustard, sugarcane, potato etc, produced by seed Farms established in several Blocks of the District. Saplings of fruit trees are also available cheaply at the Horticulture Nursery. The Assam Seeds Corporation was set up in 1967 to produce, procure and distribute quality seeds. All Seed Farms and the Horticultural Nurseries have been handed over to the Corporation by the Agriculture Department. Besides the Horticultural Nurseries at Ghoon-gor and Mainakhal in Silchar, Ram Krishna Nagar in Karimganj and Duhatia in Hailakandi Sub-division which were handed over to the Corporation by the Agriculture Department, the Corporation has the following Seed Farms in Cachar District :

Name of Farm	Year of starting	Area in acres	Area under cultivation (Acres)
Silchar Sub-division			
1. Alambag	1957-58	17.00	8.00
2. Mainakhal	1957-58	56.00	19.00
3. Salohapara	1945-59	50.00	20.00
Hailakandi Sub-division			
4. Monipur	1957-58	20.00	13.00
5. Kushilla	1959-60	20.00	11.50
6. Bijaypur	1959-60	20.00	11.50
Karimganj Sub-division			
7. Mahakal	1962-63	7.40	6.50
8. Durlavcheria	1959-60	50.00	17.50

Paddy seeds so far distributed by the government include Monohar-Sali, Prosadbhog, Badshadhog, Basmati, Negeri Bas, and Rangadaria. Among other improved varieties are IR 8, Taichung Native, Jaya, Padmapankaj, Jagannath, Kilooa Bao (Deep water paddy), Kolangi etc.

(iv) **Field Management Committees** : In order to develop cultivation along progressive and scientific lines, Field Management Committees have been formed all over the state since 1959-60. These committees are formed from among the actual tillers. All the activities of the Agriculture Department are canalised through these committees. The members receive training in Development Blocks where they attend seminars on various aspects of agriculture. The Agriculture Extension Officers and *Gramse-vaks* are engaged in giving proper guidance to the farmers in respect of improved methods of cultivation. Demonstration by these trained officers on various aspects of improved techniques of production have encouraged the farmers in adopting such techniques.

Incidentally it may be mentioned here that the 1970-71 programme envisages preparation of farm plans for all the members of institutions like Field Management Committees, Youth Clubs, Co-operative Farming Societies, etc. Farm planning has already been made compulsory for the members of Co-operative societies in obtaining loans. Besides one receptive village in each Block, preferably enjoying irrigation facilities, is proposed to be selected and efforts are being concentrated on preparing simple farm plans for all the growers of the village.

For the development of agriculture, the Assam Agricultural University has been established. More emphasis has now been laid on agricultural research. The benefits from finds of these researches also are being enjoyed by it as are done by the other districts of Assam. Besides for the training of the farmers, a number of Training Institutes are functioning in the state. In Cachar there are one Gram Sevak Training Centre, and one Farmers Training Centre at Arunahal. Duration of training for the *Gram sevaks* is for one year and for the Farmers Training Centre it is 3 months only.

In short, since the beginning of the planning era, the tempo of agricultural development in the district was accelerated with distribution of improved seeds, fertilizers and improved implements and significant progress was achieved in the extension of area under progressive methods of cultivation as also in the production of different crops. It is also significant to note that the district of Cachar has been included under an Agricultural Package Programme since the early part of 1963. The Programme which covered four Blocks initially in 1963-64 has now been extended to all the fifteen Blocks in the district.

(v) **Plant protection** : The incidence of pests and diseases is also noticed in the district and in 1969-70 *sall* cultivation in the low-lying areas of Karimganj and Hailakandi sub-divisions covering about 2,000 acres was attacked with caterpillars. The pest attack was however, brought under

control before it could do much damage. The incidence of pest in winter vegetables, Jute and Sugarcane was found to be of no serious consequence. In 1969-70, an area of 140 acres of *Sali* and *Ahu* field was successfully covered by pesticides. Similar demonstrations in potato against blight and soil were conducted in the same year.

The following statement shows the distribution of pesticides and area treated against pests and diseases in the district in 1969-70.

	B.H.C. Dust	B.H.C. Wettable	D.D.T. dust	D.D.T. Wettable	Malathion	Thiodan	Sadrene	Aldro	Fungicides	Basudin	Roger	Retex.
Pesticides distributed quantity in kgs. and litre	5,143	2,103	202	430	23	76	535	2,016	1,023	4	10	2
Area treated (in acres)												
High yielding variety |				Other than High-yielding variety								
Aus	Sali	Boro	Aus	Sali	Jute	Mus-tard	Pulses	Po-tato	Sugar cane	Others		
1,083	458	1,361	1,990	10,460	439	103	181	350	254	691		

Besides, there is one Agricultural Farming Corporation in Chargola in Karimganj Sub-division. The Revenue and Forest Departments of the Govt. of Assam allotted 1025 *bighas* of land to this Corporation and its capacity of members and the actual number of share-holders are 80 and 18 respectively.

(e) **Animal Husbandry and Fisheries** : The livestock population of the district increases considerably during the period 1955-1961. The livestock population of Cachar was 2,26,644 in 1972.

Statement showing the livestock population in Cachar district as in 1966 and 1972.

Cachar District.							
Year	Cattle	Buffaloes	Sheep	Goats	Other livestock (pigs only)	Total Livestock	Poultry
1966	5,30,650	88,710	2,323	1,69,772	5,899	7,97,304	13,32,656
1972	4,97,494	80,726	2,878	1,77,386	7,287	—	14,44,762

The cattle of the district are not of well breed size. They are all under-sized and half-starved. In the old District Gazetteer of Cachar, B.C. Allen describes that the conditions of cattle were miserable and some were of the sorriest specimens of their kind. For better breeding of cattle no attention was given in the past. The Manipuri cattle, though small, are fine and stardy, and therefore suitable for Cachar district. In the past no bull ever was set aside to be the sires of the herd and the cows were generally covered by a young and immature male. Government have, however, taken steps to improve the breed of cattle and their health. The density of livestock population in Cachar district during 1972 was 110 per square kilometre.

Goats in the district were 1,77,386 in 1972 and came next to cattle. The goat does not belong to any particular breed. The goat milk is very nutritious for health but its yielding capacity is low. In the same year the total number of buffaloes was 80,726 out of which 31,259 were males, 32,263 females and 16,504 young buffaloes. The number of horses and ponies were 287, sheep 2,878 and pigs 7,297, in the same year.

The important diseases which affected livestock and poultry in Assam or against which preventive measures were undertaken during the last few years are as follows : Rinderpest, Hemorrhagic Septicemia, Black quarter, Anthrax, Foot and Mouth diseases, B.C.P.P.; Rabies, Ranikhet, *Coccidiosis*, Fowl pest etc. The incidence of the outbreak of Rinderpest was reported to have been controlled. The performance of Rinderpest Eradication scheme was quite satisfactory. The main livestock products are meat, bone, horn and hoofs, hides and skin wool. The variety of the sheep and goat available in the state is of mutton type and these have little wool value.

(i) **Fodder crops** : The fodder crops are both perennial and seasonal. In Block Development areas and veterinary Dispensaries fodder crops have been raised for demonstration purposes. Free distribution of seeds and roots of improved grasses is undertaken by the centres where fodder crops are grown. The area of fodder crops under Govt. farm is only 15.2 hectares in the district.

(ii) **Dairy Farming** : There is one Government Dairy Farm at Ghoongur which supplies milk to the people of Silchar town.

(iii) **Poultry** : There is one Government poultry farm at Silicoorie in Cachar. One Duck farm is also located at Silicoorie. Besides there are two small poultry farms at Ghoongur and East Harinagar.

(iv) **Measures to improve the quality of breeds and secure greater output** : In 1972, there were 1,78,712 male cattle and 28,268 working buffaloes which were above three years old. In the said year 183 buffaloes and 576 cattle were used for breeding purposes. In order to improve the breed

of the indigenous creed, various measures have been adopted by the Veterinary Department. It procured and distributed Harayana bulls and R.I.R. bulls in the Panchayat areas on loan basis. Key Village Centres, Insemination Centres, Sub-centres, Semen Collection Centres and Bull Depots were opened. In some Key Village Centres, Artificial Insemination Centres are functioning and attempt is made to increase the opening of such centres in the district. To ensure greater output through better breeding, the breeders as well as the farmers are encouraged through exhibitions, meetings and demonstrations, where the benefits of adopting scientific breeding, feeding, and management are explained. In view of the fact that various species of livestock are of poor stock the task of bringing about improvement of breed appears to be stupendous. In the Fourth Five-Year Plan, emphasis was laid on the expansion of the existing livestock farms., Key Village Scheme and distribution of improved breeding stock on a larger scale.

(v) **Animal Diseases and Veterinary Hospitals** : The common diseases of Cattle and other livestock of the districts have already been discussed. To protect the animals from different diseases, preventive as well as curative measures have been adopted by the Department. Disease coverage is given through Veterinary Hospitals and Dispensaries, Mobile Veterinary Dispensaries and First Aid Centres, established throughout the state. To support the programme, a modern Animal Health Centre and a Biological Products Centre have been established at Khanapara in Kamrup district. Prophylactic viral and bacterial vaccines against all livestock diseases are produced at Khanapara and supplied to the entire North-Eastern Region including Cachar. The district of Cachar as on January, 1978 contained 32 Veterinary Hospitals and Dispensaries. Besides, there are some Mobile Block Dispensaries in Cachar to give coverage to the cattle and other livestock population in the district. In addition to that in six Key Village Blocks, there are six Artificial Insemination Centres under Key Village Schemes. Further eight such Sub-centres are also functioning there in the district.

The following list shows Veterinary Hospitals and Dispensaries in Cachar district as in January, 1978.

Silchar Sub-Division.

1. Silchar Veterinary Hospital.
2. Silchar Mobile Veterinary Dispensary.
3. Barkhola Veterinary Hospital.
4. Barjalenga Veterinary Dispensary.
5. Sonai Bazar Veterinary Dispensary.

6. Sona Barighat Veterinary Dispensary.
7. Kalain Veterinary Dispensary.
8. Bashkaudi Veterinary Dispensary.
9. Udarband Veterinary Dispensary.
10. Narshingpur Block Veterinary Dispensary.
11. Lauhipur " " "
12. Sal-Chapara " " "
13. Sonai " " "
14. Rajabazar " " "
15. Udarband " " "
16. Katigarh " " "
17. Palenghat " " "

Karimganj Sub-division

1. Karimganj Veterinary Hospital.
2. Nilambazar Veterinary Hospital.
3. Bazerghat Veterinary Dispensary.
4. Badarpur " "
5. Patharkandi " "
6. Kaliganj " "
7. Badarpur Block Veterinary Dispensary.
8. Ramkrishna Nagar Block Veterinary Dispensary.
9. North Karimganj " " "

Hailakandi Sub-division

1. Hailakandi Veterinary Dispensary.
2. Katlichera " "
3. Kori-Charra " "
4. Hailakandi Block Veterinary Dispensary.
5. Manacherra " " "
6. Lala " " "

Besides there is a School of Veterinary Science in Ghoongur in Silchar.

In Cachar, the Government Livestock Farm is located at Ghoongur. Along with the opening of Veterinary Hospitals and Dispensaries, the Department of Animal Husbandary and Veterinary has intensified all the development schemes for increased livestock production. The special programme of training to educate unemployed youths in the field of dairy production, poultry production and fodder production for generating employment has earned much popularity. Youths are being trained at the Khanapara Training Centre in batches regularly since November, 1972.

In respect of cattle development an agreement has been made between the Government, of India and Australia to establish a Jersey Cattle Breeding Farm and a Frozen Semen Bank in Assam. Similarly poultry production is also receiving equal importance. Exotic breeds of high production strains like white-leg-horns, Rhode-Island-Reds, Australorps etc, are gaining popularity in both rural and urban areas.

(vi) **Fisheries** : In the past, fishing for commercial purpose was confined to only certain sections of the people. No social stigma is now attached to such profession. Pisciculture is now popular among all sections of the people irrespective of a caste or creed. The fish sold at present comes from the large fisheries which are put-up to auction by the Government and settled with the highest tenderer generally for a period of three years. The auction sale of long-term fisheries is often keenly contested. Only fresh fish is sold in the markets of the district.

The schemes for the development of fisheries in Cachar district were introduced in 1950 in order to meet the increased demand for fish. Accordingly, a District Fishery office under one Fishery officer was established in Silchar. The main objective of the Fishery Department is to increase fish production in the district by demonstrating scientific methods of Pisciculture with a view to popularising the profession. In short, the activities of the Fishery Department in Cachar are concentrated in production and distribution of fish seeds amongst the interested private pisciculturists. Esotic and indigenous fish seeds are supplied twice a year. The seed of the common carp is usually distributed in March-April, while that of major carp from July to September. Other major activities of the Fishery Department consist of rendering piscicultural advice and technical guidance, grant of subsidy in cash and in kind, renovation of old tanks, reclamation of rural fisheries, development of *beel* farming and popularising pisciculture through the Fishery Demonstrators posted in the different Blocks and through exhibitions.

The following table shows the area under pisciculture and distribution of fish seeds in the district in 1969-70.

Sub-division,	Area under pisciculture (acres)	Fish seeds distributed (Nos)
Silchar Sub-division	6,990	43,92,965
Karimganj "	11,650	22,950
Hailakandi "	16,910	16,910
District Total	35,550	44,32,825

Among the major achievements of the Fishery Department in the district, mention may be made of the establishment of a Fish Breeding Centre at Silchar where Indian Major carps and common carps are reared. Besides there are 3 Fishery Nurseries in the district for rearing fish seeds. At Silchar a fishery farm was established for the same purpose as mentioned above. In addition the Department maintains natural fisheries with large areas. Fish seeds of major varieties which are generally found in the district include *Bhakua*, *Bahu*, *Mirikas*, *Mali*, *Kurhi*, *Rau* etc. *Mirka* and *Bhakua* in combination are considered ideal for culturing in confined water. Being herbivorous, they do not prey on one another and all these varieties are fast growing and delicious.

There are 89 first class revenue fisheries in the Cachar district. These include rivers, bils, hoars etc. The rivers and bils, which are under the control of the Revenue Department, constitute the main fisheries where accumulation of fish occurs naturally during the rainy season and which serve as natural breeding grounds of fish.

(vii) **Forest Fisheries** : In addition to the revenue fisheries mentioned above, there are eight forest fisheries at Katakhal, Inner line Reserve Forest under Matijuri range, Upperjuri, Innerline Reserve Forest under Sonai range, Sonai forest and Longai reserve forests. The annual revenue from them is Rs. 16,704.00 which is generally low in comparison to revenue fisheries. In these forest and revenue fisheries *Rou* (labeo rohita), *Chital* (notopterus chitala), *Ilsh*, *Sol*, *Magur*, *Kawal*, *Pubba*, *Vacha* etc, are generally found.

In the *bils* the Kukis and the Kacharis use a throw net called *Len* or *Jegeding* which is similar to the *Jhakt* of the plains. The Kacharis of the district buy a long net called *jegalao* from Nowgong district which they stretch across a river, so that any fish swimming up and down becomes entangled in its meshes. Traps are also set at dams and in the swiftly flowing water to catch fishes. Besides *Gholota*, *Khewali*, (castnet), *Regh*, *Afalia*, *Duangulla*, *Anghha* and *Ghan Khewali* etc, which are commonly used for fishing purposes in the Brahmaputra valley are also used in Cachar district. There are various kinds of wicker-trap, over and above the nets, in use in the district.

THE HERREINGS.

Local name	Scientific name.
1. Ilsh	Hilsa ilisha
2. Ruga	Gohialosa mahminna
3. Pheya	Engruulis telara

THE FEATHERBACKS

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Chital | <i>Notopterus chitala</i> |
| 2. Kangla, Kamduli | <i>Notopterus natopterus</i> |

THE CARPS

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Baus | <i>Catla Catla</i> |
| 2. Rou | <i>Labeo rohita</i> |
| 3. Mirika | <i>Cirrhina mrigal</i> |
| 4. Kuliara | <i>Labio calbasu</i> |
| 5. Bhangna | <i>Labeo bata</i> |
| 6. Raiya | <i>Cirrhina reba</i> |
| 7. Ghonia | <i>Labeo gonius</i> |
| 8. Nanin | <i>Labeo nandina</i> |
| 9. Lachim | <i>Labeo pungusia</i> |
| 10. Chelabaia | <i>Chella bacaila</i> |
| 11. Darkina | <i>Rasbora dorconius</i> |
| 12. Elerg | <i>Rasbora elenga</i> |
| 13. Moka | <i>Aunblypharyngodon mola</i> |
| 14. Pitha | <i>Barbus sarana</i> |
| 15. Mohasol | <i>Barbus putitora</i> |
| 16. Puthi | <i>Stigma</i> |
| 17. Titpithi | <i>Ticto</i> |
| 18. Ghila saki | <i>Rohtee cotis</i> |
| 19. Kharia | <i>Labeo dyocheilus</i> |

The Loches

THE CAT—FISHES

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Magur | <i>Clarias batrachus</i> |
| 2. Singh | <i>Heteropheustes fossilis.</i> |
| 3. Pabia | <i>Callichrous bimaculatus.</i> |
| 4. Pabha | <i>Callichrous pabda</i> |
| 5. Boal or Borali | <i>Wellago attu</i> |
| 6. Baoha | <i>Cutropiliothya vachs</i> |
| 7. Pangus | <i>Pahg asius pangasius</i> |
| 8. Larria | <i>Pseudeutropius garu</i> |
| 9. Hiloin | <i>Silonia silonia</i> |

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 10. Ghula tengra or Singra | <i>Mystus cavasious</i> |
| 11. Gagla | <i>Mystus menoda</i> |
| 12. Airr or Ari | <i>Mystus seenghala</i> |
| 13. Tengra or Singra | <i>Mystus vitatus</i> |
| 14. Rita | <i>Rita rita</i> |
| 15. Bagh | <i>Bagariua bagarius</i> |
| 16. Kawa | <i>Chaca chacha</i> |
| 17. Teli becha | <i>Pseudeutropius</i> |
| 18. Tengra | <i>Mystus blecker</i> |

THE GARFISH.

- | | |
|---------|---------------------------|
| 1. Kaki | <i>Xenentodon concila</i> |
|---------|---------------------------|

THE FISH WITH PERCH LIKE DORSAL

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Chandkhira (a) | <i>Amflassis ranga</i> |
| Chanda (b) | <i>Ambssis nama</i> |
| 2. Kawoi | <i>Anabas testudineus</i> |
| 3. Koi | <i>Badis badis</i> |
| 4. Bhera or Bherbheri | <i>Nandue nandus</i> |
| 5. Baligorra | <i>Glossogobous giuris</i> |
| 6. Khoia or khoila | <i>Trichogaster fasciatuschuns</i> |

THE MURREIS

- | | |
|----------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Gozar, Sal | <i>Ophicephalus marulius</i> |
| 2. Cheng | " <i>Gachua</i> |
| 3. Soul | " <i>Striatus</i> |
| 4. Upal | " <i>Punctatus</i> |
| 5. Bhula Cheng | " <i>Amphibiu</i> |

THE GLOBE FISH

- | | |
|------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Phutkra | <i>Tetraodon culcutia</i> |
|------------|---------------------------|

THE SPINY EEL

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Bar-baing | <i>Mastacembelus armatus</i> |
| 2. Kat abaing | " <i>Pancalus</i> |
| 3. Cguttabaing | <i>Rhynchobdella aculeata</i> |

THE NUP EEL

- | | |
|-----------|--------------------------|
| 1. Kuchia | <i>Amphipnous cuchia</i> |
|-----------|--------------------------|

Fish diseases :- Like all other living beings fishes also suffer from a number of common and infectious diseases. Some of the common diseases from which the fishes generally suffer are gillrot, fin-rot and malnutrition. They also are attacked by internal and external parasites like lice and worms. *Barali* (*wallago attu*) is infected with tape worms. Malnutrition in a fish can be detected by its external indication like bigger head and thin anaemic flesh. During monsoon fishes generally suffer from oxygen deficiency and such deficient fishes float over the waters in search of more oxygen and ultimately die. The fishes also suffer from oxygen excess, which can be externally detected from inflamed skin. The other rare diseases are T.B. and Cancer in fish.

The Fishery Department, Government of Assam, in collaboration with the Government of India is training a number of Fishery officers for taking up research in breeding and also in treatment of diseases of fish. The Fish Farm Development Agencies render all available technical guidance regarding fish rearing and disease control. In the district of Cachar there is one Fish Breeding Centre at Silchar where Indian major carps and common carps are kept for the purpose.

(f) Forestry :

(i) Area and Character of Forests : The areas under forest in the Cachar district Sub-division,—wise were 79,412 hectares in Silchar, 40,410 hectares in Karimganj, and 1,08,433 hectares in Hailkandi Civil Sub-divisions in 1973-74. Besides there were also 32,393 hectares of unclassified state forest in the district. Thus, in 1973-74, forest areas covered in Cachar district was 2,60,684 hectares including 32,393 hectares of unclassified state forest. The forests of Cachar district lie to the South of the Assam Range. Botanically the forest of this district which lies in the Barak Valley are generally evergreen in type and contains a host of tree species. The important trees from the commercial point of view are Champa (*M. Montona*) Sam (*Artocarpus*, *Chaplasa*), Gomari (*Gmelina Arborea*), Rata (*Ammora Specie*), Kurta (*palaquiu* *Pobyanthum*), Korol (*Kayca floribunda*), Nageswai (*Mesua ferrea*), Jarual Ajha (*Lagre erstraemia flosreginae*), Jam (*Eugenia sp.*), or Holok Jhalna (*Taerminalia mymyriocarpa*) Gon odroi (*Cinnamomum cecidodaphne*), Tula (*Tetramees nudiflora*), Simul (*Bombax malabaricum*), Dhumoil (*Bombax insigne*), Bonak (*Schima wallichii*), Koro and Moroi (*Albizia sp.*), Kadam (*Anthiocephalus candmba*) Kayengla (*Bursea sertata*) and Awal (*Vitex sp.*)

Other minor forest products of commercial importance occurring in these forests are Agar (*Acquilaria agallocha*), Canes -Galla (*Daemonorops Jenkinsianus*), Jati (*Calamus tenuis*), Honua (*Calamus latifolius*), Sundi (*Calamus Guruba*), Gandhi (*Homalomena rubescens*), Patidal or Chattipat (*Licuala peltata*), Patidoi (*Clinogynnes dichotoma*), Honey and Myriabolam.

The forests of Cachar district are richly stocked with bamboos of various species occurring over wide expanses on both hills and valleys. The important species of economic value are Muli (*Melocanna bambusoides*), Dolu (*Telnostachyum dullop*), Khang (*Dendrocalum's longispatus*), Kaligoda (*Oxytenanthera nigrociliata*), and Pecha. The Muli and the Dolu have great commercial importance, the former for constructional and fencing purposes, and the latter for mat industry.

There are fourteen Reserve Forests in Cachar district most of which were opened before 1901. The names of the reserves, year of establishment, present area under each Forest Reserve are as follows.

Name of the reserves	Year of establishment	Present area under each reserve forest (in Km.)
1. Innerline Reserve Forest	1978	1,065.48
2. Katakhal Reserve Forest	1878	140.93
3. Barak " "	1878	265.29
4. Sonai " "	1878	35.94
5. Barail " "	1902	73.87
6. North Cachar Hills Reserve Forest	1915	252.39
7. Badshaitila Reserve Forest	1914	75.14
8. Duhalia Reserve Forest	1926	34.78
9. Longai " "	1901	151.39
10. Tilbhum " "	1922	18.49
11. Patheria Hills " "	1920	76.47
12. Upperjiri " "	1878	63.26
13. Lower jiri " "	1878	36.43
14. Singla " "	1901	124.30

In this context, it may be mentioned here that the Forest Department in Cachar district was first started in 1874-75 with headquarters at Silchar. The programme for reservation of forest in the district was effected from the year 1876-77 to control the forest reserves for preservation and exploitation of both flora and fauna under scientific way.

Besides the following Forest Reserves were added in the Cachar Forest Division after partition of India from Sylhet Division in 1947. They are (1) part of the Patharia Hill Reserve Forests, (2) Singla Reserve Forest (3) Duhlia Reserve Forest, (4) Tilbhum Reserve Forest (5) Badshaitila Reserve Forest and (6) Longai Reserve Forest.

Deterioration of forests has also been noticed in certain forests of the district. For this and to keep the climatic balance the Government has taken up a scheme of afforestation. In order to increase trees and forest products the *Vanomohatsav* is also observed in the district every year. Teak, plywood and Match wood plantation schemes have been taken up in the Cachar district. Teak Scheme has also been raised under Taungya system. The forests of Cachar play a very important role in the economy of the district. There are, at present, 13 saw mills, a plywood factory and 1 match wood factory. The forest of the district is not sufficient for these factories and hence raw materials for them are imported from the neighbouring regions namely Manipur, Mizoram and North Cachar Hills district.

Regeneration : Along with the exploitation of the forests, regeneration of the same is also being kept in pace. The regeneration works may be natural or artificial. The natural regeneration is aimed at in forests where sufficient seedlings of the main crop come up naturally. In the areas deficient in natural seedlings clear felling and planting are carried out. Sal and Hollong are the two species for which systematic natural regenerations have been attempted. The artificial plantation of sal however is the usual practice now and extends over wide area.

The Cachar Forest Division supplies annually a considerable number of logs and match woods to the local factories. Over and above, boulders, gravels, sand, and other forest products also earn considerable revenue to the Government. During 1976-77, the Cachar Forest Division produced the following articles. The revenue earned from the rest of Cachar is shown in the tables A,B, and C inserted in Chapter 1 of this book.

Principal products	Annual yield	Value in Rupees
1. Timber	93,000.00 Cum	3,44,000.00
2. Firewood	7,086.00 "	8,258.00
3. Bamboo	34,927.99 M. Tonnes	3,08,700.00
4. Cane	323.00 M. T.	
5. Thatch	1,651.73 Bundles	
6. Agor	28 Quintal	
7. Dhuna	28 "	

Principal products	Annual yield	Value in Rupees
8. Rama	74,457 Bundles	
9. Sukchini	6.83 Quintal	
10. Chalmugra	8.00 Quintal	
11. Kitta pata	6,700 Bundles	
12. Tezpata	800 "	
13. Patidai	77,110 Nos	
14. Chattapata	23,660 Bundles	6,50,560.00
15. Nageswar flower	3.00 Quintal	

Royalty from catching elephants also provides good revenue to the Govt. and during the period from 1967-68 to 1974-75 a sum of Rs. 36,657.00 was realised in selling 90 elephants.

(ii) **Measures to secure scientific exploitation and development etc :** The Assam Forest Regulation Act, 1891, prohibits free access to forest produce and destruction of forests. The Forest Department annually sells forests produce like wood, gravels and sands, cane and thatch *mahals*, bamboo *mahals* etc., only on tenders annually from registered contractors and the entire carrying there on goes to government. The department also grants permits to individual and institutions to extract trees in the reserve forest after collection of royalty per tree. Besides every year trees are measured by centre-wise demarcation, under Forest Divisions in the district to be exploited in clear-felling system. After complete clearing and removal of the Forests resources the areas are taken up for raising plantations under non-plan and development scheme.

The Department has adopted the following measures for the development of the forests :-

1. Afforestation, improvement and extension of forestry,
2. Development of communications in the forest areas,
3. Development of forest industries and
4. Survey and demarcation. In addition to above, measures have been taken up for development of teak, Plywood and match woods plantations in the district. Under non-plan Schemes teak species are raised in the areas under *Taungya* system. Improvement of 277.93 kms. of forest roads have been made for better communication in the district. It has also been proposed to open three Reserve forests in the district namely (1) Second Addition to Singla Reserve Forest, (2) Adarkona Proposed Reserve and (3) Arang Proposed Reserve covering an area of 4035-770 hec-

tares. For effective implementation of developmental measures, the forest personnel are well trained in the Assam Forest School, Jalukbari and also in Deheradun, Coimbatore and the other institutions.

The State Government received revenue of Rs. 15,63,026.80 during 1974-75 from the Reserve Forest of Cachar.

(g) **Foods, Famine and Drought** : Cachar has never experienced any famine though is subject to occasional heavy flood from the Barak. Just after the taking over of Cachar by the British in 1830, heavy flood occurred in Cachar in 1834 and 1836. These floods were so devastating that in 1837-38, J.G. Burns, the British Superintendent of Cachar had to move the British Commissioner at Dacca to reduce the rate of revenue per acre from Rs. 5/2/- to Rs. 3/- for the first class land and to Rs. 2/8/- from Rs. 2/12 for the 2nd class land by way of relief to the farmers.

There has been no famine in the district for a long time but drought affects it sometimes. Floods are the annual occurrences which cause heavy damage to a vast area of agricultural lands, men and animals. The district experienced three major floods since 1950 due to over flowing of both the banks of the Barak river as heavy rain water of the neighbouring hills came down suddenly to the main channel, the Barak which could not discharge it. By constructing embankments on both the banks of the river the Embankments and Drainage Department has, to some extent, controlled the flood in the district. But all such measures are temporary in nature because of the peculiar natural position of the district. Some of the important floods occurred in the district are given below along with the areas submerged by each flood in square kilometres.

1. 1954	735.55716	sq. km.
2. 1955	220.14915	" "
3. 1956	862.46667	" "
4. 1958	145.03944	" "
5. 1959	2541.78980	" "

After the independence heavy flood damage occurred in the district in 1950-51, 1954-55, 1959-60, 1962-63, and 1965-66. The flood of 1966 had three waves and in the 2nd wave Cachar sustained a very heavy loss. In 1969 there were two waves in the Barak Valley. The second wave came in August disrupting all communications in the district. During 1974, the Barak in spate effected 2,000 Sq. kilometre area in Cachar and it damaged 6,737 houses, 12 thousand hectares of cropped area with one human life. The next flood causing heavy damage to Cachar occurred

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in 1977 while an unprecedented drought causing loss of crops occurred in 1979.

Causes of flood: Cachar district having been surrounded by the hills on all 3 sides has to swallow all the rain water down the hills flowing into the Barak with its 9 tributaries which have most of the hill catchments. Meteorologically Cachar along with the rest of Assam, experiences heavy rainfall ranging from 190 cm. to 700 cm. annually. About 75 to 80 per cent of this down pour occurs in the four months from June to September. This water- discharge with silts from the hills causes excessive spilling on the banks resulting in water-logging in extensive areas in the plains. Unplanned forest operation, on the other hand damages the forests leaving bare the loose hill soil to be washed away by the rain and rivers. This not only obstructs arresting of monsoon clouds but also rains the river bed with silts causing more bank-spills with lower rain.

Flood Control Measures : In order to control perpetual flood devastation, various measures have been adopted by the Government. Flood control works in the Barak Valley are financed out of State Annual Plan. A sum of Rs.93 Lakhs were provided for the same during the year 1975-76. Efforts were made to complete the incomplete works. There is a proposal for a new scheme, viz., the Barak Dam Project. As it is an inter-State Project it has been proposed to be taken up either in Central sector or by the North-Eastern Council. The Departments of Forest and Soil Conservation also have taken up afforestation schemes. But no improvement in forest areas has been noticed uptill now. It is seen that since 1951-52, total area of forest in the district has considerably decreased due to opening of forests for settlement of refugees and also due to large scale encroachment in Cachar.

Relief measures: Every year during and after flood and drought a huge amount is declared in the form of grants and gratuitous relief to the victims by the government. The relief is advanced through the local agencies of the district revenue authority. The grants are (1) Rehabilitation grant, (2) Seed grant, (3) Test relief grant, and (4) supply of drinking water. Besides loan for rehabilitation, purchase of cattle and seed or seedlings also are provided.

There is a State Relief Fund constituted out of donation from different agencies to meet the emergency needs at the time of calamities in the State. Likewise in the district, there is a District Relief Fund operated by the Deputy Commissioner. This fund is created out of the non revenue receipts like donation, subscriptions, etc, from public and State Relief Fund.

INDUSTRIES

CHAPTER-V

INDUSTRIES

(a) Old-time Industries:

Cachar like other districts of Assam was also the traditional home of a wide variety of industrial products in the ancient past. This is evident from many literary and historical records. To cite a few, the art of weaving and sericulture was widely practised in the district. It is likely that these were introduced in Assam at an early period by the Bodos and other allied tribes. The art of gold, silver and brass smithy was well-known to the people. Salt was manufactured from the brine springs. During the Kachari rule and British regime the salt-wells were a source of revenue for the State. Other crafts like wooden, bamboo and cane works were highly developed.¹

(i) **Weaving:** Spinning and weaving of cotton are not universally practised as home industry in the district except among the tribes and Manipuris. The Manipuri women have gained a special reputation for their Cotton Cloth called *Laisingnphi* or *Khash*. It is a quilt like winter cloth of plain weaving, generally form 5 ft. to 9 ft. in length and 3 ft. to 6 ft. in breadth. It can be used as wrapper and is very durable. A special feature of this fabric is that the cloth is wadded with cotton during the process of weaving. The *Fanek* is a garment worn by Manipuri women. It is used by womenfolk instead of *Sari*. It is fastened under the arms above the breast and reaches to a little below the knees. It is weaved of dark blue and green colour with red yellow strips and the border is sometimes embroidered with flowers in cotton or silk. *Pelei*, the dancing apparel for Manipuri girls is another notable product. It is embroidered with artistic designs of high skill and its cost varies from Rs. 100/- to 200/- according to the quality and design. Other products of Manipuris are bed-sheets, bed-covers, shirtings, *sans*, *dhotis*, mosquito nets and cheap quality *gamosas*. Kuki women also weave cloths like *Khesh* or called *pal* in their dialect. *Pari* is their speciality. It is a kind of rug made of lumps of raw cotton woven into a coarse stout cloth and knotted tightly between the weft. It measures about eight by four feet. Like

wise Kacharis also weave a variety of cloths. Some of the special handloom cloths woven and used by Kacharis are *Righu* (*Mekhela*), *haraimin* (*chaddar*), *Rimchow* (*chaddar* used by males), etc.

Weaving is pursued as a part-time occupation to produce the cloth required for the family and the surplus, if any, sometimes are sold in markets. Among the immigrants, however, professional weavers are not rare. The handloom weaving has been greatly developed in Lakhipur, Karimganj and Silchar areas. Lakhipur area is mainly inhabited by the Manipuris whose womenfolk excel in weaving. In Silchar area, some people have settled in the suburb of the town practised weaving as their profession.

The implements of weaving which were and still are common in almost all the families are quite simple and few in numbers. Besides various types of looms, like Pit-looms, Fly shuttle, Power-looms and Chittaranjan looms; *Ugha*, *Sereki*, *Rash*, *Beam*, *Makoo*, *Jatar*, *Neothani*, etc., are some of the accessories required for weaving. It may, however, be noted that there is no common nomenclature for all the parts and accessories and the names widely vary from district to district and from tribe to tribe. About twelve types of looms are said to be in use which may be broadly grouped under four categories. They are the Throw Shuttle Loom, Loin Loom, Pit Loom and Fly Shuttle loom. The first one is found in every Assamese house-hold while the second one is common among the hill tribes. The Bengali weavers who have migrated from East Pakistan mostly use Pit Loom. The Fly Shuttle Loom which is of recent introduction is an improved type of frames which considerably increases the output of the weavers. Of the 51,700 Looms employed in the district in 1975, Throw Shuttle Looms accounted for 35,000, Fly Shuttle Looms 10,500, Loin Looms 6,000 and Chittaranjan Looms 200.

Raw materials required for weaving industry are mainly Cotton, *Muga*, *Pat* (Mulberry Silk), *eri* and silk yarn. Various counts of yarn are used by the weavers. The yarn is mostly purchased from the markets and only a few do the spinning at home. The number of professional weavers in the district is very small. As per the census of 1961, there were 7,639 professional weavers (outside the Co-operative fold) of which 3,474 were full-time weavers and the rest part-time weavers. Of the full-time weavers 2,922 were males and 552 females. Among the part-time weavers males accounted for 2,282 and females 1,883. Besides, there were 4,397 weavers in the co-operative sector forming 149 co-operative societies. Of these artisans males constituted the majority and accounted for 3,474 to solve the

Since the Second Five Year Plan much emphasis has been laid on the development of village handicrafts and cottage industries with a view to solve

1. P.C. Choudhury : *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.*, Gauhati, 1959, pp. 363-378.

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the baffling problem of ever-increasing unemployment and handloom industry is no exception in this regard. This industry, if geared to the commercial exigencies, will provide lucrative employment, especially to the womenfolk as part-time as well as full-time work in their traditional crafts. The Khadi and Village Industries Board, the Directorate of Sericulture and Weaving and the Directorate of Industries of Assam look after the development of village and cottage industries in the district.

The Directorate of Sericulture and Weaving, Assam comprises two wings, i.e., Sericulture and Weaving. Under the Weaving wing there is one Superintendent of Weaving with his headquarters at Silchar to look after the development of weaving in the district. He is assisted by 4 Inspectors of weaving posted at Silchar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. Besides, there are twenty-five Demonstrators in the district. These Demonstrators keep the artisans abreast of the latest development of handloom industry and impart training on the new designs and techniques of production and use of improved looms and implements. There are three Weavers Extension Service Centres at Lakhipur, Hailakandi and Karimganj and two Weaving Training Centres at Kabuganj and Mahakal. The Extension Service Centres are established with a view to supply raw materials to the poor skilled weavers and in return received the finished goods on payment of reasonable weaving charge. The Karimganj and Hailakandi units mainly produce *sarees*, mosquito nets, shirting, *lungis* etc. While the Lakhipur unit mainly produces *Laisingphi*. The products of the district has a good demand in the local markets. *Laisingphi* is getting a very good market through Assam Government Marketing Corporation. The Corporation has established two Sales Emporium at Silchar and Karimganj whose annual turnovers come to about Rs. 9 lakhs and 2 lakhs respectively. The three Weavers Extension Service centres produced 1,57,328.91 metres and 1,11,060.00 metres of cloth during the Third and Fourth Five-year Plans respectively. The total valuation of the production respectively came to Rs. 2,15,526.22 and Rs. 1,63,221.42. The Weaving Department also provides loans, grants-in-aid and subsidies to the weavers. Subsidy for conversion of Throw Shuttle Looms into Fly Shuttle Looms was provided to 455 and 1,406 weavers during the said plan periods.

(ii) **Sericulture** : Next to weaving sericulture is the most important cottage industry of the district. It is practised as a household industry during the agricultural off season as a subsidiary occupation and an occupies

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an important place in the rural economy of the district. The main rearers are the female members of the family and they practise this trade to fulfil the requirements of the family. Only very few have taken this trade on commercial lines. The tools and implements required for the industry are few and simple and almost all of these are made by the artisan himself and by the members of his family or can be had from the market at a moderate price. The tools generally required are bamboo tray (*dala*), Bamboo *chandrakiful*, thread net, *jatar* or *Charkha* (spinning wheel), *takli*, boiling pan and loom with accessories.

Of the three varieties of silk called *Pat*, *Eri* or *Endi* and *Muga* produced in Assam, only first two varieties are chiefly produced in the district. The first variety is the finest and costliest. *Endi* is of coarser quality and is generally used by the common people. The third variety i.e., *Muga* is a stouter, and more durable than *Pat* but coarser and less glossy. The Manipuri and Bengali communities mainly rear *Pat* cocoons and the Kachari women are mostly engaged in rearing *Eri* cocoons. The main centres of silk worm rearing in this district are Pailapul, Dargarband and Dharmikhal villages.

Pat is produced from the cocoons of two species of worms called univoltine or *Bar polu* (*bambyx textor*) and the multivoltine or *saru polu* (*bambyx croesi*). Both the species are reared indoors on the leaves of the mulberry tree (*morus indica*). The eggs of the *bar polu* take about ten months to hatch, the worms usually making their appearance in January. The life span of the worms is about thirty to forty days and the cocoons which are of bright yellow colour, take about 6 days to spin. The silk, after it is boiled in the potash water, looks perfectly white. About twelve to fifteen thousand cocoons are needed to produce one pound of thread. The rearing of *saru polu* is much favoured by the cultivators as it yields four broods in a year although thread obtained from it is regarded inferior to that of the *bar polu*.

Several causes may be attributed to make this silk rare and expensive. The worms producing this type of silk are very delicate and large number of them die before they spin. The supply of mulberry leaves is also limited. Moreover the rearing of this worm in the past carried a stigma of impurity and as such the rearing of this worm was confined only to the members of certain communities and even they also regarded it with disfavour. However, this old-time prejudice has almost died out and the rearing of the worm has become popular among the members of other communities.

The *eri* worm (*attachus ricini*) derives its name from the *eri* or castor plant (*ricinus communis*) on which it is usually fed. Patch of this plant are commonly seen in the gardens of most of the villages. In a year, five or six broods are

generally reared and those who spin their cocoons in November, February and May yield much silk. Females moth are tied to pieces of reed while males are left free to visit them. When the worms appear they are put in a tray or a basket suspended in a place of safety and fed on the leaves of the castor plant. Worms when fully grown look dirty white or green and varies in length from 76.20 to 88.90mm. After the final moulting the worms are transferred from tray to forked twigs suspended across a piece of wood and as soon as they are ready to spin, they are placed on dried mango leaves or a hut. Before spinning, cocoons are softened by boiling in water with a solution of alkaline and the silk produced by each empty cocoon is just equivalent to the three quarters of its weight. The most useful garment made of *eri* silk is *bar kapor* or a large sheet, 6.09 metres in length and 1.52 metres wide which is folded and used as a wrap in cold weather by all sections of the people. *Eri* silk is also made into coats and shirts, *eri chaddar*, etc.

The sericultural activities in the district are under the control and supervision of a Superintendent of Sericulture with his headquarters at Silchar under the Directorate of Sericulture and Weaving, Assam. He is assisted by other field staff like Inspector, Marketing Organiser, Cocoon Marketing Inspector, Demonstrator, etc. There is one Sericulture Farm at Pailapul. Both Sericulture & Weaving Department and Community Development Blocks have undertaken manifold activities to popularise the sericulture industry in the district. Training facilities have been given to local youths for undergoing training in the art of sericulture industry. Grants-in-aid and subsidies have also been provided to individual rearers to encourage them in pursuing the industry and it is interesting to note that most of the rearers have got model rearing houses constructed with such financial assistance from the Govt. The Department has also supplied seedlings and seeds to the grower.

(iii) **Pottery:** Pottery though is a very ancient industry in the district has lost much of its past glory and is now confined only to making of common earthen wares such as jars and pitchers. "In Cachar district, the word 'Kumar' denotes what it does in Bengal, the separate potter caste, i.e., one of the nine professional castes (*Navashakha*) which are said to be descendants, as the professional, from *Viswakarma*, the divine artisan. According to the *Brahmahatbarta Purana*, the union of *Viswakarma* and a *Sudra* woman resulted in the birth of nine castes of which *Malakar*, *Karmakar* (Blacksmiths), *Sankhakar*, and *Kumbhakar* (potters) are considered to be the more important ones. In Cachar district, some of the craftsmen are engaged in making only images of gods and goddesses. At present, the

image-making is their subsidiary occupation, primary occupation being *Grahapuja* along with the studies of astronomy. This class is also known as *Grahahipra* or *Ganak* (astrologers) and the members of their families prepare images of Hindu gods and goddesses during different religious occasions. According to the estimates of the numerical strength of some backward classes prepared by the Census Organisation in 1954, *Grahahipra* or *Ganak* was shown as one of the backward classes in Cachar. According to *Bhabishya purana*, the union of *Surja-Deva* (Sun) and a *Brahmin* woman resulted in the birth of this class. It is written in the 139th Chapter of *Bhabishya purana* that they were brought from *Shakadwipa* by Lord Krishna's son *Shamba*². Most of the potters have abandoned their traditional occupation and taken to agriculture and other occupations. Principal centres of industry in the district were Joynagar, Chatla, Banraj and Lala in the Silchar sub-division and Rangauti, Matijuri, Bishunapur and Shibot-tar in Hailakandi Sub-division.

The state of affairs of the pottery industry is not encouraging in the district. The local pottery has mostly been replaced by superior clay or porcelain goods and metal utensils imported from outside. The profits of the industry are also small and according to the Census of 1961, the population of persons engaged in manufacture of earthen wares and earthen pottery was 698, of whom 267 were males and 431 females.

The raw materials required for the industry is the glutinous clay, and the tools and implements used are the wheel (*chak*) the mould (*athai*) the mallet (*hatiya pteni*) and the polisher (*chaki*). The articles made are the cooking pots, water jars, vessels for boiling rice and lamps, pipes and drums. In the urbana areas, there are small groups of potters as mentioned above, who specialise in making the images of Goddess *Durga*, *Kali*, *Saraswati* etc. The artisans often display an astute artistic sense in making the images and are paid in handsome amounts. In off season, they make beautiful dolls, toys, etc. and sell in the nearby markets.

In recent years some schemes have been taken up by the State Khadi & Village Industries Board and the State Industries Department, to encourage the village potters to switch over from their traditional items of products to the production of glazed pottery wares, bricks and tiles which have better marketing potentialities. Arrangements have also been made to provide training facilities to the artisans. No doubt, few units have sprang up but impact of these measures on the pottery industry in the district is yet to be felt.

(iv) **Bamboo and Cane Works:** Among the traditional crafts, the

² Census of India, Vol.III, Assam, *Selected Handicrafts of Assam*, p.52

making of bamboo and cane products is perhaps most universally practised by all sections of the people throughout the State. Its products may be termed as 'pure handiwork products', where even elementary mechanical device is not used. Its products have wide range of uses and as such are commonly found in every household. The craft is mainly a household industry and occupies an important place among the handiworks of the district. It provides a subsidiary occupation to the cultivators and full-time occupation to the highly skilled artisans who produce only decorative baskets, furnitures, mats etc., in commercial scale.

The making of bamboo products is mainly a rural industry. It is commonly pursued by the agriculturists in their spare time as a subsidiary occupation. Its heavy concentration in the rural areas may primarily be attributed to the availability of bamboos in abundance in the villages and the very high demand for the various bamboo products, such as mats, baskets, fishing contraptions etc., in every rural household.

Bamboo mats of various types are manufactured on commercial scale in the Karimganj sub-division of Cachar district where thousands of people are engaged in this craft. These mats are locally known as *dhara*, *jharia*, or *darma* and exported to Calcutta also. In the districts of Brahmaputra Valley, Such mats are produced from the dried stalks of various kinds of marshy plants and weeds while in the Cachar district, it is produced out of bamboo slips.

Manufacture of umbrella handles is another important craft of the district. Umbrella handles are manufactured from a variety of *Muli* bamboo on commercial scale and largely exported outside the district. This craft did not exist prior to Independence. The craftsmen engaged in the manufacture of umbrella handles are mainly immigrants from erstwhile East Pakistan, now Bangladesh.

Japi, the bamboo and leaf headgear, is one of the indispensable items for the open air worker especially the cultivator. It is termed as poor man's umbrella. It is made from a few strips of bamboo and a special kind of palm leaf known locally as *Tokow pat*. In the district, *Japis* on commercial basis are largely manufactured in villages mainly in Rangpur, and Chinipatan and supplied mainly to neighbouring tea gardens and some parts of Nowgong district. The products are generally carried on shoulder-loads to the nearby markets and sold to consumers.

Other notable bamboo products manufactured in the district are baskets of various sizes and shapes, winnowing trays, sieves, various types of fishing contraptions etc. The essential equipments required for the industry are *dao* and *Katari* (Knife) which are invariably found with every agriculturist family. The manufacturing activities are generally shared

by all members of the family, although the male members predominate. Most of the products manufactured in such households are meant for domestic consumption and only a small percentage of the products are sold in the markets. The professional artisans who follow this trade as a whole-time occupation sell their products in the markets.

The making of Cane products is an important and growing cottage industry of the district which abounds in cane. Extraction of the thorny cane from the thick jungles is a difficult task. The forest authorities grant leases to the *Mahaldars* to extricate cane from the forests. The tools and implements required for the industry are mainly *dao* and *katari* (knife) and it is only in the making of furniture that few hammers, pliers and pincers etc., are required. The cane industry is mostly concentrated in the urban and semi-urban areas of the district.

The main product of the cane industry is the plucking basket which is required in large numbers every year by the tea gardens. As the tea planters find it convenient to purchase in bulk and the small establishment of artisans find it difficult to meet their requirements; the supply of plucking baskets have become the monopoly of few firms that can afford to produce the baskets on a large scale. Deprived of this market the petty artisans look to the needs of the individual consumers and manufacture various types of furniture and sundry articles like boxes, cradles, tools, office trays, tiffin baskets, bottle carriers, bicycle baskets, waste paper baskets, cane-chairs etc.

Sital pati is another important product of Cane industry in the district and the highest concentration of artisan following this craft is in the Cachar district. Slips for *sital-pati* is made from a different type of reed called *Murta*. Its production is purely a household industry. Generally cane slips are prepared by men and women do the weaving of it. Kata-khal, Kaliganj, Karimpur, Bashigram and Sridurgapur are known for the production of this craft.

Murta (*Clinogyne dichotoma*) is a plant belonging to the family of reeds. Unlike the reeds of *khagari* variety, it has no joint and grows on marshy and water logged areas. It is also found in abundance in choked up tanks and damp hill slopes. Though, this type of cane is available in the different forests of Assam, it is abundantly available in different forests of the Cachar district only.

Manufacture of cane products calls for a high degree of skill on the part of the artisans and most of the artisans in this trade are displaced persons from Bangladesh. In the manufacture of cane furnitures and other articles, Cachar district enjoys the advantageous position over other districts of Assam so far as the skilled artisans and raw materials are con-

cerned. The units engaged in the commercial production of cane products are found in almost all the urban areas of the district.

According to the Census of 1961, the persons engaged in the manufacture of products from bamboo and cane etc., in the district were the highest among all the districts of Assam. They numbered 2,478 of whom 1,625 were males and 853 females. With little training in artistic designs and use of colour etc., the artisans will be able to produce articles which will have demand not only within the State but also outside the State. Recent figure engaged in the industry is not available.

(v) **Blacksmithy** : It is one of the old-time industries associated mainly with agricultural economy. The principal articles of production of this industry include agricultural implements, domestic tool, weapons besides the tools of the craft like anvil, bellows, hammers, chisels etc. The industry has suffered decay and very few indigenous artisans are found in the trade. According to the Census of 1961, the number of blacksmiths, hammer-smiths and forgers was 367 in Cachar district. The present production of the blacksmithy usually includes simple agricultural implements like plough, spade, sickle, and various implements of daily use like *dao*, *katari* etc. The raw materials required for the industry are steel and soft iron imported from outside the State. A considerable demand for raw materials is also met from scrap iron. The industry needs rapid modernisation.

(vi) **Brass and bell metal industry** : The industry is not of much importance in the district. Its principal centres are Badarpur and Silchar. Bell metal utensils are cast in moulds but brass vessels are made out of thin sheets of beaten out brass pieced joined together. The implements of the trade consist of anvils of different sizes (*nehal*, *thammua* and *amti*) hammers, pincers, and chisels. The furnace is simply a hollow in the floor of the hut and the bellows are made of goats skin. The main articles manufactured by the artisans out of brass are small flattish bowls often used as drinking cups (*bati*), jars of different sizes for holding water (*lota*, *kalai*), basins (*dabar*, *tagar*, *saria*, *tasla*) and spoons (*hata*). Bell metal articles manufactured and used in the district are lime-boxes (*chumati*), cooking vessel (*banhao*), and scymlals (*tal*).

(vii) **Gold and Silversmithy** : The industry is mainly concentrated in urban and semi-urban areas though scattered family units are also found in some rural areas. The artisans are from the families who are traditionally associated with the industry. The survival of this old age industry may primarily be attributed to its higher profit and its adaptability to individual tastes. The workers engaged in this trade are all males. The busy season of the industry starts from December and lasts upto April.

During this period demand for ornaments increases because of marriages and other ceremonies which generally take place during these months. Moreover agriculturists also obtain money by selling their agricultural products and afford to spend money on making or remodelling of their old ornaments.

Reasons for the decay of old-time industries : Although cottage industries described above still play a vital role in the economy of the district, some of the old-time industries have suffered protracted stagnation while some others are now buried under oblivion. The reasons are not far to seek. The withdrawal of patronage of kings and nobles that often led to the growth of the industries ceased. Dumping of local markets with cheaper machine made goods imported from outside by the British, universal weakness for more luxurious goods and the old technique of production are the factors that retarded the steady growth of cottage industries. Many of the traditional artisans finding other avenues of employment more lucrative left their crafts.

(b) **Industries and manufactures of the district** :

(i) **Power Supply** : Prior to Independence there was only one Power Station at Silchar which was under the control of the Silchar Electric Supply Company Ltd. established in 1928. In 1952, Karimganj Electric Supply Co. Ltd. came into being, but it was acquired by the Govt. in 1956 for its inefficiency. With the establishment of the Assam State Electricity Board in 1958, the Silchar Electric Supply Co. Ltd. was also taken over by the government.

The district is now served by 132 K.V. Grid Sub-Station at Fenchgaon near Badarpur where from electricity is distributed to almost the entire area of Cachar. There is, besides, another power station at Durlavcherra which supplies electricity to the whole of Tripura and a part of Cachar. The monthly average consumption of electricity in the district during 1969-70 was of the order of 13, 27,000 kwh.

By 1969-70 all the six towns and 15 villages have been electrified and 15 villages are proposed to be electrified in the ensuing years. By 1971, altogether 48 villages in Cachar were supplied with electricity.

(ii) **Large Scale Industries** :

Tea : Tea is the largest industry of the district and its history dates back to the year of 1855 when wild tea plants were discovered in the district. Next year the first tea plantation was opened up in mauza Barsangan. Initially the plantations in the district were laid out on the flat tops of the low hills projecting from the Barails towards the Barak. As such land was limited, the planters turned to undulating land and the low topped hills called *tilas* which when cleared of jungles the soil

was found to be of inferior quality. The heavy rain caused further loss of fertility by washing away the upper surface. In 1875, the experiment of planting out tea on low marshy land yielded good results in the form of large return of tea leaf. The quality of tea, however, was not as good as that produced in other soil.

Tea planting in the early sixties was speculative rather than a solid industry. "Scarcely any one interested", said Mr. Edgar, who was Deputy Commissioner at that time, "looked forward to obtaining his return from the produce of his tea cultivation; every one looked forward to becoming suddenly and immensely rich by getting a piece of land, planting it out with tea, and then selling it for a vastly greater sum than he had expended on it."³ Gardens were sold at seven hundred to eight hundred per cent more than the actual cost incurred by them in planting out. This unhealthy speculative state of affairs soon brought its own remedy. In the depression of 1866-69, many concerns collapsed.⁴ In 1872, there were reported to be 80 tea gardens in Cachar, covering 91000 acres. Out of these 23000 acres were under tea plantation and annual yield was about 25,00,000 kilo gram.⁵

By 1878, this trend was checked and like other districts of Assam, the expansion of tea plantation led, on the one hand, to the continuous influx of large number of labourers from various parts of India mainly from Chotanagpur, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh. On the other hand, it also brought about the progressive development of methods of cultivation and manufacture of tea. The increase in the quality of the produce boosted up the fast expanding tea market. By 1900, the tea industry began to grow by leaps and bounds.

The tea industry enjoyed a state of boom till the end of the First World War and there after faced a crisis of heavy fall in prices due to release of tea stocks built up during the War period. As a result, plucking in the tea gardens of Assam was stopped in 1920 to curtail the output in order to arrest further fall of tea prices. A poor crop in 1921 helped the industry to recover and a period of prosperity that followed lasted upto 1927. During this period, rapid strides were made in the modernisation of factories and the production technique was vastly improved. In the early thirties, the world wide depression seriously affected the tea industry. However, the adoption of certain measures, namely the International Tea Agreement 1933, India Tea Act, 1933, and institution of India Tea Licensing Committee and other allied steps saved the industry

3. B.C. Allen : *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol-I, Cachar, Cal. 1903, p.79.

4. Ibid, pp. 78-79.

5. *The Assam Land Revenue Manual*, Eighth edition, 1968, Introduction, page, xxxv.

from virtual collapse. During the World War II and a few years thereafter, the industry passed through a period of prosperity until 1952 when tea prices crashed again to an extent below the cost of production. Among the causes that attributed to this depression in prices, the most potent was the over-production of tea. Meanwhile several tea producing countries such as Indonesia, Japan, Formosa, and East Africa offered stiff competition to Indian tea in the world market. Production of tea in India and Ceylon increased so much that it outstripped the demand in the world market. The glut in medium and other different grades of tea which could not get ready market owing to the cessation of bulk purchases in U.K. coupled with an impact of downward trend in commodity prices during the post Korean War of late 1951 and 1952, was no less responsible to precipitate the crisis. However, the conditions improved considerably in the next year and since then the tea industry has not suffered serious set backs, though occasional drought sometime badly affect the output of the tea industry.

The opening of tea Auction Centre at Gauhati on 25th Sept. 1970, augurs a new era for the tea industry in Assam. Marketing of tea has always been a problem for the tea producers of this region. Previously the Tea Auction Centre at Calcutta was the only centre of sale for Assam tea. Imposition of the West Bengal Entry tax on Assam Tea, transport bottlenecks, and many more difficulties involved in arranging the sale at Calcutta Auction Centre, necessitated the opening of the Tea Auction Centre in Assam which produces the bulk of it.

The tea industry in the district is more than a century old and inspite of all the stresses and strain that it came across, the industry continues to make rapid strides both in production and acreage. The industry in the district made its beginning in 1856 and by 1882 had 48,878 acres (19,780.19 hectares) under the tea and produced 12,721,100 lbs. (57,69,708.39 kg.) of tea. It continued to make steady progress and in 1901, though area under tea declined slightly to 48,601 acres (19,668.09 hectares), the outturn of tea increased to 2,63,41,944 lbs (1,19,48,446. 91 kg). In 1951, the tea industry in the district occupied an area of 30,45 hectares and total production of tea was 1,98,27,000 kgs. As regards tea production and acreage under tea the district of Cachar occupies fourth position among the districts of Assam. Tea industry is also the largest employer in the district. Following tables will furnish various data on tea industry of the district.

Area and Production of tea in Cachar district.

Year	Number of tea estates	Area in hectare on 31st March.	Total production in thousand kg.	Average daily number of labour	Average production per hectare in kg.	Production per labour in kg.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1951	—	30,445	19,827	—	651	—
1961	116	29,928	20,181	—	674	—
1962	—	—	16,747	—	—	—
1963	—	—	17,649	—	—	—
1964	114	29,869	19,337	53,050	647	—
1965	—	—	19,228	49,747	—	—
1966	—	30,181	19,578	52,573	649	—
1967	114	30,019	22,302	49,330	743	—
1968	113	30,331	22,302	48,027	735	464
1969	113	30,527	21,360	48,457	700	441
1970	113	30,854	23,646	49,364	773	462
1971	114	31,018	22,736	46,638	733	—
1972	114	31,259	24,816	47,816	794	—
1973	113	31,231	25,751	47,046	825	547

Source : Tea Statistics, 1968-69, 1970-71, 1971-72, 1972-73, 1974-75.

Labour engaged in Tea Factories in Cachar District.

Year	Males	Females	Adolescents	Children	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6
1967	R 4,478 O 110	876 29	— —	15 —	5,369 135
1968	R 4,518 O 66	10,14 25	— —	31 7	5,563 98
1969	R 4,389 O 99	882 30	— —	25 6	5,296 135
1970	R 4,258 O 171	829 60	2 2	21 7	5,110 240
1971	R 4,165 O 219	802 75	1 3	14 6	4,982 303
1972	R 3,987 O 365	716 241	3 15	12 312	4,718 933

R : Resident O : Outside

Sugar Mills : The construction works of the rupees three crores Public Sector Cachar Sugar Mill at Chargola in the Karimganj sub-division are in progress. It is a state owned project and has been established in an area of 120 acres. It will have captive farming in an area of 5,000 acres. Its crushing capacity will be of the order of 1,250 tonnes per day and will produce about 15,000 tonnes of sugar annually.

Paper Pulp Mill : There is a proposal to establish one paper pulp mill by Hindustan Paper Corporation Ltd. with an estimated cost of Rs. 68 crores at Panchagram. Acquisition of land for the project has already been completed. It is likely to produce 80,000 tonnes of paper annually.

Fruit Processing Plant : Govt. of India has issued a letter of indent to establish a Fruit Preservation and Processing Plant in Cachar district. This export oriented plant is to be established in collaboration with a Bulgarian firm in the private sector at an estimated cost of Rs. 75 lakhs. It will have a daily capacity to process nearly 72 tonnes of raw materials mostly pineapples and oranges.

(iii) **Small Scale Industries :**

Textile Mill : There is one textile mill located in the Industrial Estate at Badarpur. This came into being in January 1966 with 196 power looms, sizing section and finishing plants. It is owned by the Assam Small Industries Development Corporation, a Government of Assam undertaking. The total investment on machinery and shares in the mill comes to Rs. 17 lakhs and its working capital amounts to Rs. 9 lakhs. The main products are coarse cloth, *Dhotis*, *Saris*, and *Gamochas*. Most important textile production of Cachar is Laisamphie which commands a very good export market.

Rice Mills : There are thirteen rice mills in the district mostly concentrated at Silchar, Karimganj, Hailakandi, Barkhola and Katakhal. Of these rice mills some are rice and oil mills and some are rice and flour mills. All these mills in the district were established before the fifties. The permission for setting up new rice mill is very much restricted. The government is encouraging hand pounding of rice. A number of licences to install rice hullers have been issued in recent years.

The capital investment of rice mills vary from rupees fifty thousand to three lakhs depending upon the financial resources of the proprietors. Average number of labours employed in each mill varies from thirty to fifty though a lesser number is also found in very small establishments. The raw materials required for the industry is paddy which is locally procured and its product is rice which finds its way into the local markets. Govt's monopoly in paddy procurement said to have greatly affected the running of the rice mills as they had to depend on the allotted paddy which was considered insufficient to run the mill fully. Recent withdrawal of monopoly in procurement of paddy has brighten up the prospect of the industry.

Cotton Ginning and Baling : There are 4 units engaged in the ginning and baling of cotton in the district. Three of them are located at Karimganj. Almost all of them are small units employing four to six persons.

Oil Mills : There are six oil mills engaged in the manufacture of edible oils. Raw material which is mainly mustard is available in the local markets. Edible oil is also mainly sold in the local markets. Of these mills 4 are at Karimganj and two are in Silchar.

Saw Mills : The district is rich in forest resources and offers ample opportunity for the development of the timber industry like saw mills, plywood factories etc. But till now only twelve saw mills have been established in the district. The production of these factories mainly goes to meet the demands of local construction works. There were 3 (three) wood cork mills in Cachar as per 1961 Census.

Plywood Factories : There are eight plywood factories in the district and tea is the mainstay of the industry. The existence of a large number of tea estates in the district provides enough scope for the development of this industry. Tea production in these estates are packed in plywood chests for despatch either to sale centres in India or for export to foreign countries. Plywood is also in great demand for the manufacture of furniture, travelling boxes and decorative pieces etc. Of these factories three were situated in Silchar, three in Karimganj, two in Bhangabazar, and two in Badarpur in 1961. One of these was practically a supplier of timber at Silchar to feed their plywood factory situating in Calcutta.

Soap Factories : About 10 units are engaged in manufacturing washing soaps in the district and almost all of them are concentrated at Karimganj and Silchar. The capital investments vary from Rs. 10,000/- to Rs. 35,000/- and products are sold in the local markets.

Candle Works : There are some units engaged in the manufacturing of candle. Paraffin is the only raw material required for the industry. It is supplied on allotted quotas. Manufactured goods are mostly sold in the local market. Capital investment is also small and varies from Rs. 2000/- to 5000/-.

Bakeries : There are about 45 bakeries in the district producing biscuits, cakes, loafs etc. A great majority of the units are however small establishments employing five to eight persons. These units cater to the requirement of their locality. Most of these units are located in the urban and semi-urban areas of the district. There is one confectionery unit at Silchar engaged in the manufacture of Lozenges.

Fruit Canning and Preservation Units : There are three units engaged in the production of orange and pineapple squash and canned fruits. Of these units two are privately owned and located at Silchar and Lala. Third one is located at Silchar and is owned by the Assam Agro-Industries Development Corporation. The raw materials which is mainly comprised of oranges and pine apples are procured from Mizoram. The products are even sold outside the state.

Brick Kilns : With the increase in the tempo of constructional activities and urge for higher standard of living, the brick making industry has come to occupy an important place in the economy of the district. The brick fields scattered mostly on the out-skirts of towns present a common sight, though a few can be noticed even in the interior villages. The normal practice in the brick kilns is to make the bricks by manual process with the help of moulds called *forma* and then by burning them in the oval pattern multi-chambered kilns.

Match Factories : The district has two match factories manufacturing safety matches. One unit is located at Silchar and other at Karimganj. Raw materials are procured from Calcutta as well as from the local markets. Their products are sold throughout the State and exported to the neighbouring areas.

Engineering Industries : Tea industry of the district offers ample scope for the development of light engineering industries in the district. Its demand for various implements, machinery and their spare parts, wire fencing, etc., has led to the establishment of a few factories which manufacture tea gardens implements and agricultural implements. There are few other units which are engaged in the manufacturing of sluice gate, compound gates, steel almirahs, chairs, water tanks, gate-doors, window grills and various types of bottle units. In 1961, there were 6 such industries in Cachar, and out of these, five were located in Silchar while the remaining one situated in Karimganj.

Automobile Workshops : With the increase of motor cars, trucks, stage carriages etc., a number of automobile repairing workshops have come up in the urban areas of the district. These are mainly repairing and servicing centres. Some of them also undertake the spray painting of automobiles. There were 4 such workshops in the district in 1961, and all of these were in Silchar.

Volcanising and Tyre-retreading Workshops : Growing use of automobiles has also led to the development of another category of repairing workshops known as tyre retreading and volcanising workshops. These are mainly found in the urban areas of the district. Scarcity and high cost of new tyres in recent years is another boost to those engaged in this trade.

Trunk and Suitcase making units : There are a number of small firms engaged in the manufacturing of trunks and suitcases. These are mostly concentrated at Silchar and Karimganj. One of such firms situating at Karimganj is engaged in aluminium work.

Printing Presses : There were 27 printing presses in the district in 1969-70. Most of these presses are small units employing 3 to 5 persons and were concentrated at Silchar, Karimganj, and Hailakandi. These cater to the local demand for printing works.

Manufacture of Wooden and Cane Furniture : In 1969, there were eleven units engaged in the manufacture of wooden furniture and nine units in the manufacture of cane furniture. Most of the cane furniture makings are small units employing four to six persons and concentrated at Silchar. The wooden furniture making units are at Badarpur, Silchar, and Karimganj and three of them are large scale units. Besides, there are small units engaged

in the making of *Sitalpati*. As per 1961 census, there were 2 *Sitalpati* units in Hailakandi in 1961, while number of this industry was one in Silchar and two in Karimganj.

(c) **Miscellaneous Industries :** In addition, there is one unit engaged in the making of aluminium at Karimganj, one Ice factory at Silchar, one Perfumery Works at Silchar, one Tape Weaving unit at Badarpur, one Conch factory at Silchar and four units engaged in the repairing of musical instruments. Besides, there are 4 Lime Works engaged in chalk-making in the district and three of these are at Karimganj, the remaining one being at Silchar.

(iv) Cottage Industries :

Important Cottage industries that exist in the district namely weaving, sericulture, pottery, bamboo and cane works, brass and bell metal, gold and silversmithy, and blacksmithy have already been described as old-time industries. A reference may, however, be made to the handpounding of rice. It is commonly practised in almost every household in the rural areas of the district. Making of *chira*, *muri*, *akhai* is also practised by some family as part-time occupation. Save and except these old-time industries, none of the other industries are owned or practised by the indigenous people of Cachar.

Carpentry in the rural areas, is more or less a subsidiary occupation. Village carpenters do not specialise in any branch and generally do all types of works like furniture making, house building, etc. Wooden agricultural implements like plough, harrow, yoke etc., are the main items manufactured by the village carpenters. Carts, wheels, and boats are also made. Moreover, some of the industries like bakery, trunks and suitcases, candle, etc., described under the head 'Small Industries' are practised as cottage industries by the immigrant inhabitants of the district in the urban and semi-urban areas.

Among other industries of the district mention may be made of rope-making, fishing, bee-keeping, leather-tanning, oil-crushing, etc., practised by the individuals here and there in the district. In recent years, tailoring have made large inroads into the interior areas of the district. Due to the increasing use of bicycles, the cheapest means of conveyance, number of cycle repairing shops are coming up both in urban and rural areas. But they are mostly concentrated in the urban and semi-urban areas of the district. Watch repairing is appearing as another lucrative profession though, it is mostly confined to urban and semi-urban areas of the district.

Khadi and Village Industries : Assam Khadi and Village Industries Board has been trying to advance Khadi and Village Industries in the district since

the time of its inception. Much progress has been made in the field of weaving and spinning during the last few years. In 1978, there were 3 important Khadi Production centres in Patharkandi, Lala, and Lakhipur with seven more sub-production centres at Durlavcherra, Karimganj, Lai-powa, Kabuganj, Udarband, Ramkrishnanagar, and Behera. In all these centres, about 2444.055 kilograms of yarn valuing Rs. 53,545/-, and 2,41,211.64 square metres of cloth valuing Rs. 2,33,037/- were produced during the year 1977-78. Employment facilities in these centres during 1977-78 were advanced to 3,086 spinners, and 971 weavers and Rs. 2,37,281/- were distributed as wages to these workers during the same year. Besides Khadi Production centres, there are 134 *Gur* and Khandsari units and 1 Bee-keeping centre working in the district under the Board. Value and quantity of *Gur* produced in these units are Rs. 13,40,000/- and 67,00 quintals respectively while quantity of honey produced by 265 Bee-keepers at their own homes under the supervision of the Bee-keeping centre during 1977-78 was 3,001 kilograms.

Lakhipur and Udarband Khadi Production Centres mainly produced Laisamphie, a special kind of mat-like cloth which has a very good foreign market. The weavers engaged in production of Laisamphie are generally all Manipuri weavers specialised in the job.

The list of registered factories in Cachar in 1976, as is available from the Chief Inspector of Factories, Assam, is furnished below :

Industries	Government	Non-Government
1. Manufacturing of food products	1	112
2. Manufacturing of Beverages, Tobacco and Products.	..	1
3. Manufacture of Cotton and Textile	1	5
4. Manufacture of wood products, furniture, etc.	...	24
5. Repair Service	..	7
6. Manufacture of Chemical and Chemical products.	..	2
7. Manufacture of non-metallic mineral products	..	1
8. Basic metal products and parts except machinery and transport equipment.	..	2
9. Manufacture of Machinery, Machine tools, parts except Electrical Machinery.	1	3
10. Electricity	3	..

(d) Industrial Potentialities and Plan for Future Development :

The district of Cachar is primarily an agricultural district and has not yet carved out a distinct place in the industrial map of the country. Tea manufacturing is the main industry of the district and in 1962 it absorbed nine-tenths of the factory-population.⁶ Barring a few other manufacturing industries like saw mills, rice mills, match factories, and engineering workshops which are concentrated around the towns of Silchar and Karimganj, there has not been substantial development of other industries in the district. In 1960-61, the bulk of the total income of the district came from the agricultural and allied activities which contributed 43.2 per cent of the total district income. The industrial sector i.e., tea industry and other manufacturing industries contributed 13.5 per cent and 10.3 per cent respectively to the district income. The contributions from other sectors of production were as follows : commerce, transport, and communication—15.9 per cent; public services—4.5 per cent; and other services—12.6 per cent. During the same year, the district's share of the State Income was only 11.2 per cent of the total State Income and it ranked fourth next to Darrang district among the plain districts of Assam.⁷ Lack of industrial development in the post-Independence era is primarily attributed to the fact of its relatively isolated situation,—cut off from its traditional markets by political changes and separated from its parent area by a great distance.

In recent years, some investment has been made to provide the infra-structure required for the industrial development in the district. There has been considerable improvement and expansion in road communication during the last three decades. The electric-power which is considered to be the primary requisite of modern industrial development, is now supplied by the Assam State Electricity Board. All these factors combined with the existing rich forest and agricultural resources of the district provide ample opportunity for the industrial development of the district.

The Cachar valley with its forest reserves covering 4% of the total area has immense potentiality for the development of forest industries. Its valuable species of timber can be utilized for construction purposes and for making railway sleepers. These forests provide immense scope for the establishment of a number of saw mills, timber seasoning plants,

6. *Techno-Economic Survey of Assam* by National Council of Applied Economic Research, New Delhi, 1962, p. 94.

7. *Economic Survey of Assam* by Department of Economics & Statistics, Govt. of Assam, Shillong, 1963, p.31.

and ply-wood factories for making tea chests, etc., the demand for which already exists in the tea gardens of the district.

The district is rich in cellular raw materials. The potential bamboo surplus of Assam forests is estimated at 14,06,400 air dry tons per year and half of this is located in the inaccessible Mizoram, a neighbouring state.⁸ The Cachar district itself has 2,75,000 tons of *Muli* and *Dalu* bamboos and 2,00,000 tons of bamboos in the neighbouring States of Tripura and Manipur which can be floated down the rivers to Badarpur and Karimganj. This raw material can be utilized to feed paper and pulp, rayon and news print mills, if established in the district. Moreover, the district has also source of raw materials for rayon pulp and other allied products.

Bamboo and Cane resources of the district provide ample scope for the development of small scale establishments as well as the cottage and household establishments for the manufacture of cane furniture, baskets and other articles of day-to-day use. The cane baskets are in good demand in tea gardens of the district. The demand for cane furniture is also growing with the gradual improvement in standard of living.

A number of small industrial units can be established using timber, bamboo, and cane as raw materials to make the agricultural implements, the demand for which is rather high. These include making of *Jhapi*, *Rash*, *Pati*, *Sitalpati*, *Dhari*, *Hukkanal*, Umbrella handle, improved types of Ploughs, and a host of other sophisticated items.

The district like all other districts of the State also offers enough scope for the development of the light engineering industry. The tea gardens of the district provide ready market for the products of light engineering industries. The industries which have a vast potentialities are expanded metal industry, wire drawing industry, tea garden machinery, steel structures, agricultural implement, hump pipe, steel castings, etc.

The cottage industries like weaving, sericulture, pottery, blacksmithy, cane and bamboo works, etc., which have been already described, can be further developed. These are traditional industries and large number of people are well aware of the technique of production. Only a little encouragement, improvement in technique of production, better financial and marketing facilities will make these industries economically viable. Among other industries which can be taken are oil *ghanis*, tanneries, bee-keeping, rope-making, *gur* making, etc.

8. *Techno-Economic Survey of Assam* by National Council of Applied Economic Research, New Delhi, 1962, p.49.

9. *Industrial Potentiality of Assam and Its Development* by Directorate of Industries, Assam, Shillong, 1962, p. 22.

The district is poor in mineral resources. Only petroleum has some potentialities. It was at Masimpur and Badarpur on the bank of the Barak and a small stream, namely, Larang where petroleum was found. It was also found at various places of the Saraspur hills and in the Patharia Reserved Forests. In Badarpur and Masimpur fields, oil was drilled out for about eight years from 1915 to 1923. As the oil bearing stratas were of limited extent, the fields were abandoned when exhausted altogether. 63 wells were drilled and 18,64,00 barrels of crude oil was obtained for Digboi Refinery during the period.

The Oil and Natural Gas Commission is likely to start soon its drilling operation at the location called Barak-1. The drilling will be by a heavy duty Rumanian drilling rig. The construction of road and other preparatory civil works are at present in full swing near Panchagram. The civil construction works and another location for deep drilling at Mashimpur are nearing completion. In addition, surveys are being conducted to prepare for drilling at next location in the Chargola hills where well was drilled earlier near Patharkandi. The Commission is also likely to deploy a geological and seismic field party with modern sophisticated equipments for construction of further explanatory drilling in the new area of Cachar. The following tables shows the industrial development possibilities in Cachar District:

Type	Location	Natural advantage	Possible capacity	employment	Investment required (Rs. lakhs)
1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Sugar mill,	Badarpur	—	1,00,000 tons annually	500	16.0
2. Pulp mill,	Monachara	Advantages of assembling bamboos from Mizoram by waterways.	50 tons per day.	360	150.0
3. Pulp mill,	Badarpur	Bamboo reserves, water facilities for washing and bleaching and transport facilities.	50 tons per day.	200	150.00

1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Pulp mill,	Karimganj	Advantages of assembling bamboos from Mizoram by water ways	50 tons per day.	100	150.0
5. Caustic Soda	Silchar or Badarpur	Nearness to paper pulp mill which will consume the finished products.	30 tons per day.	150	150.0
6. Confectionary (Biscuits & Candies)	Silchar	—	1.5 ton per day.	45	1.5
7. Caffeine	to locate preferably in tea estate factories.	—	3,00,00lbs per annum.	60	2.0
8. Cotton Hosiery (under wear socks, etc).	Silchar	—	Rs. 4.5 lakhs sales per annum	70	2.0
9. Agricultural implements, Blacksmithy tools, Road building tools and Parts.	Silchar	Most of existing demands met by Calcutta.	6 tons per day.	90	9
10. Domestic Utensils and Cutlery	Silchar	Existing supply is mainly from Calcutta.	2 tons per day.	60	4.5
11. Steel Furniture, trunks, baskets, sprayers.	Silchar	Local demand due to urbanization growth of hospitals and education will create	6 tons per day.	60	5.0

1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Fencing and Barbwire.	Silchar	large demand for steel furniture Demand for tea gardens is still met through Calcutta producers. Bulky nature of product makes local decentralised production profitable.	6 tons per day.	90	6.0
13. Sewing machine assembly and repair	Silchar		200 machines a month.	25	2.5
14. Bamboo mill modelled on existing plant in Gauhati	Silchar	—	Rs. 15.2 lakhs sales output.	182	7.2
15. Handlooms, power looms	Silchar	—	Rs. 18 lakhs sales every year	240	8.0

Welfare of Industrial labour : With the infusion of welfare criterion into the concept of the State and progress of labour unions, our country also adopted a number of Laws to safe guard the interest of the labour population and also to promote their welfare. As, in Assam, Tea-industry is the major and important industry, most of the Assam Acts in this regard are connected with tea garden labour though they are applicable to all other industries and employments. All the Central and State Acts listed below are applicable to the entire district of Cachar. These Acts are:

The Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923.

Indian Trade Union Act, 1926.

Payment of Wages Act, 1936.

Assam Maternity Benefits Act, 1944.

Industrial Disputes Act, 1947.

Factories Act, 1948.

Minimum Wages Act, 1948.

Plantation Labour Act, 1951.

Assam Tea Plantation's Employees Provident Fund Scheme Act, 1950.

Assam Tea Plantation Employee's Welfare Fund Act, 1948.

Indian Mines Act, 1948.

Assam Shops and Establishments Act, 1948.

Though under these Acts child labour below a certain age is prohibited and equal wage for women labour is prescribed; benefits have not yet been extended on universal level. There are still child labour below the age of 15 years working in the different plantations, agricultural farms and industrial and commercial establishments of the district on full-time basis. After the enactment of equal wage for women labour Laws, number of women labour in Cachar Tea gardens came down. On the other hand due to increase in bonuses and wage-rates, condition of plantation labours in the district has very much been improved. Most of the labours in tea gardens of the district have been provided with good habitable residences and primary schools for their children. Life Insurance and medical facilities have been made uniformly available to all tea garden labourers.

Other labourers working in different manufacturing and commercial establishments also are being uniformly conscious of their rights and working hours for them in the district in no way exceed eight hours.

(d) Labour and Employees Organisations :

The first labour organisation in Cachar started on 2nd May, 1921, while the labourers of thirteen tea gardens belonging to Chargola and Langai village of Karimganj sub-division went on strike in protest against great reductions, wholesale dismissals, low wages and inhuman treatment of tea labourers by the tea planters. The wage of the tea labourers was six pice per day at that time and in a meeting at Ratabari, held prior to the strike, the labourers demanded enhancement of their daily wage to eight annas (50 paise) per adult male, six annas (.37 paise) for adult women and four annas or (.25 paise) for children. As the movement took place at the very time when the Non-co-operation Movement launched by the Indian National Congress was a fire throughout the state of Assam, the labour cause was also taken up by the freedom fighters as a result of which labour movement in tea gardens went under the leadership of the leaders of Indian National Congress.

INDUSTRIES

At present, in Cachar, there are two trade unions of the employees working in the tea gardens. One is the Indian Tea Employees Union and the other is Cachar Cha-Sramik Union. The former looks after the employees, and the latter, the labourers of the tea gardens. Besides these, there are also branches of Bharatiya Cha Mazdoor Sangha in some tea gardens and they are also working amongst the tea labourers.

With the introduction of different trades and industries, several other labour unions also were formed in Cachar. Following is the list of recognised labour unions in Cachar along with their year of registration, registration number, and membership in the roll.

Statement showing details of registered Trade Unions in Cachar :

Name of Unions	Regd.No.	Date	Membership
1.Karimganj Rickshaw Mazdoor Union,Cachar	439	14.10.58	35
2.Silchar Rickshaw Drivers Union,Silchar.	591	8.9.66	19
3.Cachar Central Co-op. Bank Employees Union,Silchar, Cachar.	627	20.6.68	109
4.Indian Tea Employees Union, Silchar.	46	10.2.47	2161
5.Cachar Weaving Workers Union, Silchar.	444	—	80
6.Makunda Sramik Union, Cachar	821	1974	125
7.Cachar Motor Driver Association, Silchar, Cachar.	35	1946	143
8.Motor Chalak Samity, Karimganj	653	25.7.69	37
9.Cachar Cha- Sramik Union	156	9.1.50	34052
10.Cachar Mills Workers Union	468	—	65
11.Cachar District Biscuits Workers Union, Banamali, Karimganj.	470	—	70
12.Cachar Motor Transport Employees Union, Silchar.	—	29.7.72	1500

[Sources : (1) INTUC Office, Guwahati, (2) Labour Commissioner, Guwahati.]

CACHAR DISTRICT GAZETTEER

NUMBER OF REGISTERED FACTORIES IN 1974 AND 1975 IN
CACHAR

	Govt.		Non-Govt.	
	1974	1975	1974	1975
Manufacture of-				
1) Food products	1	1	116	115
2) Beverage, tobacco	-	-	-	-
3) Cotton textile	1	1	4	5
4) Jute, hemp	-	-	-	-
5) Manufacture of Textile apparatus	-	-	-	-
6) Paper and Printing	-	-	-	-
7) Leather work	-	-	-	-
8) Wood & Wood Products	-	-	16	16
9) Rubber and Plastic	-	-	-	-
10) Chemical	-	-	2	2
11) Non-metallic mineral	-	-	-	-
12) Basic metal	-	-	-	-
13) Metal Products except machinery and transport equipments	-	-	2	2
14) Machinery tools	1	1	3	3
15) Electric appliances	-	-	-	-
16) Transport equipments and parts	-	-	-	-
17) Electricity	3	3	-	-
18) Gas and steam	-	-	-	-
19) Storage and Ware housing	-	-	-	-
20) Education, Scientific Research Services	-	-	-	-
21) Repair Services	-	-	7	7

CACHAR-VI

BANKING, TRADE AND COMMERCE

A. Banking and Finance.

(a) **History of Indigenous Banking:**—The Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee held in 1929-30 observed that history of indigenous banking in Assam is shrouded in obscurity. During the pre-British days the economy of the district of Cachar was mainly based on the barter system and therefore, there was hardly any need of any monetary transaction. Except coins of smaller denominations and cowries or conch-shells which were generally used in small transactions, money itself was seldom available to public for their use. The hill tribes like Kacharis and plains people like Dehans, who are the indigenous inhabitants of Cachar, had very little wants; while the Bengali settlers both Hindus and Muhammadans from Sylhet produced everything whatever they want and exchanged their surplus with the tribes in local markets.

Land revenue was paid in kind and the use of money was, therefore, unwanted. Under this state of affairs there was no possibility of growth of money economy and establishment of banking institution of any sort. It is observed that some kind of credit system grew during the later part of Kachari-rule when land revenue was accepted in cash and the people in need of money sought help of the co-members of the Khel or else had it from mahajans, professional money-lenders or affluent agriculturists who kept their surplus money for lending purpose with interest.

The district of Cachar lapsed to the British in 1830, and the British currency system was introduced by replacing gradually the old indigenous system which was wiped out totally beforehand from the present Karimganj sub-division, as the sub-division was then a part of Sylhet which was under the Mughal rule for a considerably long period. As and when the British administration was consolidated in Assam including Cachar district and free trade and commerce were growing, large number of businessmen from outside Assam came and established their trade centres in the important places of the district. They gradually extended their business to the rural areas as well as to tea gardens which in their wake brought in a large number of immigrant labour population. These factors had no doubt an impact upon money market giving rise to demand for and supply of money. The merchants, who belonged to

Marwari community mainly, had ready money, played an important role and lent it at a profitable rate of interest besides investing in trade while the tea garden population had need for credit money to procure their daily requirements. The agricultural economy of the rural areas was, however, not presently shivered by the new wave as the peasants produced almost all their requirements and had the little money by selling their surplus at the village bazars or at the nearby garden hats for payment of land revenue. In giving an account of the conditions during the last part of the last century W.W. Hunter observed, "the Manipuris, who are perhaps the wealthiest class among the natives of the district, usually hoard their money. The well-to-do Hindus either invest their profits in trade which is principally confined to woodcutting, or lend them out at interest. The Musalmans for the most part observe the precepts of the Koran so strictly that they will not take to usury. The cultivators, therefore, of this religion are compelled to hoard their little gains. When money is lent on interest, the rates charged are the same whether a mortgage be given or not. In the case of small transaction, the rate is from 48 to 75 per cent. per annum. In large transactions, the rate varies from 36 to 60 per cent."¹

Among the well-to-do Hindus, there were professional and agriculturist money lenders, Bengali and Marwari merchants and shop-keepers. They issued short-term loans, carried their trades on hundies, cheques or drafts. This type of banking business was not the sole one to these people at that time. Some of the business men succeeded in mobilising savings in the rural sector. They also used to accept deposits from the villagers either with interest or without interest. Such deposits were of the nature of deposit at call. The cultivators whatever they could save came to the Marwari firms to deposit with a sense of security. The firms generally did not issue any documents like passbook but gave receipts against the deposits. The firms and other money lenders also made short-term advances to the village agriculturists against interest not in the terms of money but against their standing crops on condition to purchase at the rate prevailing in the market at the time of harvesting, or on security of possession of land in mortgage. The middlemen or beparis advanced money to the agriculturists against the crops and charged interest in terms of crops, which in terms of money was too high and such interest generally varied from 50 to 75 per cent.

(b) **General Credit Facilities:** It was only during the early part of the present century that the credit structure of the district took some

concrete shape over and above the credit facilities rendered by the money lenders and affluent agriculturist landlords as referred to above. They had their monopoly upon the credit field and therefore earned enormous profits on 29 per cent. Since 1929-30, the position of the Societies and Government had deteriorated, whereas the importance of the money lenders had definitely increased. Some efforts made during the first two plan periods increased the importance of co-operative credit a little. The high rate of interest charged for the loans given to the agriculturists failed to achieve the objects for which the loans were issued to the rural people. As they had little to offer as security, most of the loans remained unsecured, on the other hand the village money lenders rarely suffered losses as they could realise something from debtors with whom they were in constant touch. Naturally the money lenders retained the predominant hold upon the people even after banking institutions grew up.

(c) **Rural and Urban Indebtedness:** There is considerable burden of indebtedness in the rural areas. Population increase, burden of indebtedness in the rural areas, stagnation in rural productivity and limitation of employment avenues are the important causes which lead to great indebtedness.² It has been observed in the District Gazetteers of Cachar, 1905, in this respect, as follows:

"The extent to which indebtedness exists is a question of some importance, but is one with regard to which it is difficult to obtain reliable information. The local revenue officers, who have been recently consulted, state that from 60 to 75 per cent of the population are in debt, though they admit that in the majority of cases the debtor could discharge his obligations if he would take service or do other work when not engaged on agriculture. It is difficult to believe that these statements can be correct. The land revenue assessment is light and only amounts to Rs. 1.8.5 per head; the incidence of the excise revenue was only Rs. 0.8.11 per head in 1902-03; and there is a large foreign population who must, to a great extent supply their wants from the produce of the villagers. On June 30th. 1903, there were 71,573 adult coolies in the Cachar plains and assuming an estimate that seems moderate enough—that each of them spent Rs. 25 a year on the products of the district, they would put some 18 lakhs of rupees in circulation amongst the villagers. This would amount to Rs. 6.8 per head for each man, woman and child in the plains of Cachar outside tea gardens and Silchar town in 1901.

"In a matter of this kind considerable weight must be attached to the opinion of the settlement officer, Rai Sarat Chandra Banerji Bahadur. His estimate differs entirely from that submitted by the local

2. P.C.Goswami: *The Economic Development of Assam*, Calcutta, 1963; P.60.

1. W.W. Hunter: *A Statistical Account of Assam*, vol. 2, New Delhi, (Reprint), PP.432-33.

revenue officials, and on a priority grounds would deem to be much nearer to the truth.

"In regard to the actual indebtedness of the people it is not of course very easy to form an estimate. The point was one of the items set down for enquiry during the classification operations, and has been noted upon more or less carefully in regard to every village. The statement of the *mirasdars* themselves in such a matter had to be accepted with considerable reserve. Large allowances had to be made for the natural anxiety to convince the assessing officer that, generally speaking the people were in an abject state of poverty. The fact that there were evident signs to the contrary had necessarily by no deterrent effect against sweeping statements of misery, or against the assertion that, unless the rates of assessment were reduced to what they were before the current settlement, everybody would starve. Rather careful enquiries were made in the Katigora *tahsil* to the number of persons actually in debt in each village, and tested by the existence of money bands, and the result would go to show that the number of householders who had contracted debts formed about 10 per cent. of the whole, and that about a tenth of these, or 1 per cent, were rather heavily in debt.

"According to the same authority, the rate of interest varies with the amount of money borrowed. For sums under Rs. 20 the usual rate is 75 per cent, though in parts of the *sadr tahsil* it is only 60 per cent, and in the Varnerpur *pargana*, 48 per cent. For sums between Rs.20 and Rs.50 an interest at 75 per cent. is occasionally paid; but 48 or 60 per cent is the more usual rate. For loans of between Rs. 50 and Rs. 100, the rate varies from 80 to 60 per cent, and is usually about 48 per cent. Money is borrowed for the purpose of paying for a wife, or land, or cattle, or lawyer's and sometimes to pay land revenue. The last named obligation is, however, usually discharged by the sale of surplus paddy, vegetables, poultry, goats, and even cattle."³

During the twentieth century, however, the total volume of rural indebtedness of the district appeared to have considerably increased in view of the Banking Enquiry Committee's findings of 90 per cent of indebtedness to total families in the sample. According to the said Committee, average debt per family was Rs. 179.00 and per indebted family it was Rs. 200.00 in the rural areas of the Cachar district. It appears from the Banking Enquiry Committee's report that the Marine, Fire Insurance Companies of Cachar which kept their business suspended, issued loan of Rs. 78,000.00 during 1929-30 at the rate of 5% in the urban areas only. After this, no district indebtedness survey was conducted

3. B.C.Allen: *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol.I, Cachar, Calcutta, 1905, pp.104-106.

ducted in Cachar, as such the general report on indebtedness in Assam only may be deemed to have reflected the condition of the average district. The findings of the Survey in brief is as follows:

Rural Indebtedness: "According to all-India Rural Debt and Investment survey conducted by the Reserve Bank of India, the aggregate value of assets per rural household in Assam as on 31st December 1961 works out at Rs. 3,115. Fixed capital formation per rural household during the period of July, 1961 to June, 1962 averaged Rs. 18/- in farm business and Rs.1 in non-farm business. Major alterations, additions and new construction of residential houses amounted to Rs. 7 per household during the same period.

The amount borrowed during July, 1961-June, 1962 was Rs. 163 per borrowing rural household and averaged Rs. 33 per household for all rural households. Repayment per involved household during the same period amounted to Rs. 131 and per rural household it averaged Rs. 26.

The survey revealed that the proportion of households reporting outstanding loans (at the end of June, 1962) was more than 50 per cent in all the states except Assam and Orissa."⁴

The Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee estimated, in 1929-30, the average debt per family in Assam at Rs. 205 and per indebted family at Rs. 242. But it should be noted that 2,500 families out of total 4,997 families surveyed belonged to Sylhet district alone which was in Assam till 1947. The figure for Karimganj sub-division, then in Sylhet, was 296 families. The Committee accounted the total amount of indebtedness in Assam, at Rs. 220 million which is subject to much doubt. The all-India Rural Credit Survey for the year of survey estimated debt per family in Assam at Rs. 219. In Assam 20.1 per cent of the rural households reported borrowings during the period covered by the survey as against 49.1 per cent for all-India.

The average amount borrowed per rural family was Rs. 33 and the averages for cultivators and non-cultivators being Rs. 36 and Rs. 23 in Assam as against the corresponding all-India averages of Rs. 180, Rs.205, and Rs. 111 respectively.⁵ As in other parts of Assam, the most fearsome but handy money lenders as a community are the *Kabulies* who advance any borrowable amount to the middle class people against personal security at 107. per cent monthly rate of interest payable in advance every months.

With the economic depression of 1931-32, the debt burden of the people increased considerably. The Assam Money Lenders Act was enacted

4. Source: *Economic Survey Assam 1970*, Department of Economics and Statistics Govt. of Assam, p.111.

5. *Census of India*, 1961, vol.III, Assam General Report, Calcutta, 1964, p.427.

ted in the year 1934 to reduce the hardship caused by the exorbitant rate of interest. During the period from 1936-39 several Debt Conciliation Boards were set up under the Assam Debt Conciliation Act of 1936.

The Second Great World War opened large scale avenues of employment. The trade and commerce rapidly grew in the province which was inflated with money, the price of every commodity was soaring high and the burden of debt in the rural sector was naturally affected by the high commodity prices, although the cultivators got relief to some extent due to the rise of prices of agricultural products. Yet the inflation of the plan period has, on the whole, enhanced the demand for the rural credit. To meet this demand, the Government has established Rural Credit Societies and Land Mortgage Banks to save the economically hardshipped people who are in constant need of loans for meeting the essential demands of society and life. Achievements and working of these societies will be discussed elsewhere in this chapter. It is believed that under these circumstances the possible financial assistance provided by different financial organisations has not been commensurate with the total needs.

The Role of Private Money Lenders: Reference has been made earlier that the private money lenders, professional and semi-professional business men played prominent role in providing rural finance to the needy people. As a matter of fact, in the past they were the only persons to whom the people in distress could look for credit. Even in spite of legislation curtailing the earnings of money lenders expansion of banking institutions and Co-operative Credit Societies the money lenders continue to be the most important source of rural credit.

The introduction of the Assam Rural Indebtedness Relief Act, 1975 is an important step taken by the Govt. in the field of rural credit in Assam. The liquidation of old debts belonging to certain weaker sections of the rural people as per provision of the Act mentioned above is no doubt an important relief to the poor people of the district. Yet in the midst of various legislations and other protective measures the unlicensed and licensed money lenders have been following under ground and secret means for furtherance of their lucrative business. In the subsequent periods Gaon Panchayat level Co-operative Societies have been formed in Cachar as in other parts of the state to streamline their activities in the field of rural finance.

Banking facilities:

(d) **Joint Stock Banks:** No Joint Stock Commercial Bank is incorporated in this district. There are only a few branches of Commercial

Bank such as the United Commercial Bank, and the United Bank of India incorporated outside the district. There are also several branches of the State Bank of India. In December, 1969, the Reserve Bank of India has introduced the "Lead Bank Scheme" for setting up proper banking facilities in the underbanked districts of the country. Under the "Lead Bank Scheme" Cachar, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur and Dibrugarh have been allotted to the United Bank of India. On the whole the expansion of the banking facilities has gradually been improving along with the establishment of Scheduled Commercial Bank offices in the district. In June, 1973, the district had 12 Scheduled Commercial Bank offices (5 in rural areas and 7 in semi-urban areas) and the total deposits and advances made by all these functioning bank offices were Rs.597 lakhs and Rs.127 lakhs respectively. But these Scheduled Bank offices made loans and advances of Rs.6,34 lakhs and Rs.1,43 lakhs respectively on December of the same year. The number of Bank offices in the district increased to 13 in June, 1974 and their total deposits and advances in 1974 were Rs.6,29 lakhs and Rs.1,69 lakhs respectively. Out of these bank offices 6 were in rural areas, and 7 in semi-urban areas, the position of deposits and advances being Rs.59 lakhs and Rs.37 lakhs in rural areas and Rs.5,70 lakhs and Rs.1,32 lakhs in semi-urban areas. It appears that the banking facilities have been on the increase to cater to the needs of the people of the district.

The United Bank of India: Cachar branches: The Silchar Branch of the United Bank of India was opened at Silchar, the headquarters of the district on 3.1.33. Before taking "Lead Bank Scheme" in 1969, this bank had another branch office at Karimganj which was opened on 27.12.47. Under the "Lead Bank Scheme" Cachar has been allotted to the United Bank of India for expansion of banking facilities and accordingly from 1969 to 1974, it had opened 9 more branch offices in the Cachar district at Badarpur, Lakhimpur, Lala, Meherpur Patharkandi, Ramkrishnagar, Sonai, Tarapur, and Udarband. This bank also undertakes agricultural advances in addition to advances for business and industry. The volume of business of the Cachar branches of the United Bank of India has considerably increased during the recent years. The advances and deposits position of the branches in the Cachar district upto 30.11.75 are given below:

Advances—	(in thousands of rupees)	As on 30/4/75
Total Advances		13719
1. Priority Sector Advances...		
(a) Agriculture		13.23
(b) Road Transport Organisations		41.81
(c) Small Scale Industries		9.15
(d) Retail Trade		23.35
2. Professional and Self employment.. .. .		3.57
3. Traditional business		41.89
4. Small business		3.32
5. Others		.87

Deposits :

Total Deposits....	.....	425.81
	Amount	Percentage to total
1. Demand deposit ..	48.45	12%
2. Time deposit ..	159.04	31%
3. Savings Bank deposit ..	195.25	46%
4. Other deposits ..	23.07	5%

The State Bank of India: The Silchar Branch of the State Bank of India was opened at Silchar, the headquarters of the district on 4.5.56. This bank first took over government transactions and currency chest from the local treasury. Since then all government transactions, banking operations viz: acceptance of deposit, grant of advances, collection of bills Hundies, remittances by drafts, telegraphic transfers etc. were conducted by this branch of the State Bank. By 1975, the State Bank of India opened four other branches at Karimganj (28.5.58), Hailakandi (30.11.60), Narsingpur (30.9.58), and Silchar Bazar (19.12.75). It now transacts all types of banking business in additions to government transactions. The following tables show the position of deposits and advances of the Silchar branch of this Bank from 1960 to 1969.

Table—I
Deposits :

Year	Total deposits	Demand deposits	Time deposits	Savings Deposits
		Amount	Amount	Amount
1	2	3	4	5
1960	16,61,858	13,13,079	1,33,975	2,14,804
1961	17,46,703	11,30,882	2,98,263	3,17,558
1962	18,51,087	11,04,873	3,97,455	3,48,759
1963	26,56,782	12,92,534	9,21,765	4,42,483
1964	32,92,344	16,92,971	9,83,584	6,15,789
1965	38,11,061	19,70,261	10,40,443	8,00,357
1966	54,12,210	27,80,445	14,60,367	11,71,398
1967	64,57,886	31,91,820	18,17,014	14,49,062
1968	80,93,803	42,81,608	20,86,407	17,03,945
1969	89,48,970	49,58,612	20,95,860	18,55,516

Table—II

Advances

Year	Total advance .	Industry		Personal	
	Amount	Amount	%	Amount	%
1	2	3	4	5	6
1960	49,077	1,179	6.02	47,898	5.78
1961	1,17,918	23,131	6.51	44,788	6.27
1962	1,11,609	15,052	7.09	96,557	7.13
1963	71,780	19,382	7.12	52,398	6.05
1964	1,15,686	18,088	7.25	97,598	6.43
1965	1,12,957	16,051	7.95	96,900	6.68
1966	1,20,523	1,314	8.00	1,19,209	8.01
1967	1,82,548	7,400	8.00	1,95,148	8.5
1968	2,54,545	—	—	2,54,545	9.7
1969	3,09,031	24,731	9.50	2,84,300	7.00

The volume of entire business of the branches of the State Bank of India in Cachar district has considerably increased gradually on account of the increasing government activities as well as trade, commerce, business and industries. Up to 31-12-70, the State Bank of India, in Cachar district issued advances of Rs.72,000 to 5 agricultural units, Rs.10,22,000 to 29 small scale industrial units, Rs.22,25,000 to 129 small business and professional units, and Rs.5,25,000 to 9 trading units.

As per Banking Statistics published by Reserve Bank of India, in Cachar there were altogether 13 working Scheduled Commercial Banks 5 of which were in rural areas. All these banks made deposits and advances of Rs.59 and Rs.37 lakhs respectively as on 30-6-1974.

This figure is very much encouraging in comparison to all other plains and hills districts of Assam. The remaining seven banks were situated in the semi-urban areas and made deposits and advances of Rs.5.70 and Rs.1.32 lakhs respectively, on the very same date of 30th June, 1974.

United Commercial Bank: There is one branch of the United Commercial Bank in Cachar district. This branch was established at Silchar in

1951 for the whole district. This Bank offers loans and advances to both big and small concerns. The United Commercial Bank is a nationalised autonomous industrial concern and its district branch had assets and liabilities of 459 lakhs and 43 lakhs respectively in 1970. The advances and deposits of this United Commercial Bank for the period from 1960 to 1969 are shown below:

Table—I Advances (1000 omitted)

Year	Total Advances	Industry	Trade & Commerce	Personal
1	2	3	4	5
1960	399	224	115	60
1963	666	232	291	143
1965	683	319	245	119
1967	509	258	151	100
1969	911	512	239	160

Table—II Deposits

Year	Total Deposits	Demand Deposits	Time Deposits	Saving Deposits
1	2	3	4	5
1960	928	314	260	354
1963	1,511	408	364	739
1965	1,968	383	550	1,035
1967	3,247	558	981	1,708
1968	3,395	664	1,118	1,613
1969	3,699	625	1,169	1,905

Although a number of bank offices have been opened both in urban and semi-urban areas in the district, yet facilities so far available are not adequate to meet the growing demands of the people. According to a study of the Reserve Bank of India, the average size of population per bank office in Cachar was as high as 2,37,000 at the

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end of 1967 while the corresponding figure for Assam and India were 1,99,000 and 73,000 respectively. This situation in respect of coverage of population was improved in 1970 in the district as the average population per bank office came down to 2,02,000. But then the corresponding figures in respect of Assam and India were also much better than before in 1970, being at 1,34,000 and 52,000 respectively. There was a relative decline in the position of Cachar which occupied the seventh place among Assam districts and the 250th in place on an all-India basis in terms of population coverage. By the end of September, 1970 the position of the district came down to the ninth in Assam and to the 294th among the 324 districts of India ranked by the Reserve Bank.

It should be noted that the number of bank offices has shown an increase during 1968 and 1969 only when United Bank of India started its branch expansion activities in the district following its allocation as a lead bank in the district.

Deposits with the bank offices in the district have recorded a 14.7 per cent increase from Rs.2.72 crores to Rs. 3.12 crores between December, 1967 and March, 1970. The district's share in the total deposits of the State marginally improved from 7.0 per cent to 7.8 per cent during the period from December, 1967 to March, 1970; the deposits having increased from Rs.16.19 lakhs to Rs. 40.24 lakhs. The district's share in the total advances in the State appeared quite meagre being 2.7 per cent in March 1970. These advances, however, excluded the large amounts utilised in other sectors in the district through the bank branches located outside the district. The United Bank of India alone financed 16 tea gardens in Cachar by about Rs.1 crores. This fact needs to be taken into account while analysing the advances and deposits ratio obtaining in the district. Although the ratio was more than double (the increase was from 6.0 per cent to 12.9 per cent) during December, 1967 to March, 1970, it was still very lower than the ratio obtained for the State as a whole which was 36.9 per cent in March, 1970. But these figures do not reflect the financial benefits flowing to the district from sources outside the district.

The following table shows the actual position of the scheduled commercial banks in the district for the years from 1967 to 1970.⁶

6. Report of the Fact-finding Survey on Cachar district, Assam, by Dept. of Economic Studies, United Bank of Calcutta, p.553.

CACHAR DISTRICT GAZETTEER

Item/Date	Centre			Total for Cachar District		Total for Assam		Percentage of district Assam
	Silchar	Karimganj	Hailakandi	Badarpur				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
A.No of offices.								
Dec.1967	3	2	1	-	6	66	9.1	
Dec.1968	3	2	1	-	6	70	8.6	
Sept.1969	3	2	1	1	7	79	8.9	
March.1970	3	2	1	1	7	90	7.8	
B.Deposits								
(Rs.'000)								
Dec.1967	1,79,23	75,24	17,47	-	2,71,94	38,75,46	7.0	
Dec.1968	1,99,31	71,53	18,26	-	2,88,20	39,34,36	7.4	
Sept.1969	1,94,00	73,00	16,00	2,00	2,85,00	37,91,52	7.5	
March.1970	2,09,00	84,00	16,00	2,00	3,12,00	39,89,100	7.8	
C. Advance								
(Rs.'000)								
Dec.1967	9,42	6,61	16	-	16,19	9,43,45	1.7	
Dec.1968	1,421	7,12	26	-	21,59	13,64,71	1.6	
Sept.1969	22,41	1,59	1,49	-	31,40	13,81,39	2.3	
March.1970	25,82	12,75	1,49	18	40,24	14,71,72	2.7	
D.Advances								
Deposits Ratio (%)								
Dec.1967	5.3	8.8	0.9	-	6.0	24.3	-	
Dec.1968	7.1	9.9	1.4	-	7.5	34.7	-	
Spt.1969	11.6	10.3	9.3	-	11.0	36.4	-	
March.1970	12.4	15.2	9.3	6.0	12.9	36.9	-	

(ii) **Co-operative Credit Societies and Bank:** Cachar district has now been served by the Assam Co-operative Apex Bank Ltd. Cachar branch, the Cachar Central Co-operative Bank Ltd. and a net-work of Co-operative Credit societies both agricultural and non-agricultural. The Cachar Central Co-operative Bank has five branches one in each at Silchar, Hailakandi, Badarpur, Lala, and Karimganj. At the end of June 1969, the total number of different types of co-operative societies in Cachar district stood at 837 of which the agricultural credit co-operatives constituted by far the major portion, their number standing at 442. In terms of number, the Weaver's Co-operatives came next, their number totalling 105. Of other Co-operatives, mention may be made of Thrift and Credit Co-operatives, Marketing Co-operatives, Industrial Co-operatives, Farming and Fishery Co-operatives etc. There is one Town Co-operative Bank in the district namely the Silchar Co-operative Town Bank. Before discussing the Co-operative Credit Societies in respect of rural credit, it will be proper to trace briefly the growth of the Co-operative societies in the district.

The Co-operative movement in Assam started after the enactment of the Co-operative Societies Act of 1904. As elsewhere in Assam, a number of Rural Agricultural Credit Societies were organised in this district. Gradually, the need to extend the movement to the credit aspects was also felt. Accordingly, the Co-operative Societies Act of 1912 was passed. This Act provided for formation of both credit and non-credit societies. The societies formed in this district till 1920 could not make progress for want of a central organisation for financing and co-ordinating the societies. It was only in 1921, that the Cachar Central Co-operative Bank Ltd. was established at Silchar to bridge the gap. Since then the Central Bank has been acting as the supplier of credit to the societies. Under the guidance and supervision of the Central Bank, a number of Co-operative Societies both credit and non-credit in the field of agriculture, industry and trade were formed.

Unfortunately, the growth and working of these societies were not satisfactory in this district and the movement could not make much headway in Assam as a whole till Independence inspite of Government patronage. The movement received a serious set-back during the great depression of the thirties. However, due to timely efforts of the Government, the movement managed to survive. The Second World War which followed the crisis geared up the movement in the State and a number of Co-operative Consumer's Stores and Trading Societies were formed and flourished in the district as elsewhere in the State. Thus there was a brief span of prosperity in its history. After the war, the move-

ment again suffered from similar crisis. Most of the Consumers Stores and Trading Societies went into liquidation and the agricultural credit societies groaned under overwhelming burden of over dues. The position further deteriorated at the time of Independence when the movement was virtually on the verge of decay.

After the Independence, efforts were made to reorganise the co-operative movement in Assam, and the Assam Co-operative Societies Act, 1949, was passed repealing the old Act.

During the First Five-Year Plan, efforts were renewed to revitalise the Co-operative Societies with financial assistance from the Reserve Bank of India. The Assam Co-operative Apex Bank was set up in 1948 and was entrusted with the arduous task of supplying credit to the Co-operative Societies and other organisations. During the Second Five-Year Plan, the Co-operative organisation was reoriented on the lines of recommendations of the Rural Credit Survey Committee of the Reserve Bank of India. During this plan period the Warehousing Co-operative was also formed facilitating storage of agricultural produce. Several Warehouses have since been built in the district. As years rolled on, the co-operative organisation of the district grew in size and strength. During the 3rd and the 4th Five-Year Plans the emphasis has been placed on the rationalisation of the credit structure at primary level on the basis of viability. During the 4th Five-Year Plan the policies and procedure of credit co-operative societies and Land Development Banks were oriented in favour of small cultivators.

The Co-operative societies have made a phenomenal progress during the plan period. Besides the primary credit societies various categories of Service Co-operative Societies, Industrial Co-operative Societies, Farming Co-operative Societies, Co-operative Marketing Societies and Producers' Co-operatives have been established in the district.

(iii) **Credit Revitalisation Scheme** : It may be noted that the Service Co-operatives formed during the last period of the Second Plan were entrusted not only with the task of disbursing credit but also with such other responsibilities such as distribution of fertilisers, establishment of effective links between credit and marketing and so on. But these societies emerged out as weak and uneconomic units with overwhelming burden of overdues. Therefore, during the middle of the Third plan, credit revitalisation scheme was initiated. Under this scheme weak and uneconomic units were amalgamated with strong and viable ones, and the dormant societies were liquidated. Such reorganised service co-operatives were made co-terminus with Goan Sabha areas. Agricultural credit was made production oriented and crop-loan system was introduced

in the areas of operation of the Cachar, Tezpur and Nowgong Central Banks.

During the Third Plan, the Banking Loan (applicable to Co-operative societies) Act, 1965, has brought the co-operative banks within the purview of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

The Assam Co-operative Apex Bank Ltd : The Assam Co-operative Apex Bank Ltd. opened its branch at Silchar in May, 1949, which was followed by two other branches at Karimganj and Hailakandi. Operation of each branch was confined to the Sub-division concerned. At first these three branches of the Assam Co-operative Apex Bank accepted current deposits from co-operative societies only. Subsequently after six month deposits from individuals and firms were also accepted. Since then all sorts of banking facilities were opened by the Bank to the public. The branches started also with accommodations to the Central Trading co-operatives in Cash Credit accounts at three towns of the district against proper securities but subsequently such credit facilities were opened to public in all forms. The Bank has also been shouldering the responsibilities of rural credit finance from funds available from the Reserve Bank of India and also from its own resources. It provides direct short-time loans to the societies. To implement the plan for removing agricultural indebtedness of rural people, the Bank is advancing loans to the Cachar Central Co-operative Bank Ltd. for rural credit operation since 1954.

The table in the next page will give an account of deposit and advance (both of agriculturists and non-agriculturist) positions of the bank in the recent years.⁷

The Cachar Central Co-operative Bank Limited : This Bank was established at Silchar, in 1921. The Bank then functioned with a meagre capital and during the slump period of the thirties, the bank was in a meribund stage. It thrived, however, through a long period of about thirty-three years upto 1954 when the Reserve Bank of India extended its financial help to the Bank. The Bank consequently regained its position and was reorganised with a working capital. Gradually the Bank has been expanding its activities in the district opening more branches at Karimganj (7.9.54), Hailankandi (3.9.57), Badarpur (31.5.65) and Lala (9.7.65). The number of societies affiliated to the Bank was 866 as on 30.9.75. The Bank has been issuing short-term and medium-term loans

7. Source—Assam Co-operative Apex Bank Head Office, Gauhati.

Statement showing Deposit and Advance position of the Cachar branch of Assam Co. Op. Apex Bank Ltd.
as on 30.6.71, 30.6.75 and 30.6.77

(figures in Lakhs)

Name of the Branches of Apex Bank in Cachar District.	Head quarters & Sub-division	D E P O S I T S			A D V A N C E S					
					Agricultural			Non-Agricultural		
		1971	1975	1977	1971	1975	1977	1971	1975	1977
Silchar Branch	H.Q.	47.04	64.12	69.68	101.94	97.55	98.66	.71	1.53	1.12
Karimganj Branch	Sub-division	14.54	31.32	30.41	40.88	39.07	39.28	1.07	1.53	.82
Total—		61.58	95.44	100.09	142.82	136.62	137.94	1.78	3.06	1.94

Note : 1. All branches are being controlled by Head Office directly and no branch is being controlled by any district Head Quarter branch.
2. Advance under Non-agriculture includes, loans, cash credit, overdrafts etc.
3. The Bank has drawn up Schemes for Financing Small Scale Industries from the year 1978 only.

on the basis of crop-loan and security of land mortgaged and loans issued to individuals in cash and overdraft on the pledge of stock and other conditions of such loan. The financial position of the Bank in September 1975 is given below:

Position of Share Capital, Deposits and Fund invested as on 30.9.75.

1. Share Capital	No. of members	Amount.
(a) Societies	753	Rs. 27,97,800.00
(b) Individual	112	Rs. 14,700.00
(c) Government	1	Rs. 1,50,000.00
Total—		Rs. 29,62,500.00
2. Deposits		Amount.
(a) Current deposits		Rs. 2,49,827.48
(b) Savings deposits		Rs. 9,78,786.92
(c) Fixed deposits		Rs. 1,00,138.43
(2) Deposits		Amount.
(d) Growers deposits		Rs. 28,017.87
(e) Thrift deposits		Rs. 9,04,485.73
(f) Recurring deposits		Rs. 12,320.00
(g) Other deposits		Rs. 73,112.03
Total—		Rs. 23,46,688.46
(3) Funds:		
(a) Statutory Reserve Fund		Rs. 20,375.62
(b) Agricultural Credit Stabilisation fund		Rs. 977.00
(c) Bad and Doubtful Debt Reserve		Rs. 53,467.95
(d) Special Bad Debt Reserve		Rs. 1,11,101.00
Total—		Rs. 1,85,921.57
(4) Investments:		
(a) Share with Apex Bank		Rs. 8,00,000.00
(b) Share with Sugar Mill		Rs. 10,050.00
(c) Fixed with Apex Bank		Rs. 44,2,289.00
(d) G.P. Note		Rs. 500.00
(e) Fixed deposit with U.B.I. Calcutta		Rs. 50,000.00
(f) Debenture with CLMB		Rs. 19,875.00
(g) NDG		Rs. 24,270.00
Total—		Rs. 13,46,984.00

The position of borrowing and lending business of the Bank as stood on 30.9.75 is shown below:—

A. Borrowing		Lending
SP Rs.	1,49,48,040.24	Rs. 1,75,64,612.55
NP Rs.	58,5000.00	Rs. 77,826.26
Total Rs. 1,50,06,540.24		Total— Rs. 1,76,42,438.81
C. Overdraft:		
Society	Rs. 22,062.12	Rs. 22,064.12
Individual	Rs. Nil	Rs. Nil

The Bank is managed by the Board of Directors consisting of 25 members. The Assam Co-operative Apex Bank has posted one Secretary, one Assistant Branch Manager and one Sub-Accountant for managerial supervision while the Co-operative Department has posted one Assistant Registrar and one Senior Inspector to assist the business and inspect the business of the Bank. Besides, the Bank has its own employees including one Assistant Secretary and one Assistant Branch Manager.

Silchar Co-operative Town Bank : The Silchar Co-operative Town Bank was established in 1905. The overall business of this Bank is not particularly impressive. The total deposits with the Bank at the end of June 1969 stood at about Rs. 22,900 only, while the loans issued by it to its members upto 1969-69 totalled about Rs.22,6000 only.

Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank : The Assam Co-operative Central Bank, Shillong (now Gauhati) started in 1956 two sections in Cachar district one at Silchar for Silchar and Hailakandi sub-divisions and the other at Karimganj for Karimganj sub-division. The Silchar section was reorganised into Silchar Primary Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank in 1960 and the Karimganj section into Karimganj Primary Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank in 1962-63. By the time another Primary Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank was organised at Hailakandi. They are all affiliated to the Assam Co-operative Central Bank, Gauhati, which finances all these Banks. Each Bank is managed by a Board of Directors. The Departmental Officer on deputation to each Bank acts as the Secretary and is the ex-officio member of the respective Board of Directors. The loan application of a member applicant is forwarded by the Secretary of a primary bank after due scrutiny and enquiry by its Board of Directors to the Assam Co-operative Central Bank which is the authority for sanctioning the loans.

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These Primary Co-operative Land Mortgage Banks issue loans for the purposes of improvement of lands, purchase of agricultural machineries, construction of cow-sheds and granaries, horticulture, fishery, construction of irrigation tanks and purchase of lands. Till 1970 loans for redemption of mortgage and repayment of old debt were also provided.

Primary Co-operative Credit Societies: In order to open a Primary Co-operative Society, 15 or more persons should meet in an "Inaugural General Meeting" which is also attended by a Departmental officer. The model bye-laws provided by the Department are accepted in the meeting and the general body elects the functionaries of the society particularly the chairman and the members of the Managing Committee. The area of operation of the society, the functions and the objects are also finalised in the meeting. The proceedings of the meeting are then forwarded to the Assistant Registrar, Co-operative Societies. The society is then registered by the Department and formally comes under the purview of the Co-operative Societies Act. The working capital of a primary society whether agricultural or non-agricultural is composed of 1. paid-up share, 2. reserve fund, 3. other funds, 4. deposits from members, 5. deposits from non-members, 6. borrowing from central and provincial banks, 7. borrowing from other societies and 8. borrowing from Government Departments. The first four terms constitute the internal; and the other terms, the external capital. A primary Co-operative society is managed by a Managing Committee consisting of 7 elected members. The Secretary of the society is usually appointed by the society and is responsible for maintaining the accounts of the society. The Co-operative Department carries out audit from time to time.

In Cachar district there were 442 Primary Agricultural Co-operative Credit Societies, 13 Marketing Cooperatives; 51 Industrial Co-operative Credit Societies; 105 Weaving Co-operatives; 39 Consumer's Co-operatives ; 10 Trading Co-operatives ; 16 Multipurposes Co-operatives ; 25 Fishery Co-operatives; 22 Farming Co-operatives ; 1 Urban Credit Co-operatives; 58 Thrift and Credit Co-operatives; 3 Primary Land Mortgage Societies; 1 Central Co-operative Bank; 1 Wholesale Co-operatives and 50 others as on June 1969. The total members of these societies increased from 23, 342 persons in 1960 to 93,090 persons in June 1968. The district had 47 Primary Non-Agricultural Co-operative credit societies with 4573 members at the end of June 1968.

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During 1967-68 the total loan advanced by the Agricultural Co-op. Societies amounted to Rs.80,46,000 against a recovery of Rs.44,25,000 only. The total loans remained as outstanding were Rs.1,09,32,000 of which Rs.56,06,000 was overdue and Rs.11,000 bad and doubtful debt at the end of June 1968. The value of goods procured and of goods distributed by the societies during the year amounted to Rs.1,75,000 and Rs.1,74,000 respectively. During the same year 241 societies made a profit of Rs.61,000 while 191 incurred a loss of Rs.47,000.

47 Non-Agricultural Co-operative Credit Societies, during 1967-68, advanced a loan of Rs.6,96,000 against a recovery of Rs.5,20,000 only. The total loan remained as outstanding was Rs. 6,19,000 of which Rs.1,50,000 was overdue at the end of June 1968. The societies during the same period distributed goods, value of which was Rs.9,000 only. During the same year 37 societies made a profit of Rs.13,000 while 10 such societies incurred losses of Rs.2,000.

The financial position of the primary Agricultural credit societies and of the primary non-Agricultural credit societies at the end of June, 1968 was as follows:-

(Amount in thousands of rupees)

Description	Agricultural Credit Societies	Non-Agricultural Credit Societies
1. Total Liabilities	14974	831
2. Working capital	13212	810
3. Paid up capital	2058	104
4. Borrowings	10276	176
5. Total assets	14664	883
6. Cash balance	452	80
7. Investment	1525	107
8. Loan outstanding	10932	619

(iii) Insurances:

Life Insurance: The Life Insurance business in India was nationalised in 1956 and the Life Insurance Corporation of India was established on 1.9.56 under the provisions of Life Insurance Corporation Act, 1956. A branch office of the Life Insurance Corporation was opened at Silchar in Cachar district after the enactment of the Life Insurance Corporation Act on 1st July, 1956 under the control of Gauhati Divisional Office. This Silchar Branch had jurisdiction over the entire Cachar district, Mizoram Hills district, North Cachar Hills Sub-division of the

United Mikir (present-Karbi Anglong) and North Cachar Hills district and Manipur and Tripura State.

With the increasing integration of the unit policies and growing business of Life Insurance Corporation of India, it became inconvenient to manage the affairs of a vast area and necessity for introducing new offices were felt. With this end in view and also for the purpose of rendering better service to the policy holders, the territory of the State of Tripura was separated from this branch and put under the jurisdiction of Agartala Branch in the year 1958. During the same year a sub-branch office was set-up at Karimganj with the area of Karimganj and Hallakandi sub-divisions of the district. Ultimately Silchar Branch of the Life Insurance of India had been confined to the areas of Silchar sub-divisions; North Cachar Hills sub-division of United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District and the Mizoram State only.

Volume of business performed by the Life Insurance corporation of India, Silchar Branch, from the year of its inception to March '63 is given below:

October '56 to December, 1957	Rs.40,79,750.00
1958	Rs.48,27,750.00
1959	Rs.60,65,250.00
1960	Rs.70,12,500.00
1961	Rs.61,81,000.00
June '62 to March 1963	Rs.70,95,000.00

The Life Insurance Corporation of India in Cachar District has been carrying its business successfully. During the year 1969-70, 4,112 new policies were taken out, involving a total assured sum of Rs.2,0 crores, while the total premium income earned during the year was of the order of about Rs.36 Lakhs. The volume of total business of the Life Insurance Corporation branches operating at Silchar and Karimganj during 1969-70 are shown below:—

	Silchar Branch	Karimganj Branch
No. of L.I.C.		
Number of policies issued	2,554	1,558
Amount issued	Rs. 1.36 crores	Rs. 0.67 crores.
Premium income	Rs.21.82 Lakhs	Rs.15.81 Lakhs.

General Insurance:— As to General Insurance business, there were some branch offices in the district of Cachar. The Marine Fire Companies did their own business before 1901, but after that year these Insurances carried only banking business in urban areas. They issued loans to private persons and agriculturists on security and thus carried business of Rs.78,000/- during 1929-30. Sometimes the rate of interest varied from 12 to 24 per cent.

The General Insurance Corporation of India has been set up after nationalisation of general insurance industry in the country. It is an apex body under which the Govt. of India have set up 4 subsidiary unit companies for operation all over India. The unit companies are:

- 1) The Oriental Fire and General Insurance Co. Ltd.
- 2) The New India Assurance Co. Ltd.,
- 3) The United India Fire and General Insurance Co. Ltd.,
- 4) The National Insurance Company Ltd.

The Oriental Fire and General Insurance Ltd. has their Divisional office at Gauhati to administer areas comprising the State of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram. The Divisional Office has its branch office at Silchar. They have a number of Agents in the district.

There is no question of lapse of General Insurance policies—as the policies are issued for a short term of one year only. They pay Rs.5% commission to the Agents for business secured against Fire Policies and 10% commission against accident and other policies. They give Insurance cover for almost all items of the State economy i.e. industrial undertaking, shops and establishments, vehicles, tea plantation, burglary and house-braking, cash insurance, machinery breakdown insurance, fidelity guarantee insurance etc.

The New India Assurance Company Ltd. with its Divisional Office at Gauhati covers the entire state of Assam besides the adjoining states and Union Territories of Arunachal and Mizoram. Currently there is an office of Inspectorate level at Silchar under the New India Assurance Company Ltd. Besides there are 60 agents in Cachar district as on 31.12.80.

B. Currency and Coinage:

Assam is rich in old sculptures, architectures and stone, and also copper inscription but unfortunately there is no concrete numismatic evidence of our ancient rulers of pre-Ahom age. It, however, does not mean that these rulers did not have their own coins. The Nalanda seal and copper plate inscriptions of Bhaskar Varman of seventh century A.D., bear testimony to the art of minting metals and impressing seals on clay or melted metals. Gold and copper could

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be obtained within the kingdom. This mighty king presumably struck coins of his own. It is mentioned in the Silimpur stone slab inscription of the time of Jayapala (1120-1138 A. D.), the last king of the Brahmapala dynasty in Assam, that he offered 900 gold coins together with a large gift of gold to a learned Brahmin, whose name was Prahasa.

The Kachari coins: It is distinctly proved that the Kacharies were the earliest known inhabitants of Assam and their family was a descendent of the Raja of *Kamarupa* of the time of 'Ha-tsungtsa' as referred to in the inscription of their coins. The Kachari rulers of Asam struck their own coins. The coins of Yasonarayan Deva and of Satrudaman alias Pratapnarayan are still extant. One of the coins of Yasonarayan is dated 1505 Saka (1583 A. D.) shows that he occupied the throne some twenty years before Satrudaman. The coins of Tamradhvaja show that one series of coins continued for a period of one hundred twenty years. Coins of more modern type were issued by the last Kachari King Govinda Chandra (1813-1830 A. D.).

Ahom coins: As early as the fourteenth century A.D., Sudanpha alias Bamuni Konwar (1397-1407 A.D.) struck coins in his own name at the time of his coronation. Since then the practice had grown with the subsequent Ahom monarchs of issuing coins in the name of Ahom king while ascending the coronation building known as the *Singarighar* wherein a throne of gold was kept for the new monarch to occupy. In his book "*Catalogue of the Provincial Coin Cabinet, Assam*", A.W. Botham ascribed the credit of minting the first Ahom coin to Suklengmung. This view is, however, not accepted by some other historians. During the Ahom period both gold and silver coins were issued and the coins were octagonal in shape. The coins of Suklengmung who was contemporary of Nara-Narayan, the Koch king, who also struck coins in his name, bear inscriptions in the Ahom language and Ahom script. Jayadvaj Singha and his successor Chakradhwaj Singha used Sanskrit scripts in their coins while Gadadhar Singha replaced Sanskrit and reintroduced Ahom script in his coins. Again Rudra Singha (1696-1714) introduced an annual issue from 1696 and Assamese scripts are found to be in use from his time till the end of the Ahom rule in 1821.

All the full coins are on the same line; the obverse containing the names of the kings and the date of the coins while the reverse, an impression of the king's devotion to particular deities. The deities most commonly mentioned are Indra and Siva with or without their consorts. The coins minted by the king

Siva Singha and Rajeswar Singha are found to be the most interesting among the coins of the series.

Queen Pramatheswary, wife of Siva Singha, for the first time replaced the traditional Assamese Scripts by minting a square coin with persian-script in 1651. The shape of the coin may have been derived from the coin issued by the Manipuri king Chairamba. In addition to the ordinary octagonal coins in Assamese scripts Rajeswar Singha minted in the first year of his reign octagonal coins in Ahom script and also issued square coins in Assamese script. Besides these, he issued octagonal coins with a Nageri script in 1675 Saka, also two issues of coins with persian script, a square issue in 1676 Saka and an octagonal issue in 1685.

During Moamoria rebellion two of the Moamoria insurgents namely Bharat Singha and Sarbananda came to power and minted coins in their names. The coins of the former dated 1791, 1792, 1793, 1795 and of the latter dated 1794 and 1795- and they are still in existence. Bharat Singha styled himself in his coins as a descendant of Bhagadatta and in other respect used the manner of an Ahom king. The last dated coins is a quarter rupee of Jogeswar Singha issued in 1821 A. D. The Burmese during their invasion of Assam (1819-1826) issued two rough coins locally known as Gahar Mohar.

The coins of early Ahom period with exception of that of Suklengmung bear date of occasion of the king who struck them. The rupees and the gold Mohars of the Ahom kings were minted to the Indian standard of about 170 grains. Half and quarter rupees were introduced by Rudra Singha and Siva Singha. This was carried further by Rajeswar Singha, who even struck an eight and sixteenth parts both of rupee and Mohar while Gaurinath Singha introduced a thirty-second. Mention of the place of mint on the body of Ahom coins also made in all the Ahom coins except on those with persian-script issued by Pramatheswary and Rajeswar Singha. It shows that coins were minted by Ahom Kings at Gargaon, Rangpur and Desoi at different periods. There was practically no copper currency. Its place was taken by *cowries* which were used generally in minor transactions.

The Koch Coins : The Koch coins were found in form similar to that of Hussain Shah of Bengal. The legend are in Sanskrit but in archaic Assamese script and are in similarity to those of Ahom coins. The first Koch King to strike coins in his name was Naranarayan whose kingdom was extended almost over the whole of Assam valley, the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Manipur, Tripura and part of Sylhet. After his death, his son Lakshminarayan and his descendents continued to reign in the

western part of the vast kingdom only as a vassals of the Moghul empire. They were not given power to mint full rupee coins except half rupees known as "Narayani Rupees" with incomplete inscriptions. But there are two or three full coins of Prannarayan now preserved in the British Museum dated Saka 1556 (1633 A.D.). The Koch kings of the western Koch kingdom struck coins in their own names upto the last part of the 19th century. The only known coins of the eastern Koch kingdom are a very few rupees of Raghudeva and single rupee of Parikshit Narayan.

Jaintia Coins : The kings of Jaintia kingdom used to mint coins of their own. Their rupee coins bore the inscription "Jaintipur purandara" on the obverse without the names of the kings. After the fall of Jaintia king at the hands of Koch army in the middle of the sixteenth century the Jaintia kingdom remained as a vassal one and the Jaintia kings struck coins with mere inscription as "Jayantawara" possibly owing to the direction of Koch kings. The coins also bear Saka dated 1591, 1592, 1630, 1653, 1695, 1707 and 1712. It can be presumed that as in the case of earlier Ahom coins, these dates represent the occasion or perhaps of the installation of the king who struck the coins.

B. TRADE AND COMMERCE :

(i) **Ancient trade:** Formerly a good overland communication system was not feasible and therefore external trade though existed was very much limited. Moreover the geographical barrier and political situation were not conducive to the external trade. Adverse diplomatic policies of the ruling kings of different kingdoms were one of the most fundamental factors for holding up the growth of such trade. In spite of these, some amount of external trade was on way with Bengal and neighbouring hill tribes during peace period. Prior to the construction of the Assam Bengal Railway, communication with the outside world was kept up by the steamer through the river Barak. The internal trade was carried out at the bazars and market places where hill tribes carried down their products to barter them for salt and iron tools.

(ii) **Modern Trades:** With the British occupation in Assam and gradual development of communication, both external and internal trade of the district grew up and the volume of trade began to expand. W.W. Hunter, in his Statistical Account of Assam published in 1879, observes that the district trade was carried on in the markets, the principal ones being Janiganja suburb of the civil station of Silchar, Barkhain, Udabohi, Lakhipur and Sonai. There were petty bazars in almost every tea-garden.

for convenience of the imported tea garden labourers. Three bazars were established on the Dhaleswari river, Sonai river and Tipai river where barter system was in vogue. The Bengali traders brought to these places commodities like rice, salt, tobacco, brass-ware, beads, clothes etc. which were exchanged for caoutchouc (Indian rubber), cotton, ivory, bee-wax and pari cloth. The most important produce of the hills was caoutchouc which was sold at Silchar. It has already been said that the external trade of the district was carried by water and passed through the neighbouring district of Sylhet. The staple export was tea, the quantity of which was more than five million pounds annually. Next in importance were the caoutchouc, cotton cloths, brass wares brought down from the southern hills and timber. The chief articles of import were rice brought from Sylhet, cotton goods-both European and native manufacture, salt, hardwares, and various articles of luxury mostly required by the European tea-planters. B.C. Allen in his District Gazetteers of Cachar, observes: "The import trade is chiefly in the hands of foreign shopkeepers; the most important articles brought into the district being rice, which is required for the large cooly population, flour, betel-nuts, salt, sugar, ghee, cotton-piece, goods, kerosine oil, coal, and iron and steel. The only important articles of export was tea, which is shipped direct from the gardens, and timber and other forest produce. More than half of the total weight of the trade still (1903-04) enters or leaves the district by water. Manipuri exports to Cachar timber and other forest produce, cattle, and Indian piece-goods; and receives in return European piece goods and twist, dried fish, and betelnuts. Forest produce is floated down the rivers. Other articles are carried on men's backs or sometimes on pack bullocks.

The internal trade of the district is carried on at markets which are held on certain specified days in the week, and the more important of which are generally sold at several permanent shops. After Silchar itself, where there are upwards of 470 shops, the principal business centres are Udharband on the Madhura river, Sonaimukh at the junction of the Sonai and the Barak in the Sonapur pargana, and Barkhala near the Jatinga river. Most of the shopkeepers are natives of Sylhet, Bengal or the United Provinces, and very few of the indigenous inhabitants of the district have attempted to appropriate any portion of the profits that accrue from retail trade. The number of Marwari merchants is also very small. The village shopkeeper usually deals in grain and pulse, ghee, oil, sugar, molasses, salt, tobacco, spices, umbrellas, and piece goods. The villagers come to the bazars on market days, bringing with them rice or paddy, fruit, vegetables, goats, and poultry."

6. B.C. Allen; *Assam District Gazetteers, Vol. I Cachar*, 1905, pp.114-115.

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There was not much improvement in the trade position of the district during the subsequent years till Independence except in case of the import trade. The growth of population in the district and negligence of the foreign rules towards the indigenous industries were the causes for the increase in the volume of import trade. Foreign articles such as mill-made cloths and yarns, oil and others flooded the local markets and sold at cheaper rates, and became more popular. The import trade remained generally in the hands of foreigners, who carried the articles by steamer through the Barak and by rail. A net work of railways was already laid in the district. The Assam Bengal Rail line (Now North-East Frontier Railway) divides at a point a little to the east of Badarpur and a branch line runs south of the Barak past Katakhal, Salchapra and Machimpur to Silchar. The main line after leaving the Badarpur junction crosses the Barak and winds its way up the Jatinga valley crossing through the North Cachar Hills district into Assam Valley. North of the Barak this line has Bihara, Damchara, Harangjao, Jatinga and Hatikhali stations. A branch line was constructed from Katakhal to Lalabazar. These railway lines and the roads connected the important trade centres of the district. After independence, the position of the district has changed in different aspects. Before the Partition, communications with Calcutta and Chittagong, the two ports serving Assam, were easy and speedy. But after formation of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), Chittagong went to the then Pakistan and access to Calcutta by waterways stopped. The trade and commerce faced the problem of a serious transport bottleneck. Towards the end of 1949, the Pakistan Government stopped all goods in transit over their railways, roadways and waterways to and from Assam and therefore Assam lost all links with the rest of India through the then Pakistan.

Under these circumstances a new line was started in 1948 with the estimated cost of Rs. 8.9 crores on the North-East India to connect Assam with the rest of India.

Gradually, after independence a vast net-work of road communication has been developed in the district during the Five-Year plans. Moreover, a number of public bus routes have also been opened. A considerable volume of trade both internal and external is carried on by these routes.

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It is to be noted that developmental works like construction of roads, bridges, building, setting up of new industries during the Five Year Plan periods have considerably increased import of different materials like iron sheets, cement, other iron materials, coal, kerosene, petrol, lubricants, machineries, machine parts, tools and implements, new materials, sports goods, cosmetics, cloths and yarns, garments, fancy goods, leather and leather goods and luxury goods and other commodities used in our daily life are also imported in large scale. Assorted food articles in packed tins or in plastic papers such as milk, butter, ghee, cornflakes, etc., are also imported. Salt, sugar, medicines and other, numerous industrial products not manufactured in the district are the other items which are imported to the district. Cachar district is the second important crop region in Assam despite its serious climatic hindrances. It exports volume of products like pineapple, jute, ginger, timber, bamboos, forest products, medicinal herbs, cane, oil seeds, mats, raw-cotton, arecanut etc.

The following table shows the destination of export and places of import of some important commodities of the district :

Name of the Commodities	Destination of export.
Pineapple	Lumding, Guwahati, Tinsukia.
Ginger	Calcutta.
Jute	Calcutta.
Tea	Calcutta.
Timber	Calcutta.
Medicinal herbs	Calcutta.

The bulk of the tea and timber is carried to Calcutta market from the Cachar valley in steamer through Bangladesh territory. The main clearance of goods on Railway is also largely made through Badarpur, Lamuding Hill section of North-East Frontier Railway.

The following table furnishes information on imports of the district :

Names of commodities	Places of Import.
Cotton piece goods and yarn	Calcutta, Varanasi, Bangalore, Madras etc. Calcutta, Punjab, Delhi.
Hosiery goods	
Spices	
Salt	
Iron and Steel	Calcutta.
Stationery	
Coal	Cherrapunji, Ledo.
Grains and pulses	Bihar, Uttarpradesh.

Kerosene oil	Digboi, Gauhati.
Medicine	Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi.
Leather and Leather goods	Kanpur, Agra, Calcutta.
Electrical goods	Calcutta, Bombay.
Sugar, Wheat	Uttar Pradesh, Bihar.

For want of data, it is not possible to give a correct account of the volume and value of export and import in the district. 7

(iii) Trade Centres: Centres of wholesale business: Silchar town, Karimganj and Hailakandi, the sub-divisional headquarters of the Cachar district, Patharkandi, Bhangabazar, Katigora, Nilambazar, Badarpur, Kaliganj, Lakhipur, Algapur, Lala, Sonabazar, Katlichharra, Durilabchharra are the main trade centres in the district. Most of the business is transacted at the bazars. Almost all the bazars are situated on the bank of rivers. From the local hats or markets the Beparis collect the local products and store them in the trade centres as mentioned above. The wholesale as well as retail business are growing in these centres during recent years. The wholesale traders import goods from various trade markets outside the district and purchase local goods for export. Gauhati is the most important trade centre in Assam wherefrom many of the commodities of different use are imported to the district. The wholesale purchase of some commodities like sugar, pulses, mustard oil etc. is done at the production centres which are generally situated outside Assam. All the trade centres of the district are the distributing centres for goods both imported and locally purchased. The wholesale as well as retail business are generally carried on side by side in these centres. In almost all these centres daily and weekly markets are held for retail business. It is to be noted that the Karimganj bazar though situated in a subdivisional headquarters is far more better than the Silchar bazar. In Karimganj, Hailakandi and Silchar there is a fixed day in a week known as principal market day.

(iv) Important retail marketing centre: Over and above the daily and weekly markets in the wholesale trade centres, a number of retail shops dealing in different consumer's goods run the retail business. The important retail markets are at Sealtek, Patharkandi, Hailakandi, Bhangabazar, Kaliganj, Nutanbazar, Lakhipur, and Algapur. Numerous retail trade centres are now growing up in the rural areas due to location of some big industries, offices, or factories. Consequently some shops

7, Report from the Assistant Director of Supply, Silchar.

dealing with various items particularly groceries, stationeries etc. are also growing up in these centres. Each village has got atleast one grocery shop which caters to the necessities of the people. The public bus services facilitate mobilisation of the business in different parts of the district. Moreover, every tea garden is an important centre of sales and purchases specially for the people of the garden.

The **hats** are also the important centres where a great deal of retail business is carried on. These **hats** are held either weekly or bi-weekly on particular days. According to 1961 census, there were 89 weekly **hats**, 4 daily and 113 bi-weekly markets in the district. To these **hats** and **bazars** the villagers bring their surplus agricultural produces such as vegetables, rice, betelnuts, poultry, cattle, goats, home-made cloths, and hand-made bamboo and cane products for sale. The sellers also include a section of petty traders who gather these from towns and trade centres with their wares which consist of cotton goods, sugar, pulses, spices, toys, utensils and various others bits. The petty dealers hold licences issued under the Assam Cotton Cloth and Yarn Dealers Licensing Order, 1953. The important **hats** have rows of small temporary sheds mostly of bamboo and thatch.

The management of the **hats** vested in the Local Boards till 1960, when the Panchayat was introduced, and consequently the management of the **hats** passed over to the Goan Panchayats. The daily markets located in the towns are generally managed by the respective Town Committees or Municipalities.

The importance of the village **hats** cannot be undermined because they provide the villagers easy marketing facilities for their surplus agricultural produce including perishable goods which require rapid transactions. Moreover, the articles of daily use are made available to the villagers who can easily procure those from the local **hats** without going to the distant markets or trade centres. The most important markets are Silchar, Karimganj, Katlichhara, Durlabchharra, Sonai bazar and Bhanga-bazar in the district where rice, jute, gur, cotton, pine-apple and arecanut are sold in wholesale and rice appears in the markets in large scale. A list of **hats** and market is appended in the appendix of the chapter.

Fairs and Melas: Many fairs are held in different parts of the district, most of which go on for some days and mass of people congregate there to enjoy the festivals. The fairs are seasonal and held on particular religious festivals. Apart from the merriment which marks these fairs, a good deal of buying and selling of different goods is also carried on there. The congregation is generally of villagers (including men, women, boys, girls and children), a section of whom also bring their produce for sale in these fairs which are visited by some petty traders

from towns and trading centres with their wares. B.C. Allen mentions, in his District Gazetteer of Cachar, about a considerable fair held at Katigora on the occasion of Baruni festival.

Among the important **Melas** held at present in the district are those held on the **Baruni Tithi** in the month of March at the Sidheswar Siva temple near Badarpurghat within the jurisdiction of Katigora *Thana* and other Siva temples at Bhuban hill and Malugram. It is a bathing festival attended by a large number of Hindu people. These **melas** are familiarly known as **Baruni Melas** which last for 15 days and so. **Siv-ratri** or **Siva Chaturdashi Melas** are also held at Siva temples at the Bhuban hill Sivatilla, Malugram and at the temple of Dadhimata. These fairs remain jubilant continuously for several days. The other one, is not so big but fairly important, is the **Ananda mayee Mela**, or **Pausa Sankranti Mela** at Arunachal Kalibari. It has the connection with the movement of the sun and therefore held on **Uttarayan Sankranti** which generally falls in the month of January. Large number of people gather at the foot of the Arunachal Ashram where the **Mela** is held. The **Mela** continues for five days only. Another **Mela** known as **Gandhi Mela** is held in Silchar town during January and attended by large number of people of all sorts. On this occasion, an exhibition in industrial arts, handicrafts etc. is held by the different departments located in the district. This **Mela** lasts for about a fortnight. **Melas** are also held on **Rash Purnima** and **Maghi Purnima** at Bharambaba temple.

(v) Co-operation in wholesale and retail trade (co-operative marketing):

The co-operative consumer's stores and marketing societies were functioning during the second World War for proper distribution of scarce commodities at controlled prices. Almost all these societies were liquidated during the post-war period. In 1958, the Assam Co-operative Apex Marketing Society was organised. Primary Co-operative Societies were organised in each district to carry on the trade and wholesale. In 1966-67 there was one District Co-operative and 13 Primary Co-operative Marketing Societies in Cachar district. The 13 Primary Marketing Societies had a total membership of 2,465 persons and total paid-up capital of Rs.5,58,555 during 1966-67.

(vi) **Weights and Measures:** Till the introduction of the metric system of Weights and Measures in 1959, the inhabitants of the district followed the age-old system of weighing and measuring which very often lacked standardisation. Specimen of the old weights and measures are still found in some remote villages. The **Doom** which is a bamboo container of almost conical shape was prepared with fine bamboo strips for measuring rice and paddy. Its capacity varies from 2 **seers** to 3½ **seers** from

place to place. A ring is attached at the bottom to enable it to stand on the ground. The Dhol looks like the Doon but is of much bigger size and holds approximately 20 seers of paddy. It was used for measuring paddy only. Liquid molasses locally called gur was measured in terms of Kalah which is a big earthen Jar. Land was measured in term of bigha, Katha, Lecha etc. small linear measurement was done in terms of yab, anguli, gira, muthi, beget, hat, kathi, (Gauge) etc. The Bengali settlers followed a different bigha and katha measurement and it was the same system which prevailed among the Bengal zamindars. The English units of linear measurement such as inch, foot, yard, pole, chain, furlong, mile etc. were used side by side. The old system of weighing gold in terms of rati, anna, and tola is still in vogue.

The old units of measurement of weights and capacity measures were tola, chattak, pawa, seer, maund etc. Tulasani was the weighing scale commonly used in the village hats. This is of two circular bamboo trays which are suspended with strings from both the ends of a round wooden pole. Bamboo sungas were used for measuring liquid things. On the basis of recommendations of the weights and Measures Committee (1913—14), the uniformity of weights and measures was brought into force. Accuracy of the indigenous weights and measures including some of those mentioned above was always doubtful. Lack of uniformity in weights and measures also subjected many illiterate villagers to cheating by unscrupulous traders. The metric system of weights was introduced in the district on the 1st. April 1960, and the metric system of measures on the 1st October, 1961.

Although the Directorate of Weights and Measure have been enforcing the metric system of weights and measure by launching prosecution as well as by arranging supply of standard weights and measures to the needy traders; yet the traditional measures have not altogether fallen into disuse. The following table gives the conversion factors of the basic units of measurement prevailing in the district at present.

LENGTH

1 inch	....	25.4 millimetres
1 foot	....	30.48 centimetres
1 yard	....	0.9144 metres.
1 mile	....	1.609344 kilometres
1 centimetres	....	0.393701 inch
1 metre	....	1.09361 yards
1 kilometres	....	0.62137 mile

AREA

1 square inch	....	6.4516 square centimetres
1 square foot	....	9.2903 square decimetres.
1 acre	....	0.404686 hectare.
1 square mile	....	2.58999 square kilometres.
1 hectare	....	2.47100 acres.

WEIGHT

1 ounce	....	28.3495 grams.
1 pound	....	0.4535924 kilogram.
1 ton	....	1.01605 metric tonnes.
1 kilogram	....	2.20462 pound.
1 metric ton	....	0.98420 ton.

APPENDIX—A

List of Hats and Markets in the District,

Sl. No.	Name of Hats/Markets	Place where it is held	Whether Daily Bi-weekly/weekly/Fortnightly
1	2	3	4
1.	Jirighat T.E.	Jirighat. T.E.	Bi-Weekly
2.	Pailapur	Tariniganj	-do-
3.	Nayagram.	Nayagram	-do-
4.	Dikash T.E.	Dikash T.E.	-do-
5.	Telka T.E.	Telka T.E.	Weekly
6.	Singerband	Singerband	Bi-weekly
7.	Hatirhar Bazar	Hatirhar	-do-
8.	Hazarigram Bazar	Hazarigram	-do-
9.	Binnakandi T.E.	Binnakandi T.E.	Bi-Weekly
10.	Gobindapur Bazar	Gobindapur	-do-
11.	Baghpur Bazar	Baghpur	Bi-Weekly
12.	Kashipur T.E.	Kashipur	Weekly.
13.	Comp Bazar	Chandinagar-II	Bi-weekly
14.	Kalar Bazar	Chandinagar—II	-do-
15.	Bhairabbari	Chandinagar —III	-do-
16.	Rags G.E. Bazar.	Haritika—II	-do-
17.	Katigora	Katigora—III	-do-
18.	Gangapur	Katigora—II	-do-
19.	Sealte	Fulbari—J	-do-
20.	Jamirgram Bazar	Jamirgram—IV	-do-
21.	Dharinir Bazar	Jamirgram—III	-do-
22.	Jaraitala	Jaraitala	-do-
23.	Pechachara	Kalain T.E.	Weekly
24.	Kalain	Lakhipur	Bi-weekly
25.	Karkuria	Karkuria T.E.	-do-
26.	Digabar	Digabar T.E.	-do-
27.	Hitara	Hitara T.E.	-do-
28.	Gumra Bazar	On the bank of the river Gumra	-do-

Source: Secretaries, Anchalik Panchayats in Cachar.

1	2	3	4
29.	Digarkhal	Near the side of J.B.Road.	Weekly
30.	Sadirkhal	On the bank of the Surma river.	Bi-weekly
31.	Kalainchhara	In the Kalainchhara T.E.	Weekly
32.	Rajpur	Rajpur T.E.	-do-
33.	Kushiyarkul	On the bank of the river Baleswar.	Bi-weekly
34.	Jalalpur	Jalalpur T.E. on the bank of the river Baleswar	-do-
35.	Natampur	In the Stanpur T.E.	Weekly
36.	Niz-Jalalpur	On the bank of the river Surma	Bi-weekly
37.	Raja Bazar	Joypur part—II	-do-
38.	Nutan Bazar	Joypur part —IX	-do-
39.	Sobhushnagar	Kanakpur part—IV	Weekly
40.	Harinagar	Harinagar	-do-
41.	Dalaichhara	Dalaichhara	-do-
42.	Dipu Hat	Dipuichara	-do-
43.	Chandrapur Bazar	Chandrapur part—II	Bi-weekly
44.	Pallorband Bazar	Pallorband T.E.	-do-
45.	Labak Bazar	Labak	-do-
46.	Soottpur Hat	Scottpur T.E.	Weekly
47.	Thailu T.E.	Thailu T.E.	-do-
48.	Bandhu Hat	Bandhu T.E.	-do-
49.	Indranagar Hat	Indranagar T.E.	-do-
50.	Kumbhirgram	Kumbhirgram T.E.	Bi-weekly
51.	Bartul Hat	Bartul T.E.	Weekly
52.	Tarapur Bazar	Tarapur T.E.	Bi-weekly
53.	Ladiachara Hat	Ladiachara T.E.	Weekly
54.	Nistal Hat	Nistal T.E.	-do-
55.	Sonai Bazar	Sonaimukh	Bi-weekly
56.	Diwan Hat	Diwan T.E.	-do-
57.	Rangirkhari Hat	Rangirkhari (Silchar)	Daily
58.	Sonabarighat	Sonabarighat	Bi-weekly
59.	Sidubi	Sidubi	-do-
60.	Sadhin Bazar	Sadhin Bazar	-do-
61.	Kachudharam	Kachudharam	Bi-weekly
62.	Hathikhali	Hathikhali	-do-
63.	Nagatilla	Nagatilla	-do-

1	2	3	4
64.	Hati Nagar	Hati Nagar	Weekly
65.	Nikama	Nikama	-do-
66.	Amraghat	Amraghat	-do-
67.	Galaohina	Galaohina	-do-
68.	Phakirtila	Phakirtila	-do-
69.	Rahmannagar	Rahmannagar	-do-
70.	Chengkuri	Chengkuri	-do-
71.	Udarband Market	Udarband	Daily
72.	Rabibari Bazar	Modhuramukh	Weekly
73.	Srikona Bazar	Srikona G/P.	Bi-weekly
74.	Salchakra Bazar	Salchakra G/P.	-do-
75.	Chibitabichla Bazar	Chibitabichla G/P.	-do-
76.	Digar Srikona Bazar	Alambang G/P.	Weekly
77.	Bairagi Bazar	Bairagi Bazar G/P.	Bi-weekly
78.	Alambagh Bazar	Alambagh G/P.	Weekly
79.	Bhari Bazar	Barjatrapur G/P.	-do-
80.	Jatingamukh	Nij-joynagar G/P.	-do-
81.	Kalibari	Topkhana G/P.	-do-
82.	Arunachal	Balighat Kumarpura G/P	Weekly
83.	Barkhala	Barkhala G/P.	-do-
84.	Nilam Bazar	Nilam Bazar	Bi-weekly
85.	Kaliganj Bazar	Kaliganj	-do-
86.	Thamua Bazar	Alamkhani	-do-
87.	Singariya Bazar	Singariya	-do-
88.	Mullanganj Bazar	Batnia	-do-
89.	Beraohara Bazar	Dararpur	-do-
91.	Bazarghat	Bazarghat	Bi-weekly
92.	Mihar Bazar.	Nahua	-do-
93.	Girishganj Bazar	Laprakandi	-do-
94.	Khagail Bazar	Khagai	-do-
95.	Chowdhuri Bazar	Kanishail	-do-
96.	Kazir Bazar	Jatkapu	-do-
97.	Ayalabari	Ayalabari	Weekly
98.	Chandrapur	Dagargul	-do-
100.	Hathikhira Market	Hathikhira	Weekly
101.	Charagi Bazar	Sherpur	Bi-weekly
102.	Andheri Bazar	Ilashpur	-do-
103.	Raghurtuk	Raghurtuk	-do-
104.	Khagra	Khagra	Weekly

1	2	3	4
105.	Balipipla	Balipipla	-do-
106.	Patharkandi North	Patharkandi	Bi-weekly
107.	Patharkandi South	Patharkandi	-do-
108.	Isabil Market	Isabil T.E.	Weekly
109.	Burighat	Burighat T.E.	-do-
110.	Pathini	Pathini T.E.	-do-
111.	Eraligul	Eraligul T.E.	-do-
112.	Bazarichara	Bazarichara	-do-
113.	Baitbakhai	Baitbakhai	-do-
114.	Chandkhira	Chandkhira T.E. (Langai T.E.)	-do-
115.	Kalkalighat	Kalkalighat (Langai T.E.)	-do-
116.	Medli	Medli (Safeenjuti)	-do-
117.	Kanai Bazar	Kanai Bazar	-do-
118.	Binodini	Binodini T.E.	-do-
119.	Iochaganj	Iochaganj	Bi-weekly
120.	Katamoni	Katamoni	Weekly
121.	Tilbhum	Tilbhum (safeenjuri)	-do-
122.	Tirinti	Balirband (Safeenjuri T.E.)	-do-
123.	Adamtila	Adamtila (Langai T.E.)	-do-
124.	Kadamtala	Duttapara	-do-
125.	Loirapowa	Loirapowa	-do-
126.	Kathalthali	Kathalthali	-do-
127.	Nagraohara	Katamoni	Bi-weekly
128.	Ghoramara Bazar	Ghoramara	-do-
129.	Sahaganj Bazar	Chargola	-do-
130.	Bhanga Bazar	Bhanga	-do-
131.	Badarpur Station Bazar	Badarpur	-do-
132.	Darga Bazar	Mahakal	-do-
133.	Duttapur Bazar	Duttapur	-do-
134.	Anglar Bazar	Anglar Bazar	-do-
135.	Baguar Bazar	Bagua	-do-
136.	Khala Bazar	Khala	-do-
137.	Thakurdighir Bazar	Mahakal	-do-
138.	Mugrapur Bazar	Mugrapur	-do-
139.	Borthal Bazar	Borthal	-do-
140.	Girishganj Bazar	Chamela	Weekly
141.	Charagi Bazar	Near the Charagi forest Office	-do-
142.	Rampur Bazar	Near the Rampur Forest Office	-do-

1	2	3	4
143. Debadwar Bazar	Debadwar	Bi-weekly	
144. Niblachhara Bazar	Niblachhara T.E.	Weekly	
145. Kegragul	Kegragul T.E.	-do-	
146. Magura Bazar	Magura T.E.	Weekly	
147. Singlachara Bazar	Singla T.E.	-do-	
148. Chargola Bazar	Paldahar	Bi-weekly	
149. Maulvi Bazar	Tongibari	-do-	
150. Majhergram Longercchar Bazar	Pahartal	Weekly	
151. Kalibari Bazar	Nabingra	Bi-weekly	
152. Kalibari Chak Bazar	Kalibatihghat	Daily	
153. Choumuni Bazar	Nitai Nagar	Bi-weekly	
154. Kazir Bazar	Sakabari Basti	-do-	
155. Dullabchhara Bazar	Dullabchhara	Weekly	
156. Ramkrishna Nagar	Ramkrishna Nagar	Bi-weekly	
157. Kalinagar Bazar	Kalinagar T.E.	-do-	
158. Channighat Bazar	Channighat	-do-	
159. Pargona Bazar	Krishna Nagar	Weekly	
160. Kalachara Bazar	Kalachara T.E.	-do-	
161. Charagirangpur Bazar	Charagi	-do-	
162. Gobindaganj Bazar	Nayatila	Bi-weekly	
163. Kaluganj Bazar	Baruala	-do-	
164. Gaurishganj Bazar	Nayatila	-do-	
165. Gamaria Bazar	Gamaria	-do-	
166. Gopikanagar Bazar	Dalugram	-do-	
167. Chargola Bazar	Anipur T.E.	-do-	
168. Fakir Bazar	Suptakandi	-do-	
169. Sufiganj	Khajab	-do-	
170. Cherulbhang	Cherulbhang	-do-	
171. Gandha-I	Datgram	Bi-weekly	
172. Promodnagar	Promodnagar T.E.	-do-	
173. Tila Bazar	Noabari	-do-	
174. Yusufnagar	Bahubai	-do-	
175. Lakhi Bazar	Lakhi Bazar	-do-	
176. Tuker Bazar	Dimpur	-do-	
177. Sutarkandi	Sutarkandi	-do-	
178. Mahisashan	Mahisashan	-do-	
179. Krishnapur	Krishnapur T.E.	-do-	
180. Madanpur	Madanpur T.E.	-do-	
181. Gardarsi	Gardarsi	-do-	
182. Janata Bazar	Sadarsi	-do-	

1	2	3	4
183. Girishganj	Kasharkapan	-do-	
184. Tilaiya Bazar	Kesharkapan	-do-	
185. Jagannathi	Jagannathi	-do-	
186. Latu Bazar	Latu	Bi-weekly	
187. Majhgaon	Majhgaon	-do-	
188. Katlichara	Katlichara	Weekly	
189. Latakandi	Latakandi T.E.	-do-	
190. Rupachhara	Rupachhara	-do-	
191. Dhalai	Dhalai T.E.	-do-	
192. Manipur	Manipur	-do-	
193. Sultanitila	Sultani T.E.	-do-	
194. Raibahadur Bazar	Dhalai Village	-do-	
195. Jamirala Bazar	Jamirala	-do-	
196. Karichara	Karichara	-do-	
197. Gharmurah	Gharmurah (forest village)	-do-	
198. Palaichara	Palaichara	Weekly	
199. Ainakhal Market	Ainakhal Grant	-do-	
200. Lala Tuesday Market	Lala Part I & II	-do-	
201. Kalachar Market	Santhakua Grant area	-do-	
202. Gallachara Hat	South Cachar Grant Area.	Bi-weekly	
203. Lalamukh Hat	Sachiura Grant	-do-	
204. Lalachhara Market	Lalachhara Grant	-do-	
205. Vernerpur Market	Vernerpur Grant	-do-	
206. Ramchandi Hat	Ramchandi Grant	-do-	
207. Kaya Market	Kaya Grant	-do-	
208. Kuchilla	Kuchilla Grant	Weekly	
209. Singhalla	Senakhal Grant	-do-	
210. Ainakhal (Near Factory Hat)	Ainakhal T.E.	Weekly	
211. Lakhinagar Hat	Ainakhal Grant	-do-	
212. Manachhara Hat	Manachhara Grant	-do-	
213. Chublaghat	Bhatirkupa-III	Bi-weekly	
214. Bara-Hailakandi	Bara-Hailakandi-III	Weekly	
215. Sadhuganj	Kalinagar -III	Bi-weekly	
216. Katakhal Station	Katakhal Station	Daily	
217. Goona Bazar	Rangauti-I	Bi-weekly	
218. Janki Bazar	Uttar Kanchanpur-II	-do-	
219. Algapur	Algapur-I	-do-	
220. Matijuri	Matijuri Ghat	-do-	
221. Kanchanpur	Kanchanpur village	weekly	
222. Mohanpur	on the bank of the Katakhal River	Bi-weekly	

1	2	3	4
223. Barbhuyan	Ujankupa-III	Bi-weekly	
224. Boyalipar	Boyalipar-III	-do-	
225. Narayanpur	Near Narayanpur	-do-	
226. Ratanpur Bazar	Ratanpur-II	Bi-weekly	
227. Nitainagar	Nitainagar-II	Weekly	

CHAPTER—VII

COMMUNICATIONS

(a) Old-time routes :

The information about old-time routes in the present district of Cachar is scanty. Nevertheless, much of the foreign trade of the district in the past were carried on through waterways and still to-day the river Barak provides yeoman's service as the means of communication in the district. The land routes were via Arakan range, Manipur and Patkai pass.¹ Besides, other rivers and tributaries were also used as communication route by the people of the district with small country boats. During the rainy season big steamers plied through the Barak to Silchar, but in cold weather there was barely three feet of water in the channel and therefore, at this season of the year the journey from Calcutta to Silchar took five days.

(b) Road Transport :

Till 1853 Cachar was quite backward in respect of road transport. In the said year Mr. Mill reported that there was only one road in the district which had not been repaired for years together. In 1866 the district had six roads under the Ferry Fund Board. The total length of these roads was in between 80 and 96 kilometres. But soon after the construction of the above roads the district made rapid progress and it stood in advantageous position in respect of roads in Assam. This advantage owed to the tea-planters who wanted good road communications between their gardens and the Barak river by which their tea was despatched and all their supply were received. Foreign trade was entirely carried by water but internal traffic passed along the roads which were kept in good condition by the tea planters. Many of these roads were available for wheel traffic also.

By 1873, the district improved considerably in respect of road communication and had several roads. There were two roads namely Sylhet-Silchar Road which ran along the Barak river competing the water traffic and the other Lakhimpur Road which ran from Silchar eastward to Jiri river where it joined the main route to Manipur. These roads were maintained by the Public Works Department. Besides these, there were another 15 roads under local management. The majority of them were constructed for the accommodation of the tea gardens. By that year the Silchar Municipal Union had 12.8 km. of roads which were improved and extended later on. Other roads were:

1. B.K. Barua : *A Cultural History of Assam*, 1969, pp. 109-113.

Name of road	Length in K.m.	Name of places connected by the road.
1. Barkhala	14.4	Tarapur, Nij Jaynagar, Barkhala with Silchar.
2. Durganagar road.	20.0	Rangpur, Bahadurpur and Udarband with Silchar.
3. Chatla Hamor road.	29.6	Ambikapur, Meherpur and adjoining tea gardens with Silchar.
4. Nagdirgram road	20.0	Sonapur, Nagdirgram.
5. Maniarkhal road	14.4	Maniarkhal tea gardens with Nadergram.
6. Tarapur road	12.0	Tarapur, Latak tea gardens with Banskandi on the Lakshmipur road.
7. Baladhan road.	16.0	Kamranga and adjoining tea gardens with Lakhipur.
8. The Sonai road	17.60	Hatikuri and Binnakandi tea gardens
9. East Hailakandi road	19.2	Samarikona, Matijuri with Hailakandi
10. Katakhal road	12.8	Goglachhara and Sudarsanpur tea gardens.
11. Kaya or Mona road	12.0	Gangpur and Dumkar with Rajyeshwarpur.
12. Hailakandi road	20.8	Panchagram, Kesinagar and Rabinagar
13. Masimpur road	35.2	Natwarpur and other tea gardens with Jaynagar.

Thus the total length of roads under the local management of the district came to 265.60 Kilometres in 1873. But in 1875-76, there were 577.60 Kilometres as waterways communication, 332.80 Kilometres of second class roads and 480 Kilometres of third class roads. In spite of the availability of roads within the district, roads from Cachar to the neighbouring districts of the State are mostly fair-weather roads and the transport bottleneck is seriously felt during the rainy season in particular.

In 1904, there were altogether 321.60 Kilometres of road and out of this 303.80 Kilometres of bridle paths were in plains portion of Cachar district. All these roads were good and usable by carts and in spite of the existence of these cart roads, goods were carried by human labourers and pack bullocks. At that time, the inhabitants of the Surma Valley showed a lack of initiative and enterprise in the matter of wheeled traffic. Only in 1902, there were 260 carts in Cachar as compared with upwards of 3,500 in the Darrang district. Carts were first sent to Mani- pur from Cachar in 1896. From this experience, the people could grasp the advantage of wheeled transport and within a few years later more than 1,700 carts plied between Imphal and the Assam (Brahmaputra) Valley.²

2. B.C. Allen: *District Gazetteers, Cachar*, 1905.

The road position of the Cachar district in 1904 was as follows: The Trunk road entered the district at Badarpur 81.60 Kilometres from Sylhet and crossed the Manipur frontier at Jirighat 64 kilometres from Badarpur. The main places touching the roads were Badarpur, Salchapara, Silchar, Lakhipur, Jirighat and Banskandi. Another road led south from Silchar and then turned west and passed through Hailakandi and then finally ran to the north till it met the trunk road a little to the east of Badarpur. The Burnimukh Road took off north of Hailakandi to the east up to Salchapara railway station. In the south of Hailakandi, two roads which ultimately merge in one and sink to the status of a bridle path, led towards Mizoram state. This road has now developed into a black topped highway. Many roads and bridle paths touching off east and west from this road served the different tea gardens in the vicinity. East of Silchar, Maniarkhal road ran up to Sonaimukh. The Natwarpur bridle path on the north of the Barak ran westward to Jaintia parganas. There were other roads namely the Damachhara, Nemotha, Shibarbund, Baladhan and their branches in the district. From Maibong a bridle path ran to Baladhan, the total length of which was 89.6 kilometres.

The necessity of good roads was keenly felt after the World War I, when automobiles became the most important means of communication. But no adequate attention towards it was paid and no sufficient finance supplied for construction and maintenance of roads. However, after independence, the importance of good roads was felt for economic and defence strategic and therefore, large amount was earmarked for road development in the Five-Year plans.

(i) Roads under Public Works Department including National Highway, State Highway and major district roads: In 1948-49, there were 705.104 kilometres of roads in the district. The details of them are given below.³

Road position in Cachar—as in 1948-49 (in Kms.)

District	Division	Metalled road	Gravelled road	Natural soil motorable road	Natural soil un-motorable road
1	2	3	4	5	6
Cachar	Hailong Div.	—	—	4.40	50.60
	Cachar Div.	271.376	4.08	4.20	53.71
	North Cachar Hills Division.	—	—	—	262.00
	Silchar Sub-division.	7.20	—	24.592	22.808
	Total	278.576	4.08	33.192	389.118

3. *Statistical Abstract*, 1951, Deptt. of Economics & Statistics, p.107.

At the end of the First Five-Year plan there were 592 kilometres all-weather and 230.40 kilometres fair-weather roads, out of which were 192.74 kms. black-topped, 20.80 kms. water-bound, and 608.86 kms. unsurfaced road, giving a total of 822.40 kms. of roads under the Public Works Department in Cachar district.⁴ At the census of 1961, the district of Cachar had in total, 1080.644 kilometres of roads out of which 248.896 kilometres blacktopped, 714.004 kms. gravelled, 67.176 kms. earth, and 50.568 kms. metalled roads were under the Public Works Department.⁵ The following table shows the road position of the district since 1963-64 up to 1973-74. ⁶

Year	Black-topped	Metalled	Gravelled	Motorable in fair weather in earth	Bridle path	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1963-64	259.20	9.60	824.00	97.60	—	1,190.40
1965-66	342.40	1.60	788.80	67.20	—	1,200.00
1967-68	343.00	34.00	694.00	135.00	—	1,206.00
1968-69	348.00	34.00	761.00	66.00	—	1,209.00
1970-71	379.43	6.00	943.05	184.36	2.71	1,514.55
1971-72	419.02	—	919.46	191.51	—	1,529.99
1972-73	415.81	—	967.04	232.72	—	1,615.57

Even after the completion of a number of Five-Year Plans, the road transport between Cachar and the neighbouring districts of Assam and Meghalaya as it has developed so far leaves much to be desired. The Shillong (Jowai)-Badarpur road from Cachar is the only vital road link between Cachar and Gauhati, the Capital of Assam. As mentioned earlier, this road becomes inaccessible at times during the rainy season and this difficulty has partly been removed by the construction of concrete bridge across the Luva river at Sonapur falling on this route. Further improvement on this route is effected after the completion of the concrete bridge at Badarpur on the ferry crossing at Siddheswarghat over the river Barak in 1975-76. On the contrary, Cachar is well connected

4. *Statistical Abstract*, 1958, Deptt. of Economics & Statistics, p. 384.

5. *Census of India*, 1961, *District Census Handbook*, Cachar, pp.504-505.

6. *Statistical Handbook*, Assam, Deptt. of Economics & Statistics for the years 1965, 1966, 1968, 1969, 1973 and 1976.

with Mizoram, Manipur and Tripura, there being good motorable roads from Silchar to Aizawl, from Silchar to Agartala via Dharmanagar and from Silchar to Jiribam in Manipur.

The Jowai-Badarpur-Agartala road, N.H. 44 and two State High Ways namely (1) Surma Trunk Road and (2) Karimganj Churaibari Road run through this district. About 38.56 kms. of the Surma Trunk Road (from 29th kms. to 68th km.) was within the Karimganj sub-division under Public Works Department. Out of these 38.56 kms. 25 kms. (from 29th kms. to 54 th kms.) has been transferred to Border Road Transport Federation. Similarly 57 kms. of the Karimganj-Churaibari State Road has been transferred to Border Road Transport Federation. The total area of Cachar at the 1961 Census was 6,941.2 square kms. and the district had in that year about 1,080.644 kms of road under the Public Works Department. The Department has made further extensions of roads in the district to the total length of 1,615.57 kms on 31st. March 1975. The road length under Public Works Department category-wise is shown below:—

Black-topped	415.81 kms.
Gravelled	967.04 „
Earthened	232.72 „
Total	1,615.57 kms.

While discussing about the construction of roads by the State Public Works Department in the district, mention may be made of its achievements in the first three Five-Year Plans. Its achievement was as follows:

During the first plan period, 24 (twenty-four) roads were taken up, 37 kms. of road length was metalled and surfaced, 89 km. gravelled and 104 km. newly constructed. Similarly in the second plan period, 24 (twentyfour) roads were taken up ; 36 km. of road length was metalled, 179 km. gravelled and 80 km. were newly constructed. In the 3rd five year plan thirty-five roads were taken up; 19 km. of road length was metalled and surfaced and new construction was of the order of 220 km.

During the 4th plan period eighty-four roads were taken up of which fifty-six were for widening, gravelling and metalling, while twenty-eight roads were newly constructed.

(ii) **Local Board and Panchayat Roads:** Till the implementation of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1959, some union District Roads and important village roads were under the management of the Local Boards at Hailakandi, Karimganj and Silchar. In 1951, total length of roads main-

tained by the Local Bodies in the district was 523.584 km, out of which 61.840 kms. were under the category natural soil motorable and 118.672 kms. natural soil motorable during fair-weather. Besides, some unmotorable roads were also there in the district. By 1955-56, the road kilometrage under the local bodies in Cachar was 758.40 kms. The different categories of roads as on 1955-56 in the district are given below:

1) All-weather	—	182.40 Kms.
2) Fair-weather	—	97.60 „
3) Non-motorable	—	478.40 „
Total	—	758.40 Kms.

Out of this, 17.600 kms. were black-topped, 46.40 kms. waterbound and 228.40 kms. unsurfaced roads. After the Assam Panchayat Act, 1959, came into force; some of the important Local Board roads were transferred to the Public Works Department and the rest were taken up by Panchayats. According to 1961 census, there were 563 village roads in the district. Since then the Panchayats have maintained those roads upon which a substantial amount has been incurred from their budget in order to keep them in good conditions for better rural communication. The following table shows the Block-wise progress of Panchayat roads in the Cachar district during 1971-72.

Name of Block	New kutchha roads constructed.	Existing roads improved	Culverts constructed	Culverts repaired.
1	2	3	4	5
Badarpur	—	2	—	—
Ramkrishna Nagar	7	55	—	—
North Karimganj	—	76	—	—
South Karimganj	—	40	9	—
Patharkandi	14	33	25	7
Udarband	25	15	—	8
Lakhipur	—	75	74	—
Narsingpur	—	20	7	—
Katigara	—	—	—	—
Rajabazar	4	1	1	1
Salchapara	6	40	16	1
Sonai	10	27	44	32
Hailakandi	—	—	—	—
Katlichhara	—	84	—	—
Lala	—	18	—	3

(iii) Roads under Municipal Boards and Town Committees: The Municipal Boards and Town Committees of the district have their own roads other than the roads maintained by the Public Works Department. These roads are maintained, improved and renovated by the Municipal Boards and Town Committees out of their own budget grants. The former institutions are financially better off and have their own technical staff while the latter can hardly afford to keep such technical staff in their pay rolls. Paucity of fund is a great hurdle which these bodies are to overcome in order to undertake an extensive scheme of road development. Municipal Boards at Silchar, Karimganj, and Hailakandi, and Town Committees at Lakhipur, Badarpur, and Lala maintain adequate number of roads under their respective Municipal Boards and Town Committees.

(c) Vehicles and conveyances:

In the past the means of conveyance for the ordinary man was the old bullock carts or boats. The well-to-do people in the villages kept horses also for their use. In the agricultural economy of the district even now the traditional carts play an important role. The carts have open wheels fitted with iron rims, wooden spokes, and axles and are capable of rough handling on Kutchha roads. Usually a pair of stout bullocks can draw a cart with a load of six to seven quintals. The carts are generally used for transporting harvested paddy, jute, and other crops from the field and also for carrying goods from one place to another. Horse-drawn carts are also in use in the district as traffic. Bicycles are now-a-days an important and widely used means of transport in both rural and urban areas. Automobiles have also been increased with the improvement of different roads in the district. They render quick and regular service in transportation of both passengers and goods. As at the end of 1969, some 3,239 locally owned vehicles and 819 foreign-owned vehicles were on the roads in the district. Upto the same period, the total number of registered vehicles stood at: local 3,621 and foreign 894.

The following table shows the steadily increased number of motor vehicles on roads in the district from 1965 to 1975 (except for 1974).

Number of Motor Vehicles on roads in the Cachar district for the period from 1965 to 1975.

	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1975
Buses	226	224	274	279	355	283	285	281	261	281
Private Carriers	247	256	420	525	575	508	522	430	451	592

Public Carriers.	258	282	256	411	494	402	443	458	567	669
Motor Cycles	68	79	146	183	239	280	242	398	453	503
Taxi cabs	30	35	49	62	123	234	268	226	261	492
Motor cars & jeeps.	4,611	525	1,082	1,030	1,996	915	827	908	959	1,009
Tractors.	176	189	253	293	242	285	309	182	218	346
Trailers.	227	223	367	310	286	63	78	303	313	376
Government vehicles.	277	314	—	304	411	376	355	406	415	500
Auto Rickshaws.	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	26	37	47
Others.	—	—	—	22	37	37	3	20	35	58

Source— Commissioner of Transport, Assam.

Public Transport:— Road transport in Assam was nationalised as early as in 1948 but it took time for its effects to be felt all over the State. Since its inception, the Transport Department was under Police Department and the head of this department in the district was empowered to act as Motor Licensing officer. In 1951, this Transport Department was separated from the Police Department and placed under separate administration. Operation of State buses which is gradually extended to different routes, are currently being in force in the district are as follows :

Silchar to Karimganj	..	..	..	56 Km.
Silchar to Hailakandi	..	..	..	48 ..
Silchar to Aizawl	..	..	..	180 ..
Silchar to Lalabazar via Gagliachhara	..	..	..	50 ..
Silchar to Badarpur	..	..	..	29 ..
Silchar to Dwarband	..	..	..	29 ..
Silchar to Kalainchhara	..	..	..	53 ..
Silchar to Sonapur	..	..	..	94 ..
Silchar to Jowai	..	..	..	194 ..
Silchar to Shillong	..	..	..	240 ..
Silchar to Khlierhat	..	..	..	142 ..

The State Transport Organisation was converted into a corporation on August 31, 1971. Subsequently with the creation of the new State of Meghalaya, the corporation has been renamed, the Assam and Meghalaya State Road Transport Corporation. The object of the Corporation

is to provide efficient economic and comfortable services to the travelling public. The journey hours in long distance routes are reduced introducing express and super express services. Facilities in the shape of waiting rooms, provision of advance booking, canteens etc. have been extended by the Corporation.

There is another public sector corporation namely Central Road Transport Corporation carrying on inter-state operation in goods only between Assam and the rest of India. Its present fleet strength is 222 trucks. But this does not operate in Cachar district. So the Assam and Meghalaya State Road Transport Corporation is the only agency providing transport facility to passengers in between Gauhati and Silchar and Gauhati and Karimganj via Shillong, besides other private transport agencies.

The important places served by Assam and Meghalaya State Road Corporation buses in Cachar district are Salchapra, Katakhali, Badarpurghat, Badarpur, Bhanga, Behara, Algapur, Hailakandi, Lalabazar, Meherpur, Ghungoor, Dwarband, Somarikona, Sonapur, Khlierhat by some of the existing routes namely (1) Silchar-Badarpur-Karimganj; (2) Karimganj-Hailakandi-Katlichhara; (3) (a) Silchar-Dwarband-Hailakandi (b) Silchar-Dwarband-Loharband; (4) Silchar-Dwarband-Lalabazar; (5) Silchar-Badarpur-Shillong; (6) Karimganj-Badarpur-Shillong and (7) Silchar-Badarpur-Gauhati.

Besides Corporation buses, there are other State carriages viz. privately owned public buses which ply between various important places not adequately served by the State Transport Corporation. These buses usually connect district and sub-divisional headquarters and provide easy means of communication to the travelling public. There are also privately owned contract carriages such as bazar buses which carry passengers and goods to and from the weekly or bi-weekly markets or fairs and play an important part in the rural life. Other means of communication have also been introduced which are taxis, auto-rickshaws etc. There were 492 taxis, 47 autorickshaws, 592 private carriers, and 669 public carriers in the district in 1975. However, the corporation buses are more punctual and systematic than the privately owned buses in the district. Some of the important state carriage in Cachar district are enumerated below:—

Name of routes	District of route (in kms.)	No. of buses on the route daily.
1. Silchar-Udaiguri-Salganga-Kumbhir-Amaranagar.	35.10	

2. Silchar-Rangpur-Banskandi-Alipur-- Pailapur-Rajabazar Jaipur-Harinagar- Kumachhara Gulertal-Lakhipur, Jiri- ghat-Sonaimukh.	78.20	24
3. Silchar-Kalain-Rajnagar-Reniferry- Barkhala-Katigarh-Gunarah-Jalapur- Natanpur-Rajatilla-Jarailtela-Chendra- Nathpur-Masimpur-Dalu.	102.56	22
4. Silchar-Kabuganj Sonabarighat Nutan- bazar-Narsingpur-Palanghat-Amraghat- Paloi-Derby-Borojalenga Dhalai-Bhaga Bazar-Hawaitang.	72.00	33
5. Silchar-Sonabarighat-Sonaibazar-Jhulan- poor-Kabuganj-Palanghat-Ramragar- Binnakandi-Lakhipurghat-Swadhinbazar- Kachudharam- Malinnagar-Amraghat.	70.20	28
6. Silchar-Salohapra-Srikona-Mohanpur- Algapur-Hailakandi-Badarpur.	77.00	12
7. Patharkandi-Loirpowa-Churai-bazar- Rangamati-Katamani-Kathaltali	45.00	11
8. Lakhibazar-Karimganj-Ghoramara- Kaliganj-Bhanga-Marjatkandi-Adarkona- Bhairabnagar-Kalibaribazar- Hailakandi.	95.00	21
9. Sutarkandi-Karimganj-Kukital-Dullav- chhara-Nibiachhara-Latu-Mahishasan-Nilam- bazar-Ramkrishnanagr.	102.51	34
10. Hailakandi-Monachhara-Koyah-Lata- kandi-Ruttanpur-Rajyeswarpur-Lala- Gharmora-Kurrichhara-Katlichhara.	77.00	24
11. Hailakandi-Anipur-Duliabchhara- Nibiachara Kadamtala-Kalibaribazar- Hailankandi.	68.80	12

Transport Associations: There are also some public and private bus and carrier service employers and employees organisations in the district. These organisations run the private bus services in the district smoothly and the grievances of the employees are meted out by the Bus Owners' Associations. The names of some of these organisations are mentioned below:

COMMUNICATIONS

(1) The Cachar Transport Vehicle Owners Associations, Silchar, (2) Silchar-Kumbhir Bus Owners Association, Rangpur (3) Patharkandi transport Society, Patharkandi, (4) Sub-divisional Motor Transport Union, Hailakandi, (5) Karimganj Motor Service Union, Karimganj, (6) Karimganj-Hailakandi Motor Transport Union, Karimganj, (7) The Cachar Motor Drivers Association, Silchar, and (8) The Cachar Motor Transport Employees Union, Silchar. **Administration of Public Buses-** There is one Regional Transport Authority for the district at Silchar which is a statutory body consisting of the Deputy Commissioner as its Chairman, the District Transport Officer as the Secretary and some non-officials as its members. The Board sits from time to time and disposes the applications for contract carriages, stage carriages, bazar buses, taxis, and public carriages. As per existing procedure, the Regional Transport Authority Cachar (Silchar) controls the motor transports in this region and deals with issue of permits to different categories of transports and vehicles according to the policy laid down by the State Government. It also performs duties such as grant and authorisations to drive public service vehicle, issue conductors licenses, taking departmental action against those permit holders who contravene any condition of permit and prescribing policy in certain important matters relating to motor transport in the region.

The District Transport Officer assisted by his subordinate staff including the Motor Vehicles Inspector is responsible for proper maintenance of the records of all vehicles of the district, enforcement of the provisions under the Motor Vehicles Act (amended) and the Rules framed thereunder. The District Transport Officer has multifarious functions which include re- gistration of vehicles, maintenance of records of transfer of vehicles, issue of driving licences, ensuring fitness of vehicles for operation, realisation and assessment of taxes under the Assam Motor Vehicles Taxation Act, 1936, and supervision and control of bus services on the routes for which permits are issued. He can suspend and revoke the registration certificates of vehicles for non-payment of taxes. The Department has liaison with the Police Department. The Police Department carries out certain checks and detects offences under Motor Vehicles Act. The District Magistrate comes into relation with the Motor Vehicle Department in connection with imposition of restrictions on road transport, fixation of speed limits, and location of motor stands, etc.

(c) Railways - The railway system of Cachar is a metregauge system. After the formation of the Assam- Bengal Railway in 1892, steps were taken to connect Assam with the rest of India. As a result this district had the first railway line from Chandura (in Bengal) to Badarpur

on Assam in 1896. In 1897, railway communication from Chittagong (in Bangladesh) to Cachar district was established. It entered the district at a point a little to the east of Badarpur junction then under Sylhet district of present Bangladesh and had a length of 403.20 kms. Here the line divided and a branch line ran south of the Barak passing through Katakhal, Salchapra, and ultimately reached Silchar. This line covered 28.80 kms only. The main line after leaving the Badarpur junction crossed the Barak river on a bridge, which was 415.1376 metres in length and had a foundations of its piers carried to a depth of 24.3840 metre below the bed of the river. It then went its way up the Jatinga valley, and so made its way through the North- Cachar Hills into Brahmaputra valley. The followings were the stations in the N.C Hills district: Hilara Bihara, Damchara, Harangajao, Jatinga, Haflong, Mahur, Maibang, Langting, and Hatikhali and linked the Gauhati branch at Lumding junction. After eleven years of strenuous labour this hilly line of 180.80 kms. was completed in 1903. In this line there are thirty -seven tunnels (aggregating 4745.4312 metres in length) which were constructed by the Cornish Miners of England. In 1904, through communication was established between Dibrugarh and Chittagong by rail. A branch line of the then Eastern- Bengal Railway namely Katakhal- Lalabazar was started in 1915-16 and completed in 1929. By 1929 the Karimganj- Langai section of Assam Bengal railway, the length of which was 76.80 kms. was established. Mention may be made here to the fact that the direct railway link with Calcutta has been disconnected since the partition of the country and the railway traffic to and from Calcutta has to move via Lumding and Gauhati through a difficult and circuitous railway line involving much loss of time and money. The North- East Frontier Railway Hill section from Lumding to Badarpur serves as a feeble railway link of Cachar with the rest of the country. This section is quite unreliable during the rainy season when the railway service remains suspended for days together because of heavy landslides. There are further more a large number of tunnels to cross on this line which add to the difficulty of movement of large-sized manufacturing plant and machinery.

The names of a few Railway stations including junctions, branch lines, and total length of the Cachar District are as follows :

Badarpur Junction—Haflong Hill— Lumding Junction.
(Total length 38 k.m.)

- 1 Badarpur junction
- 2 Hilara.
- 3 Bihara.
- 4 Chandranathpur.
- 5 Damchara.
- 6 Bandarkhal.

Maihishasan.-Badarpur Junction-Katakhal Junction-Silchar
(Total length 61 k.m.)

- 1 Maihishasan.
- 2 Langai .
- 3 Karimganj junction
- 4 Chargola.
- 5 Bhanga.
- 6 Rupasibari.
- 7 Badarpur junction
- 8 Badarpurghat.
- 9 Panchgram.
- 10 Katakhal Junction
- 11 Salchapara.
- 12 Arunachal.
- 13 Silchar.

Katakhal junction—Lalaghat (Total length 49 k.m.)

- 1 Katakhal.
- 2 Algapur.
- 3 Hailakandi.
- 4 Monachhara.
- 5 Lalabazar.
- 6 Lalaghat.

Karimganj Junction- Dullabhchhara-Kalkalighat
(In total about 65 k.m. in length)

- 1 Karimganj Junction.
- 2 Suprakandi.
- 3 Nilambazar.
- 4 Kayasthagram.
- 5 Baraigram Junction.
- 6 Eraligul.
- 7 Phakuagram.
- 8 Nagendra Nagar.
- 9 Ratabari.
- 10 Anipur.
- 11 Dullabhchhara.
- 12 Kanai Bazar.
- 13 Patharkandi.
- 14 Kalkalighat.

The section-wise length of the Railways in the district is as follows :-

Section	length in km.
Badarpur-Lumding	185.0
Badarpur-Katakhal	19.0
Katakhal-Lalaghat	38.1
Katakhal-Silchar	20.2
Badarpur-Karimganj	21.0
Karimganj-Mahishasan	10.3
Karimganj-Durlabchhara	59.8
Baraigram-Kalkighat	12.3
Kalkighat-Dharmanagar	32.3

A number of Railway stations of Cachar district are situated near tea gardens and rice fields and therefore, tea, rice, raw jute, timber, etc., are the main goods exported from these stations.

The inward and outward traffic of goods by rail during 1969-70 sub-division-wise can be had from the following table.⁷

Sub-Division/Dist.	Outward traffic		Inward traffic.	
	No of wagons Loaded	Quantity Loaded (Quintals)	No of wagons unloaded	Quantity unloaded (Quintals)
Silchar sub-division	12,421	13,61,834	3,936	2,74,347
Karimganj sub-division	16,386	14,09,400	18,166	17,04,189
Hailakandi	1,160	88,598	285	38,182
District total	29,967	28,59,832	22,387	20,16,718

Principal commodities traded (outward) are tea, jute, bombo, timber, foodgrains, raw materials, cotton and other miscellaneous goods. Among inward goods, mention may be made of petrol and petroleum products, mustard oil, hardwares, pulses, foodgrains, sugar, salt, wheat, flour, coal, other miscellaneous goods and garden stores.

(d) **Water-ways, ferries, and bridges:** Reference has been made earlier about the means of communication which was in vogue in the early part of the British occupation of the district. In those days, its chief means of communication to the outside world was the Barak river. The

7. **Source:** Assistant Traffic Superintendent, N.F. Railway, Silchar.

journey continued to be irksome till the opening of the steamer services by the India General Steam Navigation Company and the Rivers Steam Navigation Company. In 1864, a regular commercial steamer service to Assam by the two rivers, the Brahmaputra and the Barak was opened but their services were not adequate and satisfactory. The Government of India helped these two companies with subsidies in order to open daily mail steamer service on the Brahmaputra and the Surma River and accordingly such services were established by these companies in the year of 1887 on the Barak river. The river ports in the Barak through which the steamers plied are Badarpur, Sialtek, Jatingamukh and Masimpur. In the rains, the feeder steamers went up the Barak from Silchar to Lakhipur; up the Madhura to Chandighat; up the Ghagra to Hattia rocks; and up the Katakhal to Kukiohara. The above two companies commonly known as the Joint Steamer Companies continued to maintain the steamer service to and from Assam.

The river services played a vital role in maintaining communication between Assam and the rest of India. The steamer services operated through two major routes in Assam viz., the Assam-Calcutta and Badarpur-Calcutta used to carry major goods, tea, jute, timber and other bulky products were exported by steamers to Calcutta.

Assam has internal waterways of more than 96,000 kms. of which 16,000 kms. are navigable by steamers and big country boats. The remaining are useful only for small country boats. These water-ways were used for years by country-boat operators, Public Works Department ferries and various steamer companies for carrying cargo traffic. But prior to 1957 there was no agency in Assam for dealing with matters of investigation, planning and designing of various projects on communication. As per recommendation of the Gokhale Committee, Government of Assam set up the Inland Water Transport Directorate in 1957 for development of Inland Water Transport of Assam. The Directorate was given an amount of Rs.30 lakhs to build up a port at Pandu in Kamrup district under the guidance of the central organisation. The first phase of it has already been completed and handed over to the Central Inland Water Transport Corporation. The Directorate has further carried out hydrographic and traffic survey of some important rivers of both the Brahmaputra and the Barak Valleys and in the Mizoram State. It is also associated with the construction at Jogighopa of major inland river port with all modern and up-to-date cargo handling facilities.

The Bhagawati Committee recommended commercial river service on the Barak.

The scheme was included in the Fourth Five-Year Plan as centrally sponsored scheme. But the scheme has not made much headway uptill now.

Ferries: The Ferry services linking the road transports are still under the management of the Public Works Department of the Government of Assam. The list below shows the navigable water-ways and ferries in the district.

Name of River	Navigable reach From-to	Distance in km.	Period when navigable	Type of craft plying	Remarks
1	2	3	4	5	6
Barak	Karimganj-Silchar	89.6	Throughout the year	Steamers & country boats	Feeder steamer service
(a) Barak	Silchar-Fullertal	64.0	-Do-	Feeder steamer ply during June to October	-Do-
Lengai	Dimphara-	104.0	During rainy season	Country boats	Small dug-outs ply throughout the year.
Katakhal	Lushai Hills-Katakhal (Confluence with the Barak)	160.0	Whole year	-Do-	—
Sonai	Bhubán Hills-Sonaimukh	48.0	-Do -	-Do-	—
Augur	Binnakandi-Augurmukh	16.0	Rainy season	-Do-	Small dug-out, ply whole year
Jatinga	Ditekchara-Jatingamukh	64.0	-Do-	-Do-	—
Madhura	N.C.Hills-Madhuramukh	32.0	-Do-	-Do-	—
Dadri	Whole length	25.6	Rainy season only	-Do-	—
Chiri	Jaipur-Confluence with Barak	41.6	-Do-	-Do-	—
Jhri	Manipur Hills	-Do-64.0	Whole year	-Do-	—

Bridges: There are 57 bridges in the Silchar sub-division (Public Works Department) of the Cachar District. Some of them are (1) Barak bridge at Badarpur; (2) Sadarghat bridge at Silchar, (3) Madhura bridge at Rangpur, (4) Badarpur Gosaipur bridge, (5) Kalachhara bridge, (6) Ghagra bridge, (7) Sartara bridge, (8) Tapilhal bridge, (9) Pala bridge, (10) Hatia bridge, (11) Dhaleswari bridge, (12) Jaikhai bridge etc. In recent years a number of bridge, have been constructed in different rivers and canals in the district and up to 31st. March/74 there were altogether seventy-one bridges of different length and sizes. Out of these Sixty-five bridges were upto 12 feet wide and six bridges were between twelve to twenty-one feet wide. In respect of length of these river bridges sixty-five are upto 300 feet, six bridges between 301 to 500 feet and one above 500 feet.⁸

(c) **Transport by air:** Air ways and aerodromes: Air Communication plays an important role in the transport and communication system of the district, especially during the rainy season when the surface communications remain disrupted. There is a regular air link between Silchar and Calcutta via Agartala connecting Cachar with West Bengal, Manipur and Tripura. A special air flight has also been introduced to have a direct link between Silchar and Gauhati.

The air-port is located at Kumbhirgram. This aerodrome is now maintained by the Civil Aviation Department. It was constructed by the War Department during the Second World War. After the cessation of war, this aerodrome was taken over by the Civil Aviation Department and developed to meet civil requirements. A new terminal and other essential technical buildings have been built and communication Navigational facilities provided depending upon the requirements of Indian Air lines. Further developments of this aerodrome are proposed to be taken up in near future. Indian Air lines are, at present, operating the following services to Silchar.

- 1) Silchar-Gauhati-3 days in a week.
- 2) Silchar-Imphal-4 days in a week.
- 3) Silchar-Calcutta-Daily.

Facilities for transporting commercial goods like tea, betel nuts and betel leaves and miscellaneous goods by air to Imphal and Calcutta are given by this station. Such facilities of transporting goods like tea, betel nuts, oranges, gingers, pineapple and other commodities are also found here. The statement below shows the passenger traffic, freight carried and

8. Source—Transport Statistics of Assam, 1974.

mail traffic carried to and from Assam Stations by Indian Airlines from 1971-72 to 1973-74. 9

Traffic	To Assam			From Assam.		
	1971-72	1972-73	1973-74	1971-72	1972-73	1973-74
1. Passenger Traffic Nos.	13,156	16,696	15,130	13,158	16,697	15,132
2. Freight carried (in Tonnes)	202	266	166	77	127	64
3. Mail Traffic (In Tonnes)	84	76	101	68	72	70

(f) **Tourist and travellers facilities:** There are three Circuit Houses in the district one each at Silchar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. These are under the control of the Deputy Commissioner and the Sub-divisional Officers respectively. These three places have also three **Dak Bungalows** one in each place. These are also under the over-all control of the Deputy Commissioner, Silchar. Hotels and restaurants do not generally have modern amenities of high standard. There are a number of **Inspection Bungalows**, Rest Houses etc. maintained by the Irrigation Department. Accommodation becomes available on request from the concerning authorities. Most of the **Inspection Bungalows** have 2 or more furnished rooms and are provided with sanitary and cooking utensils. In addition to above, there is one additional Circuit House at Silchar under the Medical College Construction Division. The **Chowkidar** in each **Inspection Bungalow** (I.B.) caters to the needs of the visitors. A list of **Inspection Bungalows**, Rest Houses etc. in Cachar district is given below:—

Silchar Division :

Name and Location	Type of Accommodation	Rail or Road link
1. I.B.Lakhipur	Two single-seated rooms plus dinning room	Road link
2. I.B.Sonai	Two single-seated rooms	Road link
3. I.B. Jrighat	-Do-	-Do-
4. I.B.Dholai (on Silchar-Aizawl road)	Two single-seated rooms plus one dinning room	-Do-

9. Civil Aviation, New Delhi.

Silchar Division :

Name and Location	Type of Accommodation	Rail or Road Link
5. Sub-station (S.S.) Hut Narsingpur (Silchar-Aizawl road)	Two single-seated rooms	Road link
6. Rest House Amranagar (Silchar-Shillong road)	-Do-	-Do-
7. I.B.Salchapra (on Surma Trunk road)	Two rooms	Both rail & road link
8. I.B.Borkhola (Silchar Jaintapur road)	Three rooms six-seated	Road link
9. Rest House, Katigorah	Two rooms	Road link
10. I.B.Gumra (Shillong-Agartola road)	Three rooms	Road link
11. I.B.Bikrampur (Silchar Natanpur road)	Two rooms, double-seated	Road link
12. Rest House, Silchar (Surma Trunk road)	Two single-seated rooms plus dinning room	Road link
13. Dak cum. I.B. Silchar	Eleven rooms	Road link
14. Rest-House, Kalainchhara (Shillong-Agartola road)	Two rooms	Road link
15. I.B.Lala (Hailakandi-Katlichhara road)	Two rooms	Rail link
16. I.B.Katlicherra	Two rooms	Road link
17. S.S.Hut Karimcherra	One room	-Do-
18. S.S.Hut Jamira	-Do-	-Do-
19. Dak-Cum I.B.Hailakandi	Four rooms	Rail link
20. S.S.Hut Lowerband	One room	Road link
21. I.B.(Irrigation)Borjalenga	Two rooms	-Do-
22. S.S.Hut, Narayanpur	One room	-Do-
23. Rest House, Jankibazar	Two rooms	-Do-

Karimganj Division:

24. Dak-cum I.B. Karimganj	Four rooms, three double-seated	Both road & rail link
25. I.B.Nilambazar	Two rooms, both double-seated	-Do-
26. I.B.Kaliganj	One room	Road link
27. I.B.Patharkandi	Four rooms all double-seated	Both road & Rail link
28. I.B.Baderpurghat	Three rooms all double-seated	-Do-

Karimganj Division :

Name and Location	Type of Accommodation	Rail or Road link
29. I.B.Lowairpoa	Two rooms, double-seated	Road link
30. I.B.Dullabchhara	Two rooms, single-seated	Both rail & road
31. Rest camp, Bargool	Two rooms	Road link
32. Rest House, Krishnapur	One single-seated room	-Do-
33. Rest House, Nilambazar	Two single-seated rooms	Both rail & road link
34. Rest House, Rangamati	One room	Road link
35. Rest House, Bazarghat	One room	Both road and Rail
36. Rest House, Karjatkandi	Two single-seated rooms	Road link

(g) **Post and Telegraph Facilities:** In 1903-04, there were only 30 Post offices in Cachar. Out of these 19 were combined Post and Telegraph Offices. Besides, there was a departmental telegraph office at Silchar. The mail was brought by the Assam-Bengal Railway from Calcutta to Silchar and distributed by runners to the different post offices in the plains.¹⁰ There were, no doubt, some postal facilities prior to independence, yet it was only in the post independence period, especially after the creation of a new Division for Cachar in 1964-65, that the rapid progress was made in respect of postal communications in the district.

Now there is a fairly wide network of post offices in Cachar. As in November 1970, there were two Head Post Office (Silchar and Karimganj) 56 Sub-Post Offices and 281 Branch Post Offices in the district. As per 1971 census the total number of villages having telegraph offices in the district was 36. The same source also indicates that in 291 villages there were post offices in the district. All the post offices are delivery offices having arrangements for money orders and savings bank account. The Small Savings movement has made much headway in Cachar. The movement has spread quite significantly throughout the district due to the excellent Co-operation shown by the Development Blocks. Besides the voluntary and social organisations have also made laudable co-operation for the spread of the movement. The special feature of the movement in Cachar district is that it has been intensified by launching special

10. B.C.Allen: *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol. 1, Cachar, Calcutta, 1905, p.114

promotional efforts, like pay-roll savings scheme and the extension of the movement in offices, educational institutions, tea gardens etc.

The under noted table shows the progress of the Small Savings movement in the district in the last few years.

(Accounts in Rs.)

	1963-64	1964-65	1965-66	1966-67	1967-68
Net Collection					
P.O. Savings Bank	21,61,467	38,37,267	32,02,385	43,56,591	33,06,148
A/C Opened	N.A.	7,427	7,076	11,446	10,396
C.T.D. A/C. Opened	441	580	920	1,815	2,135
Agents Collection	18,41,390	N.A.	22,88,055	20,99,020	15,53,605

The progress of Savings Bank Deposits and Money Orders in Cachar district is impressive. At the end of 1969-70 the total number of Saving Bank Accounts opened in the district stood at around 78,000. Out of these about 36,000 and 42,000 accounts were shared by Silchar and Karimganj Head Post office respectively. Similarly the total number of Branch Post Offices having Savings Bank facilities in the district stood at 154. The relevant statistics in respect of Post Office Savings Bank deposits and money orders for the year 1969-70 in Cachar district are as follows:

(in Rupees)

	Silchar Head Post Office	Karimganj Head Post office
Amount of P.O. S.B. deposits	1,24,78,906	1,82,36,480
Total value of National Savings Certificates sold	12,07,500	5,48,710
Total M.O. issued	1,86,84,633	78,98,185
Total M.O. Paid	90,84,848	1,02,56,336

In 1976-77, there were 9,340 post Office Savings Bank account, 1,198 Cumulative Time Deposit account, 2556 Post Office Recurring Deposit accounts and 659 Post-office Time Deposit accounts in which respective deposits were Rs.4,46,82,2,000, Rs.9,80,000 Rs.1,014,000, and Rs.46,64,000 in order. National Savings Certificate investment during the relevant year was Rs.53,0,8,000.00. In this figure, however, the statistics of North Cachar Hills also is included.¹¹

11. *Statistical Hand Book*, Assam 1978, by Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, Gauhati, pp.242-44.

CHAPTER—VIII MISCELLANEOUS OCCUPATION.

The Census of 1961 gives us an insight into the pattern of miscellaneous occupations in the Cachar district. In the said census these miscellaneous occupations were classified under the broad division "Services". The major groups under it were Public services, Educational and scientific services, Religions and Welfare services, Legal services, Business services, Community services and Trade and Labour Association, Recreation services, Personal services and services not elsewhere classified. The total population engaged under each of these ten groups in the district are given below:—

Division	Total Workers		
Total	Persons 62,084	Male 52,214	Female 8,870
Groups			
1. Public Services.	10,712	10,402	310
2. Educational and Scientific Services.	4,831	3,716	1,115
3. Medical and Health Services.	2,206	1,854	352
4. Religions and Welfare Services.	2,817	2,722	95
5. Legal Services.	561	561	—
6. Business Services.	144	143	1
7. Community Services and Trade and Labour Association.	977	972	5
8. Recreation Services	260	252	8
9. Personal Services.	5,197	4,468	729
10. Services Not elsewhere classified.	34,379	28,124	6,255

No figure for 1971 is available yet from the 1971 census report. So the subsequent and recent figures could not be shown.

Public Administration : 10,712 persons (10,402 males, 310 females) were employed in Public Services in Cachar district, according to the census of 1961. This figure does not include the workers of the Government, Quasi-Government bodies and Local Authorities as their sphere of activities fall outside administration. Hence these persons who are working in Transport, Communication, Information and Broadcasting (education and scientific services, health, industries, production, construction, mark-

ting and operation of financial institutions have not been accounted for under Public Services. The following table shows the number of persons serving in the different sections of Public Services (administration) in the district in 1961.

Services.	Male	Female	Total
1. Public Service in Police.	1,685	5	1,690
2. Public Service in offices of the Central Government.	1,737	32	1,769
3. Public Service in offices of the State Government.	6,188	124	6,312
4. Public Services in Local Bodies. Quasi-Government Organisations and	792	149	941

The census of Assam Government Employees conducted by Department of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, in 1966 shows that the total number of State Government employees on March, 1966, in the district was 10,252, which included 259 Gazetted Officers. Out of these, 669 persons belonged to Scheduled Tribes (Hills), 1,285 persons Scheduled Tribes (plains), 1,582 Scheduled Caste and 3,433 persons to backward classes. The table I and table II below will show the number of sex and category-wise number of government employees along with its percentage to State's number and the number of Schedule tribes, Schedule Caste and Other Backward Classes employees category-wise, respectively, in Cachar.

Table—I
Statement showing the Government Employees in Cachar district from 1963—1973.

Year	Gazetted	Non-Gazetted	Grade IV	Total	Male	Female
1963	N.A.	—	—	—	—	—
1964	121	3,838	5,056	9,105	8,848	257
1965	228	3,931	5,241	9,400	9,119	281
1966	259	4,533	5,460	10,252	9,895	357
1967	279	4,421	4,280	8,980	8,644	336
1973	444	5,729	5,044	11,217	10,598	624

On 31/3/73, the number of people belonging to Cachar and working under the Govt. of Assam is,—Gazetted-542, Non-Gazetted-7,057, and Grade IV, 6,050; that is 14.6% to total Government employees in service under the State Government, in the entire State of Assam.

Table—II

Statement showing the Schedule Tribes (Hills) Scheduled Castes (Plains) Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes employees in Cachar district.

Schedule Tribes (Hills)					Schedule Tribes (Plains)			
Year	Gazetted	Non-Gazetted	Grade IV	Total	Gazetted	Non-Gazetted	Grade IV	Total
1964	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	300	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	749
1965	5	104	226	335	8	347	393	748
1966	5	162	335	502	6	423	427	856
1967	6	168	317	491	4	410	422	836
1973	5	67	87	159	6	69	97	172

Scheduled Castes					Other Backward Classes			
Year	Gazetted	Non-Gazetted	Grade IV	Total	Gazetted	Non-Gazetted	Grade IV	Total
1964	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	919	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	2,343
1965	28	404	651	1,083	16	687	1,676	2,379
1966	31	436	678	1,145	22	737	1,915	2,664
1967	33	393	492	918	22	643	1,615	2,271
1973	27	390	811	1,228	44	1,167	1,167	2,392

The table below shows the total number of administrators and Executive officers of the Government in the district of Cachar, as per Census, 1961.

Description	Total	Male	Female	In Urban areas	
				Male	Female
1. Administrators and Executive officials Quasi Govt. & Government.	689	678	11	319	3
2. Administrators and Executive officials in Central Government	102	101	1	88	1
3. Administrative and Executive officials in the State Government	325	324	1	207	1
4. Village officials.	236	228	8	—	—

Special amenities to the Government employees: Some of the benefits available to the employees of the State Government are:—(1) General Provident Fund Benefit, (2) Pensions and gratuities after retirement, (3) Joint Family Pensions, Liberalised Family Pensions, Commuted Pension, (4) Free Medical treatment for the employee and his family members, (5) Earned Leave for three months with full average pay and for one month with half average pay at a time, (6) Medical leave with full average pay and also maternity leave for the female employees (7) Sick leave benefit for treatment of some serious diseases, (8) 15 days casual leave plus 2 days special casual leave within one calendar year (9) 120 days leave with full average pay at the time of retirement, (10) Provision for a Government employee in permanent employment for going on lien for other service (11) Provision for leave-travel concession benefit for employees going home on earned or casual leave, whose native place of residence is more than 200 kilometres from the place of posting once in a period of two years, (12) Facilities for house-building advance, (13) Conveyance advance for purchasing motor cars, motor cycles, bicycles etc., (14) Provision for rent-free quarters for certain employees and house rent for others, (15) Provision for free education to children of the Central Government employees. Now-a-days more facilities are available to the employees belonging to the weaker section of the society serving both in the State and Central Government establishments. Total number of holidays under the State Government is not less than a month during the year.

Public Employees Organisation: With a view to safeguard the general interest of the Government employees and to promote their common welfare, some categories of employees serving under both State and Central Governments have formed associations. The organisations of Central Government employees are formed on all-India basis while those of the State Government employees are formed on all-Assam basis. There are district units of both these types of organisations in the district. These organisations try to ventilate their grievances in a peaceful way. Most of these organisations have been formed with prior permission from the concerning Government.

The following are some of the associations of the State Government employees :

1. All Assam Ministerial Officer's Association (in State Government Service).
2. All Assam 4th Grade Employee's Association (in State Government Service).

3. All Assam Transport Workers' Union.
4. All Assam Mandal Kanungo Sammilan.
5. All Assam Sericultural Officer's Association.
6. All Assam Mohurrirs' Association.
7. All Assam P.W.D. Workers' Union, Cachar Branch.
8. Assam Civil Service (Class I) Association, Cachar Branch.
9. Assam Civil Service (Class II) Association, Cachar Branch.
10. Employee's Association of Electricity Board, Cachar Branch.

Learned Profession: In the Pre-independence period, the percentage of persons engaged in the learned professions such as Teaching, Medicine and Surgery, Engineering, Legal practice and Journalism was negligible. But along with the developmental activities and expansion of education, the district has made much advance in these fields. According to the 1961 census, in the district the total number of persons engaged in technical, professional and related works was 9,762, out of which 8,216 are males and 1,546 females. Only 2,303 persons worked in urban areas.

Engineers: In Cachar the total number of persons employed as Architects, Engineers and Surveyors at the Census of 1961 was 399 males. There was no woman employed under this group. Out of them 111 persons worked in urban areas. The number of surveyors was 277 and all were males, 36 surveyors worked in urban areas. Chemists, Physicists, Geologists and other physical scientists accounted for 16 male persons who worked in urban areas. The number of Biologists, Veterinarians, Agronomists and related scientists was 40 only. There was no female under this group.

The Medical and Public Health services accounted for 1,064 (1,052 males and 12 females). Out of these persons, 424 males and 8 females worked in the urban areas. The table below indicates the number of persons in Medical and related services in Cachar District.

Categories	Total	Male	Female	In urban areas	
				Male	Female
1. Physicians, Surgeons and Dentists.	1,064	1,052	12	424	8
(a) Physicians, Surgeons (Allopathic)	213	209	4	157	4
(b) Physicians (Ayurvedic)	189	188	1	111	—
(c) Physicians, (Homoeopathic)	385	382	3	109	—

(d) Physicians, others.	154	150	4	44	4
(e) Physicians, Surgeons, and Dentists, N.E.C.	116	116	—	2	—
2. Nurses, Pharmacist and other Medical and Health Technicians.	755	449	306	131	119
(a) Nurses.	159	14	145	—	55
(b) Midwives and Health Visitors.	144	16	128	1	38
(c) Pharmacists and Pharmaceutical Technicians.	136	134	2	78	1
(d) Medical and Health Technicians, N.E.C. (Excluding Laboratory Assistant.)	185	181	4	28	—

Teachers: The teachers who constitute one of the most important sections of the learned professionals in the district of Cachar were covered by "Educational and scientific services." The major group among them was comprised of those employed in Schools, Colleges, and similar institutions of non-Technical type. The total number of teachers serving in different educational institutions in the district as per 1961 census is given below:

Categories of Educational institutions.	No. of Teachers		No. of Teachers in urban areas.	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1. Teachers.	4,091	1,101	704	386
(a) Teachers serving in Secondary Schools.	682	153	339	133
(b) Teachers serving in middle and primary schools.	2,207	619	136	186
(c) Teachers, Nursery and Kindergarten schools.	102	103	—	17
(d) Teachers (not elsewhere classified).	1,047	217	176	41

Lawyers: The lawyers formed one of the most important and active occupational groups in the district. According to the Census of 1961, the district had 219 jurists, of whom 169 were in urban areas. There was no female jurist in Cachar district. The total number of persons

engaged in legal service as shown in the census was 561 males which included barristers, advocates solicitors, mukteers, muhuris and munshis.

Journalists : The Journalists also form a significant occupational group in the district though they are small in number. There were 169 males and 6 females engaged as artists, writers and related workers in 1961. Out of these persons, 30 males and 3 females worked in urban areas and the rest in the rural areas. The number of social scientists and related workers was 158 in 1961 including 7 females. 48 including 6 females of this group worked in urban areas and the remaining in the rural areas.

There were 1,371 persons excluding 103 females engaged as ordained religious workers in 1961. Of them 15 males and one female worked in urban areas. The district had 49 male persons engaged as photographers and related camera operators. In 1961, 12 persons including 2 females worked as sports and recreation workers (N.E.C.). Astrologer, Palmists and related workers accounted for 100 male persons, of whom, 25 persons were in urban areas.

The personal services include those rendered by domestic servants, cooks, hoteliers, washermen, barbers etc. The number of persons falling within some important groups comprised in the above divisions are illustrated below:—

As per 1961 census.				
Group	persons	Male	Female	persons engaged urban in areas
1. House keepers, cooks, maids, and related workers.	3,176	2,389	787	773
a. House keepers, matrons, stewards (Domestic and institutional).	165	141	24	22
b. Cooks, Cook-bearers (Domestic and institutional).	1,222	948	274	237
c. Butlers, bearers, waiters, maids, and other servants (domestic).	1,403	1,001	402	467
d. House keepers, cooks, maids and related workers (not elsewhere classified).	353	299	54	33
2. Laundry services:	618	550	68	254
Laundrymen, washermen and Dhobies.	612	544	68	249
3. Barbers, Hairdressers beauticians and related workers.	1,111	1,111	—	39

The above table shows that the males formed the predominant group under each category of the services. Domestic servants formed an unorganised sector while the workers in the institutional services had organised themselves in Trade Unions. There was no female worker serving as barbers, hair-dressers etc.

The economic conditions of the workers classified in the tables above are not apparently good to meet even their bare necessities. The incomes of domestic servants, waiters etc. are within the range of Rs.50.00 and Rs.75.00 p.m. excluding the food, lodge and cloths which are supplied to them by their employers. The charge of barbers varies from Rs.1.00 to Rs.0.75 for hair-cutting and for a shave such charge dwindles in between thirty and fifty paise.

There were 612 persons including 68 females under "Laundrymen, Washer men and Dhobis." Most of them were living in the urban areas of the district. The rate of charge for washing of cloth varies from 25 paise to 30 paise per picce. But in urgent cases high rate was charged, 249 persons of this service were in urban areas and the remaining at rural areas under Panchayat Committees.

The tailors constitute another occupational group. In 1961 Census, 1,467 persons (1,082 males and 385 females) were returned as Tailors, Cutters, Furriers and related workers. Of them, 607 including 28 females were working in the urban areas of the district. But the Tailors, Dress-makers and Germent-makers numbered 829 including 49 females only. 476 including 7 women were in urban areas, the rest worked in rural areas. Tailoring shops may be seen in all parts of the district. Most of them are owned by individuals who have their own sewing machines and attend to work themselves.

In some of the bigger tailoring shops running generally in the important and developed urban areas of the district, there are hired tailors who work on regular wages.

At 1961 Census, in Cachar, there were 1,861 persons excluding 17 females under the group "Leather cutters, lasters and sewers (except gloves and garments) and related workers." Some cobblers have established their own shops and manufactured foot-wears. Majority of this group sit on the road-sides, court-yards etc. of the towns and hats and markets.

The rickshaw pullers also form a considerable section among the occupational groups in the district. Majority rickshaw pullers are found in the urban areas specially in the sub-divisional towns.

It is the easiest means of communication in the towns and their suburbs. So the demand of rickshaw is increasing day by day. The rates of rickshaw are regulated by the respective Municipalities and the Town Committees where the rickshaws are to be registered.

Musicians, Actors, Painters, Cartoonists, Writers, Sportsmen, Decorators : Intellectual pursuits such as writing, acting, painting etc. have not yet been followed as career in the district. Likewise no section of Fine Arts has yet been accepted as an independent career in the district. As such no statistics of people employed in these services are available yet. The same is also applicable to the sportsmen and others.

As per Livestock Census of Assam, 1972, there are 32,083 fishermen in Cachar out of which 3,284 worked as full-time fishermen, 4,474 as part-time fishermen, 2,073 were engaged in fish trade, 360 dealt in dry-fish and 2,576 were engaged in net and implements making.

CHAPTER-IX ECONOMIC TREND

Introduction: The district of Cachar is predominantly an agricultural district. Its only major industry is tea industry which also has a major agricultural character. For an agricultural district, Cachar was a district with moderately dense population till the inclusion of Karimganj into it.

The Hailakandi, Silchar and Karimgang sub-divisions which now form the present Cachar district had the following population in 1901:

Karimganj	— 4,10,460
Silchar	— 3,01,884
Hailakandi	— 1,12,896

In 1901, density of Hailakandi sub-division was 317 and that of Silchar was 205 per square mile, while it was 496 per square mile in Nalbari Police Station which was then a part of Gauhati Sub-division of Kamrup District. ¹ There were 8,25,240 inhabitants in all the three sub-divisions of Karimganj, Silchar and Hailakandi then. Density of population per square mile excluding the hilly areas and reserve forest was 392 in Karimganj which was then a Sub-division and part of Sylhet while density of population in Cachar plains and Silchar were 253 and 205 per square mile respectively. As it is mentioned by B.C. Allen in his District Gazetteer of Cachar, "if he deduct this tract (North Cachar Hills) in addition to the area occupied by reserve forests, it appears that in the remainders of the plains, which cover an area of 697 square miles, the density in 1901 was as much as 515 to the square mile." ² It is found that since before British occupation Cachar has been experiencing a great pressure of immigrants which has been effecting the economic condition of the district very adversely. As B.C. Allen mentioned in Cachar District Gazetteer of 1905, in 1901, 1,01,252 of the total population of the plains of old Cachar district has been from outside the province, about three-fifth of this total came from Bengal, 12,000 from C.P. as Tea Garden labourers and 25,000 from Sylhet. ³ In Karimganj 10 %

1. Census of India, 1911, Assam, part I Report, page 6.

2. B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Cachar p.43

3. Ibid, pp.45-46.

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of its total population was immigrants and of them about 25,000 who worked as tea garden labourers were from U.P. and C.P. The same event roccurred in 1911. There was a natural increase of population in Sylhet by 11.7 %, while actual increase in that district was 10.3 per cent. As usual, about 1.5 % of Sylhet's population emigrated to Cachar ⁴ and through North Cachar to other parts of Assam- as it appears from the fact that actual increase of population in Cachar plains was found to be 13.4 % only as per 1911 census while natural increase was 25.3 %. The fact will be further illustrated by the following table.⁵

District	Year	Actual population	Immigrants	Emmigrants	Natural population
Cachar	1911	5,27,228	90,574	13,681	4,50,335
(Old)	1921	4,97,463	1,10,507	10,207	3,97,163

Evidence on the heavy influx of immigrants into Cachar from Bangladesh, the erstwhile East Bengal in the wake of partition and subsequently as a result of cummunal riots, will be evident by the following table:-

District-wise distribution of displaced families from erstwhile East Pakistan to Assam from 1947 to 1956.

Name of districts	YEAR									
	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956
Cachar	2389	2418	1123	20498	2316	655	294	930	653	40
Goalpara	540	1458	1808	10,032	4176	2196	1055	783	855	95
Kamrup	1087	1380	936	7908	2901	1725	994	398	622	120
Darrang	377	949	928	3623	2801	1726	508	413	445	109
Nowgong	1121	1903	1259	5648	2753	1176	316	201	310	20
Lakhimpur	1425	1563	915	2163	975	724	186	99	159	20
Sibsagar	562	713	511	1185	752	161	80	55	62	12
Karbi										
Anglong	66	346	339	820	305	152	117	49	47	5
U.K.& J										
Hills	203	198	89	1558	300	205	53	35	59	Nil
Garo Hills	23	73	118	721	256	141	22	41	49	8

4. B.C. Allen: *Assam District Gazetteer, Sylhet*, p.70

5. *Census of India, 1921 Vol III, Assam Part-1*, p.26

The influx of immigrants, as seen from the above table, was heaviest in Cachar during 1947, 1948 and 1950 and aggregated to the second highest in the state up to 1956, the first highest being in Goalpara district. Fresh waves of immigrants into Cachar came in 1964 and 1967. An estimate of the total population of displaced persons in Cachar up to 1970 has put the figure at 2,13,946.

The impact of this heavy immigration on Cachar's economy has generally been almost deadly. Apart from adding to population pressure on land, the displaced persons could not make any effective contribution to the district's economic progress since the bulk of them were from very poor families.

Livelihood pattern: As Cachar is mainly an agricultural district, majority of its population live on cultivation and hilly trades connected with agricultural products. In analysing the livelihood pattern of the district, a brief review on the basis of classification of the population in the decennial censuses is necessary.

Since 1951, the population of the country has been classified economically on the basis of livelihood pattern. This basis was further modified by introducing criterion of actual work in 1961. In 1951, the population was divided into 2 broad categories viz., (1) agricultural and (2) non-agricultural; these two being again sub-divided into 4 sub-groups under each of the two major categories mentioned above. The following table will show distribution of population into different livelihood classes and sub-classes as per 1951 census:

Distribution of population in Cachar according to 1951 census.

Livelihood classes	Self supporting persons	Earning dependents	Non-earning dependents	Total
A. Agricultural classes				
1. Cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned by them and their dependents.	97,690	50,031	3,24,158	4,71,879
2. Cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned by them and their dependents.	36,462	17,007	1,00,986	1,54,455
3. Cultivating labourers and their dependents.	7,677	1,769	13,813	23,259
4. Non-cultivating owner of land, agricultural rent receivers and their dependents.	5,091	1,182	12,608	18,881
B. Non-agricultural classes				
1. Production other than cultivation	99,738	11,738	1,18,350	2,29,826
2. Commerce	17,393	2,902	41,910	62,205
3. Transport	4,719	831	12,059	17,609
4. Other service and miscellaneous sources	37,965	6,276	93,520	1,37,761

Total population of Cachar being 11,15,865 in 1951, the above table indicates that more than 73 per cent of the total population in the district were non-earning dependents. Undoubtedly this aspect considerably influenced the cost and standard of living of the people in the district, other aspect being large-scale smuggling of rice, the major crop of the district, to erstwhile East Bengal (Bangladesh) beyond the border along the Kusiara river in particular, and non-production of other major cereal crops like maize, wheat, etc., in the district.

In 1961, a detailed classification of workers and non-workers was made. The following table will show the sex-wise distribution of all the nine categories of workers as well as non-workers in both urban and rural areas of the district as per 1961 census reports:

Table

Categories	Rural		Urban		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1. Workers	3,63,602	88,356	24,735	2,261	3,88,337	90,617
2. Trade and commerce	17,015	1,417	7,868	63	24,883	1,480
3. Cultivators	2,18,570	25,222	1,062	2	2,19,632	25,224
4. Construction	1,913	173	587	—	2,491	173
5. Agri-labour	30,120	2,308	131	22	32,251	2,330
6. Transport, storage and communication	3,965	23	3,408	77	7,373	100
7. Mining, quarrying, livestock, forestry, fishing, hunting, plantation, orchard and allied services	36,913	26,425	121	2	37,034	26,417
8. Household industry	5,902	24,829	11	12	5,913	24,841
9. Manufacturing other than household industry	3,444	541	3,409	625	6,859	1,166
10. Other services.	45,760	7,428	8,147	1,458	53,907	8,886
11. Non-workers	3,05,148	5,24,557	29,002	40,815	334,150	565,372

The above table shows that cultivators and agricultural labourers jointly claiming 2,76,437 workers, formed about 57.72% of the total working population of the district in 1960. The percentage would have been slightly higher if the tea garden labourers engaged in plantation and classified as industrial workers were added to it. Thus in the district of Cachar livelihood pattern is predominated by agriculture. Total number of industrial workers was 1,02,230 as per the census of 1961, forming a percentage of 21.34 of the total working population. In 1971, number of agricultural worker increased to 3,28,586 forming 66.6 per cent of the total working population of the district. Of the non-agricultural workers, highest number was in services, followed by household industries like weaving and sericulture, cane and bamboo work etc. The whole picture projects industrial backwardness of the district. The following table reveals its interesting features of the employment and occupational pattern for the period from 1951 to 1971.

TABLE
INDUSTRIAL CATEGORY OF WORKERS & NON-WORKERS IN CACHAR DISTRICT.

	Rural-urban classification	Total population	Total workers	W O R K E R S					Non- workers
				Agricul- ture	Trade & commerce	Transport, storage, communi- cation	Production, other than agricul- ture	Other services	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1951	RURAL	10,54,489	3,78,817	2,16,361	14,216	4,409	1,08,235	35,756	6,75,512
	URBAN	61,316	19,484	548	6,019	1,141	3,231	8,485	41,892
	TOTAL	11,15,865	3,98,461	2,16,909	20,295	5,550	1,11,466	44,241	7,17,404
1961	RURAL	12,81,663	4,51,958	2,76,220	11,432	3,988	98,044	53,188	8,29,705
	URBAN	96,813	26,996	1,217	1,931	3,485	4,580	9,605	69,817
	TOTAL	13,78,476	4,78,954	2,77,437	26,363	7,473	1,02,624	62,793	8,99,522
1971	RURAL	15,77,626	4,17,373	3,24,814	13,870	6,674	77,413	33,602	11,21,253
	URBAN	1,35,692	36,573	3,772	10,015	5,211	6,634	10,941	99,119
	TOTAL	17,13,318	4,92,946	3,28,586	23,885	11,885	84,047	44,543	12,20,372

SOURCE: CENSUS REPORTS OF 1951, 1961 and 1971.

It is clear that the percentage of workers in the total population of the district declined marginally from 36.3% to 34.7% between 1951 and 1961 and steeply from 34.79% to 28.6% between 1961 and 1971. Even if one makes allowance for any change in the definition of 'workers' as between the censuses; there was a significant fall in the percentage of workers. Correspondingly there has been also a significant rise in the percentage of non-workers. Over 30% of the population belonged to the category of non-workers in 1971. This implies an enormous dependency burden, part of which was caused by immigration. Those who are economically active have to support not only themselves but a lot of dependents which include their own wards as well as non-working and floating immigrants. Another striking feature has been the unusual rise in the number of workers depending upon agriculture. Their percentage in the total work force increased from 54.44 in 1951 to 57.93 in 1961 and to 66.66 in 1971. This trend is an indication of a virtual lack of diversification of the economy and what is worse, an increasing pressure of population on agriculture. Even within the non-agricultural sector, in 1971 only about 17% of the workers accounted for manufacturing, mining etc. This shows that there has been very little of industrialisation. Actually, the number of people dependent upon manufacturing, mining etc. declined in between 1951 and 1971—the decline was a steep 24%. On the other hand, the number of persons depending upon storage, transport and communications increased more than double in the same period. Obviously, the geographical isolation of the district suddenly faced with loss of easy access to its natural outlets in the eastern-most district of Bengal as result of political partition, caused a need for improvement of transport and communication with the rest of Assam. Another interesting finding is that while the total number of workers increased between 1951 and 1971 by only 94,485 the number of workers dependent upon agriculture increased by 1,11,677 thus revealing that there had been a considerable diversion of workers from other occupations, presumably manufacturing, mining etc. to agriculture. Strangely enough, even among urban workers of Cachar, there has been an increasing pressure on agriculture from 2.81% in 1951 to 4.51% in 1961 and to 10.31% in 1971. This points out the utterly inadequate employment opportunities in urban areas.

Industrial backwardness of the district is revealed by the fact that in terms of employment, the industrial sector other than household industry sector, absorbs only about 17% of the total working population. There were only 154 such units in 1971, the latest figure is 160. Among

these, tea, small units producing agricultural implements, shoe, bricks and saw-mills, printing, auto-servicing and repairing units were the predominant ones. Recently, manufacturing of food products has become the most important, accounting for 114 out of 160 units.

The cottage industry, particularly weaving industry of the district is a stagnant and even declining segment of the economy of Cachar. The weaving industry has almost become a household industry and has been facing stiff competition from textile mills products. The Cachar, Textile Mill, with its 196 powerlooms, came into existence in 1966 initially as a Departmental undertaking and subsequently as an enterprise under the Assam Industries Development Corporation. It has not been doing well.

Tea, the most important industry of the district also is in a lamentable state. The table below will give an idea about industrial position of Cachar, as far as tea is concerned.

Table

Tea: Number of Estates, Area and Production in Cachar.

Year	No. of estates	Area (in hectares)	Average Yield per hectare	Production (in 000kg)	Average daily no. of workers
1961	114	29,928	674	20,181	47,155
1965	114	30,111	639	19,228	49,747
1967	114	30,019	743	22,302	49,330
1968	113	30,331	735	22,302	48,027
1969	113	30,527	700	21,360	48,457
1970	111	30,854	773	23,646	47,155
1974	111	30,845	773	N.A.	47,155

Source: (1) Office of the District Statistical Officer, Cachar
(2) Tea Association of India, Silchar.

The tea industry dominates Cachar's industrial life. It accounts for about 90% of the factory population of the district. The following Table gives some details of the industry. The poor performance of Cachar tea gardens in comparison to other districts of Assam can also be seen from the following table.

Table

Name of districts.	Area in hectares as on 31-3-76	Production (in 000 kg)	Average yield (kg per hectares)
Darrang	31,831	47,131	1,436-2nd
Goalpara	2,281	2,733	1,198-5th
Kamrup	2,873	3,715	1,293-4th
Lakhimpur (including Dibrugarh district.)	59,893	1,13,807	1,900-1st
Nowgong	6,625	6,082	918-7th
Sibsagar (including Karbi Anglong & N.C.Hills.	53,982	71,333	1,321-3rd
Cachar	30,853	31,507	1,021-6th
Total Assam	1,89,338	2,76,308	1,459

Source: Tea Board, India.

It is clear that Cachar's production in tea is the second lowest in Assam, the first lowest being that of Nowgong. Darrang which has about the same area under tea as Cachar, produces a lot more and has second highest production-level in the State. Cachar's production-level in tea is very much below the all-Assam level.

The tea industry, though important for Cachar's industrial life, is very sick. The district has been having a high concentration of uneconomic tea gardens in Assam. About 37 tea gardens, occupying an area of about 10,000 acres have been sick. The troubles faced by the tea gardens are inadequacy of capital, bad management, rising costs, transport difficulties etc. Tea garden labourers, mostly immigrants from U.P., Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Madras, a major part belonging to Chotanagpur and Santal Pargana, are in a state of despair on account of miserable working conditions.

Prices: As noted by B.C.Allen⁶, in the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, the general price tendency was to be highest in Karimganj sub-division where there always was a considerable garden population.

6. B. C. Allen: *Assam District Gazetteers Vol. II, Sylhet*, 1905, p.170-171.

Cachar was, in the early part of the British occupation, a purely agricultural district, producing only the principal staple crops besides tea. It was not industrially developed, hence price of essential commodities produced within the district was very high. But with the growth of population and increased number of immigrants from outside the district, trade in consumers goods by boat through the Barak and the Kusiara expanded and price of essential goods took up a high trend due to loss of equilibrium between production and population. As quoted by P. Mainwarring, the officiating Superintendent in civil charge of Cachar in 1836 A.D., in 1835, price of rice in Cachar was 11 annas (69 paise) per *maund*, while prices of cotton, betelnut, salt and molasses were Rs.4.50 p. Rs.1.12 p., Rs.5.50 paise and Rs.2.50 paise per *maund* respectively.⁷

For the next decade, there was a little change in prices. But from 1860, a steady upward trend in prices of rice had been marked. In 1860s, 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s, rice available for a rupee at Karimganj was 25 *seers*, 21 *seers*, 16 *seers* and 13 *seers* respectively.

Between 1872 to 1902, there has been a marked rise in the price of rice. In 1872, for a rupee 20.2 *seers* of rice were available while in 1882 it came to be 18.5 *seers*, in 1892—14.9 *seers* and in 1902 it became even more dearer i.e. 11.9 *seers* per rupee. Rice was generally cheaper in Hailakandi than in Silchar and in February 1905, at Hailakandi, 23 *seers* of rice was available for a rupee.⁸

Tea industry was started in Cachar in 1855 and with the industry there was a constant flow of tea-garden labourers into the district which bore directly on the prices of essential commodities like rice, and as most of the tea gardens in Cachar was situated in Silchar sub-division and major portion of the paddy grew in Hailakandi area; rice was naturally dearer in Silchar and hence was its price high. Besides, as mentioned in Census of India, 1921, Vol.III, Assam, Part-I Report by W.G.L. Lloyd, the Superintendent of Census Operation, Assam (Page 169), "traders from Bengal come in boats and buy quantities of rice from the interior in Surma Valley (Cachar and Sylhet mainly), after the winter harvest". Naturally, the agriculturists of Sylhet and Silchar got grand opportunity for rice-trade which resulted in upward shot in price trend.

7. D. Datta: *District Records* 1979, Silchar, p. 19.

8. B. C. Allen : *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol. II, Sylhet, 1905, p. 171.

As for the cost of clothings in 1901-price of wearings was as follows:

Article	Quality	Price
Dhoti	1 Piece	12 annas (0.75 paise)
Chaddar	1 „	Rs.1/- (one rupee)
Small cotton coat	1 „	12 annas (0.75 paise)
Winter wrap	1 „	Rs.4/- (Four rupees)
Sari	1 „	12 annas (0.75 paise)

The price of cotton wrapper,—a locally manufactured cloth, was Rs.3/8/ per piece in 1921 while in 1901 it was Rs.4/- per piece. This indicated decline of demand for locally woven goods due to availability of cheap mill-cloths, which resulted in blocking of a means of supplementary earning for local female weavers. This meant further deterioration of economic condition of the rural mass whose womenfolk took up weaving as a side income earning home industry.

During the economic depression of 1928-32, prices of all commodities produced locally also suffered badly as purchasing power of the people went very low. But the outbreak of the Second World War led to a great rise in prices in general all over the country. Since then the inflationary trend in prices continued unabated and the whole forties of the twentieth century was a prosperous one for the agriculturists who however could not enjoy any affluency what-so-ever due to parallel increase in prices of non-agricultural essential goods like fuel, kerosine, sugar, clothings, medicine, papers and books, building materials etc. Issue of several control orders by the government even was of no effect. Rationing had to be introduced in urban areas and subsequently it was extended to rural areas also.

The district of Cachar experienced along with other districts of Assam an inflationary trend of prices. Consumer's price index of general working class people of Silchar has always been higher than that of Gauhati while in Tinsukia it is the highest in Assam. An idea about it can be had from the following table:

Consumer price index for working class at Silchar.

(Base 1949=100)

Year	Silchar	Gauhati
1955	88	87
1957	105	103
1959	109	98

Year	Silehar	Gauhati
1961	107	106
1965	149	134
1966	194	151
1967	219	182
1968	228	220
1974	359	195
1975	387	216
1976	325	229
1977	375	252

Source: Statistical Handbook, Assam.

This table shows that in Cachar the prices rose about 3½ times between 1949 and 1977.

Consumer price index for tea garden workers in the Brahmaputra Valley and Cachar district was as follows: (Base 1951-52=100)

Year	Brahmaputra Valley		Cachar district.	
	Staff & Artisan	Labourers	Staff & Artisan	Labourers
1961	113	116	119	107
1962	116	117	122	110
1963	118	117	131	124
1964	124	126	136	125
1965	134	137	157	142
1966	152	138	177	164
1967	176	189	229	109
1968	176	189	229	236
1969	173	184	220	203
1970	173	184	229	217
1971	175	183	283	220

Source: Department of Economics and Statistics, Assam.

This table reveals that the tea garden personnel in Cachar generally experienced higher pressure of price than their counterparts in the rest of Assam.

Although reliable district-wise per capita income figures are not available, the data given by the Fact Finding Survey on Cachar about Cachar District's income for 1960-61 divided by the 1961 population of the district given by the District Census 1961 yields a per capita income (at current prices) of only Rs.296/- for Cachar as against the all-Assam per capita (at current prices) income figure of Rs.363.5 for the same year. From this bit of evidence it may be presumed that the level of income of the people of Cachar was very low and much lower than in rest of Assam. However, it must not be overlooked that the cost structure of Cachar had always been in a lower key as compared with that of districts like Kamrup. The cost of labour and materials, for instance, has been lower in Cachar than elsewhere in Assam.

An idea of the wholesale prices in the market of Cachar may be had from the following table.

Prices in Rs. on 25-1-1974.

	Quintol	Rs.
Rice	..	145
Gramdal	..	265
Arahardal	..	220
Mug Dal	..	278
Masur dal	..	230
Matikalai	..	140
Chillies	..	150
Potato	..	100
Onion	..	125
Mustard oil 100 litres	..	1150
Milk (cow) 100 litres	..	200
Sugar	Quintol	440
Egg	100 nos.	25
Meat (goat)	10 kg.	80

Barring a few items such as eggs, the essential commodities are sold in Cachar at higher prices than in Kamrup and other districts, and the price difference is usually Rs.10/- to Rs.15/- per quintol of rice.

This index can be very deftly compared with earlier price-trend and indexes quoted above from the old District Gazetteers edited by B.C.Allen in 1905, and also with the data available from the Census of India 1961 reproduced in the tables A and B :

Table—A
Statement showing whole-sale prices of important

	1958				Silchar
	Silchar	Sonai	Haila-kandi	Karim-ganj	
Rice	19	16	19.50	—	19
Paddy	01	—	10.00	—	—
Gram	18.50	—	20.00	—	25.50
Masur dal	—	—	27.50	—	32.00
Arhar	—	—	—	—	—
Mug dal	24.50	—	27.50	—	32
Khesari	—	18.00	17.75	—	28
Potato	10	12	12.41	—	15
Jute (per bale)	118	—	—	—	75
Mati Kalai	—	—	—	—	21

Table—B.
Retail priced of essential commodities in Cachar.

Year	Rice per seer	Atta per seer	Masur per seer	Mati-kalai per seer	Potato per Seer	Fish per seer	Per pair egg	Salt per seer
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1951	.52	1.00	.87	.73	.66	1.30	—	.19
1952	.70	.69	.78	.62	.51	1.62	.26	.19
1953	.50	.71	.71	.62	.52	1.51	.27	.15
1954	.45	.65	.51	.46	.49	.163	.26	.16
1955	.36	.52	.51	.44	.48	1.55	.25	.16
1956	.53	.61	.70	.47	.66	1.34	.20	.16
1957	.49	.60	.75	.51	.64	1.54	.26	.19
1958	.54	.62	.82	.75	.63	2.03	.29	.19
1959	.51	.60	.80	.61	.57	2.22	.50	.19
1960	.54	.58	.73	.69	.65	1.35	.31	.20

commodities in Cachar from 1958 to 1960

(Prices in Rupees and paise per maund.)

1959				1960			
Sonai	Karim-ganj	Haila-kandi	Silchar	Sonai	Karim-ganj	Haila-kandi	
16	—	20	17	17.89	—	—	17
10	—	9.50	—	—	—	—	—
—	—	—	18	—	—	—	—
—	—	30	27	—	—	—	28
—	—	—	—	—	29	—	—
—	—	—	29	—	—	—	32
—	—	—	17.50	—	—	—	21
—	—	12.50	—	—	—	—	15
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
—	19.50	—	20	—	—	—	—

(Source: Census of India 1961, Assam District Census Head Book, Cachar)

Chill-ies per seer	Must-ard oil per seer	Gur per seer	Sugar per seer	Milk per seer	Per piece Dhoti	Per piece Sari	Per Yds. Shir-ting	Kero-sine per litre.
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
2.62	2.55	.75	1.12	.46	6.25	6.75	1.45	.52
1.74	1.75	.56	1.06	.62	4.00	5.00	.87	.54
2.80	2.13	.69	.96	.55	4.53	4.89	.79	.55
2.82	2.10	.75	1.18	.58	4.72	4.94	.58	.50
1.77	1.88	.59	.99	.54	5.06	5.50	.58	.49
1.98	2.52	.54	1.00	.51	4.45	4.62	.68	.53
2.33	2.62	.58	1.12	.50	4.70	4.83	.77	.50
2.15	2.42	.73	1.25	.52	4.23	4.48	.77	.56
2.75	2.39	.77	1.35	.58	4.25	4.50	.71	.50
3.44	2.46	.68	1.23	.54	4.78	4.94	.69	.54

(Source: Census of India, 1961, Assam District Census Handbook, Cachar.)

As described by R.B.Vaghaiwallah, 'it was impossible to correlate the rapid growth of the population in any way to the economic conditions.....The whole State was seriously effected by the world-wide great economic depression of 1928-32 and especially by the precipitous fall in the prices of agricultural produce. Whatever little trade and commerce, including the tea industry Assam had, suffered a severe depression. It was only after the out-break of the war in 1939 there was a steep rise in food grains prices; hoarding and profiteering became rampant and prices showed an upward trend. Hence, this record decennial increase is mainly due to the three demographic factors:

- (1) The natural growth of old population.
- (2) Immigration of East Bengalis colonists, tea garden labourers, Nepalese etc.
- (3) The absence of any epidemic due to the growing masters of Kala-Azar and other epidemic as well as non-epidemic diseases.'

Besides, annual flood caused heavy damage to crops thereby effecting the economy of the district. It was further deteriorated by the communal riot of 1950 which caused extensive loss of human properties.

Post-independence period Cachar experienced the same bad effect of the general inflationary economy as the rest of the country and the globe.

Wage: From the old District Gazetteer of Cachar edited by B.C.Allen in 1905,—it is found that in 1901, labour in Cachar plains i.e. Silchar and Hailakandi costed double the labour in Karimganj Sub-division which was then a part of Sylhet. In Sylhet which included Karimganj-labour was available at Rs.2.50 per month with food while it was Rs.4/- per month without food. But in Cachar plains, monthly wage of labour with food was Rs.4/- and that without food was Rs.8/-. In tea gardens, wage for labour was 6 annas (0.37 paise) per day.

In Cachar plains in 1876, a common agricultural labourer received a wage of Rs.7/- per mensem in addition to his food while without food he received Rs.10/- per month. This was due to scarcity of labour in Cachar which was relatively under populated then. So far tea gardens in the Cachar plains are concerned, only imported labour from Chotanagpur was utilised for a wage of -/6/- annas (0.37 paise) per day and these labours were obtained through the agents who received a lucrative commission for the job.

Average wage earning capacity of general labour went much down due to the great economic depression of 1928-32, though growing

consciousness amongst the working class during the Freedom Movement, caused general rise of wages in every sector. After independence in 1952, the Minimum wage Act was introduced in the State. This Act covered the labourers working in the plantation industry, public motor transport, and flour and rice mills at first and subsequently was extended to cover agricultural labour, P.W.D. labour (road construction and building operation, stone breaking and crushing), and workers under the local authorities. Since the introduction of Labour Act, from 1954, condition of tea garden labourers also improved and general upward trend of price index resulted in rise of daily wage for domestic labour also.

An idea about the daily cash-wage for different categories of labour in Cachar during the second half of the fifties of the current century can be had from the following table :

Statement showing the daily agricultural cash wages in the district, 1957-1960.

Year	Name of selected places	Type of labour	Skilled labour			Field labour	Other agricultural	Haid-men
			Carpenter	Blacksmith	Cobblers			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1957—Saidbund	Man	Man	3.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.00
		Woman	—	—	—	1.50	1.50	—
		Child	—	—	—	1.25	1.25	.75
	Krishnapur	Man	—	—	—	2.00	2.00	—
		Woman	—	—	—	1.50	1.50	—
		Child	—	—	—	1.00	1.00	—
	Purbagool	Man	3.00	2.50	2.00	2.00	2.00	—
		Woman	—	—	—	—	—	—
		Child	—	—	—	—	—	—
1958—Saidbund	Man	Man	3.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.00
		Woman	—	—	—	1.50	1.50	—
		Child	—	—	—	1.25	1.25	.75
	Krishnapur	Man	—	—	—	2.25	2.25	—
		Woman	—	—	—	1.75	1.75	—
		Child	—	—	—	1.00	1.00	—

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Purbagool	Man	3.00	2.50	2.00	2.00	2.00	—	—
	Woman	—	—	—	—	1.62	—	—
	Child	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1959— Saidbund	Man	3.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	—
	Woman	—	—	—	1.50	1.50	—	—
	Child	—	—	—	1.25	1.25	.75	—
Krishnapur	Man	—	—	—	2.25	2.25	—	—
	Woman	—	—	—	1.75	1.75	—	—
	Child	—	—	—	1.00	1.00	—	—
Purbagool	Man	3.00	2.50	2.00	2.00	2.00	—	—
	Woman	—	—	—	1.50	1.50	—	—
	Child	—	—	—	—	1.00	—	—
1960—Saidbund	Man	3.00	2.50	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	—
	Woman	—	—	—	1.50	1.40	—	—
	Child	—	—	—	—	1.25	.75	—
Krishnapur	Man	3.00	2.50	2.00	2.00	2.00	—	—
	Woman	—	—	—	1.50	1.50	—	—
	Child	—	—	—	—	1.25	—	—
Purbagool	Man	3.00	2.25	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	—
	Woman	—	—	—	1.50	1.50	1.50	—
	Child	—	—	—	1.00	1.00	1.00	—

Source: *Census of India, 1961, Assam, District Census Hand Book Cachar.*

Gradually, the Minimum Wage Act covered all the areas of work including agriculture, and regional disparity in wage discontinued. But along with price index, rates of wage also are moving up.

Domestic labour's wage is however always low in Cachar due to easy availability of such labour. As for the general trend and rate of wage in Cachar, it is always a reflection of Assam as a whole. At present in urban areas of Assam, the rate of daily wage for different categories of labourer is as follows :—

Category	Rate per day
General Unskilled	Rs. 10/-
Semi skilled	Rs. 12/-
Skilled Class- I	Rs. 20/-
Class- II	Rs. 18/-
Class- III.	Rs. 12/-

In rural areas the rate is a little lower and generally the rate is Rs.1/- to Rs.2/- less when food is supplied by the employers.

The average daily labour wage trend in the rural Assam can be gauged from the following table:—

Wage rate as per day per labour

(in rupees)

Year	Carpenter	Blacksmith	Field labour	Other agri-labourer	Herdman
1966	5.28	5.19	3.22	3.33	1.94
1967	5.75	6.23	3.30	3.49	2.19
1968	6.27	5.67	3.39	3.29	2.19
1969	6.75	6.12	3.72	3.73	3.02
1970	6.77	6.28	3.73	4.15	3.29

Source : Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Assam

The minimum wage for unskilled P.W.D. labour engaged in building construction and road operation was Rs.3.25 in 1964. In 1966, the same rate was fixed for the labourers engaged in ply-wood and engineering industries while monthly minimum rate for all unskilled labourer was fixed at Rs.85/-. In 1970, the question of revision of wage rate came in and benefit of the first revision went to the plantation labour who are the main force of Trade Union organisations and in 1972 the tea garden labours became entitled to a 20% increase over the existing old rate. According to labour Bureau of the Government of India, the wages for the lower daily paid unskilled male workers in Assam varied from Rs.1.54 to Rs.6.00 on 30th September, 1975. In the later part of 1978, the maximum of the daily wage rate has been raised to Rs.8/- The same category of workers under the Central Government receive wages within the range from Rs.3.50 to Rs.5.15 on 30th September 1975. This disparity of wage rate in Assam is due to the fact that the immigrant and refugee labour who enter the state illegally are available at the very cheap wage rate in the district of Cachar and Goalpara while the local labourers in other districts especially in the towns are very dear and are available only at a high rate of wage.

Economic status and standard of living: It should not be overlooked that the predominantly immigrant population has been generally accustomed to a lower standard of living as compared to the indigenous population of Assam. But no separate sample survey on per capita ex-

penditure for the immigrants, floating and indigenous population has been conducted in the State. So no data on the subject could be furnished. No district-wise sample survey on per capita expenditure also has been reported up-till-now. No districtwise data on the subject also could be furnished. Following tables will furnish some material on the subject as far as Assam is concerned.

Per capita consumer expenditure per month in Assam as National Sample Survey (State Sample).¹⁰

	19th round Survey 1964-65				20th round Survey 1965-66			
	Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban	
	Expenditure	P.C.	Expenditure	P.C.	Expenditure	P.C.	Expenditure	P.C.
1. Food grains	11.64	45.58	11.30	30.75	12.95	45.94	11.35	28.22
2. Milk and Milk product.	1.30	5.09	2.56	6.97	1.23	4.36	2.47	6.14
3. Other food items	6.14	24.04	10.82	29.49	7.39	26.21	12.19	30.31
Total food	19.08	74.71	24.68	67.21	21.57	76.31	26.01	64.67
4. Fuel and lighting	2.11	8.27	2.80	7.63	2.15	7.63	2.92	7.26
5. Clothing	1.38	5.40	2.28	6.21	1.18	4.19	1.87	4.65
6. Other non-food items	2.97	11.62	6.96	18.95	3.29	11.67	9.42	23.42
Total non-food	6.46	25.29	12.04	32.79	6.62	23.49	14.21	35.33

As per 20th round of Sample Survey, it seems that per capita consumption expenditure in rural areas were Rs.28/- and in urban areas Rs.40/-.

10. Source: *Economic Survey of Assam* 1970, page 110-111.

Distribution of people according to monthly per capita expenditure-classes in Assam is reflected in the following table.

Monthly per capita expenditure	19th round N.S.S.				20th round N.S.S.			
	Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban	
	P.C.	Cumulative P.C.	P.C.	Cumulative P.C.	P.C.	Cumulative P.C.	P.C.	Cumulative P.C.
0 — 7.99	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
8 — 10.99	1.22	1.22	0.87	0.87	—	—	—	—
11 — 12.99	2.00	3.22	0.96	1.83	0.56	0.56	—	—
13 — 14.99	2.80	6.02	0.48	2.31	1.67	2.23	0.90	0.90
15 — 17.99	13.00	19.02	1.95	4.26	3.75	5.98	0.49	1.39
18 — 20.99	16.23	35.25	4.81	9.07	7.35	13.33	5.05	6.44
21 — 23.99	18.90	54.15	13.61	22.68	11.38	24.71	4.26	10.70
24 — 27.99	14.22	68.37	13.17	35.85	15.99	40.70	8.98	19.68
28 — 33.99	17.41	85.78	16.75	52.60	18.19	75.26	15.08	45.99
34 — 42.99	9.21	94.99	26.90	79.50	14.60	89.86	19.93	65.92
43 — 54.99	3.80	98.76	8.56	88.06	7.35	97.21	17.79	83.71
55 — 74.99	0.97	99.76	7.92	95.98	—	—	—	—
75 and above	0.24	100.00	4.02	100.00	—	—	—	—

(Source: *Economic Survey of Assam*, 1971, page 83-84)

As per 26th round of N.S.S.—consumption expenditure in Assam in 1971-72 was Rs.41/- in rural and Rs.64/- in urban areas—as against Rs.40/- and Rs.58/- respectively of the preceding year. This increase from year to year does not necessarily mean rise in standard of living but it indicates the general unchecked tendency of rise in consumers' price index for essential commodities in the State.

Abbreviation: N.S.S.—National Sample Survey.

The following table shows per capita monthly expenditure in Assam in 1971.

Per capita consumers expenditure per month in Assam 1971.¹¹

Items	Rural		Urban	
	Expendi- ture	Per cent	Expendi- ture	Per cent
1. Food grains	18.67	45.47	19.08	30.04
2. Milk and milk products	1.86	4.53	3.50	5.51
3. Other food items	10.58	25.77	18.76	29.53
4. Fuel and lighting	2.97	7.23	3.94	6.20
5. Clothings	1.67	4.07	3.55	5.59
6. Other non-food items	5.31	12.93	14.69	23.13
Total food	31.11	75.77	41.34	65.08
Total non-food	9.95	24.23	22.18	34.92

It is seen that per capita expenditure on food in the rural areas is always higher than it is in the urban areas. This is due to two particular reasons viz., (1) prices of certain essential food-items like dal, oil, salt and sugar are always higher in the rural areas and (2) in urban areas higher expenditure on other non-food items connected with urban life compels reduction of expenditure on food items. Besides per capita expenditure of a particular income group is also connected with the consumers' price-index for that particular group. The following statement will show the trend of cost of living of the Cachar tea-gardens employees in comparison to that in the Brahmaputra Valley in Assam.

11. *Economic Survey of Assam 1975-76*, by Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Assam, page 74.

Consumers' price index numbers together with group indices for the staff and artisans (combined) in the tea gardens.¹²

Base 1951-52-100

Year	All group		Food		Fuel and lighting etc.		Tobacco etc.		Clothing		Household requisites	
	B.V.	Cachar	B.V.	Cachar	B.V.	Cachar	B.V.	Cachar	B.V.	Cachar	B.V.	Cachar
1961	115	119	106	118	217	142	145	138	108	122	104	109
1963	109	130	111	105	178	153	159	162	103	124	113	125
1965	135	157	133	168	224	146	148	178	116	138	129	136
1967	175	222	196	254	229	174	165	214	125	156	137	164
1970	173	229	190	259	193	215	207	222	136	167	142	174
1971	175	238	191	267	206	242	185	215	148	185	147	172

Abbreviation—B.V.—Brahmaputra Valley.

It can be seen that cost of living for Cachar tea garden workers is always higher than their counterparts in the Brahmaputra Valley, and their all amenities being almost the same, higher cost of living naturally will speak of a lower standard of living.

Census of 1951 being the first census in the Sovereign Democratic Republic of India, for the first time in our history, had adopted the socio-economic status of the individual person censused in India as the main basis in household enumeration. So basically the entire population was divided into 'workers' and 'non-workers' groups in relation to their primary status in agriculture and industrial economy.

As per 1951, in Assam plains, Cachar had the largest percentage of non-earning dependents (67.6%) and the smallest percentage of earning dependents (10.5%). Percentage of dependents both earning and non-earning was also the highest in Cachar it being 79.3%. The total number of infants and young children for every 10,000 (ten thousand) persons in Cachar was, 1,601 while it was 1,676 in Assam. It shows

12. *Statistical Handbook, Assam, 1971*, by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Assam, page 70.

number of adult dependent in Cachar is much larger and this state indicates greater influx of adult immigrants into this district between 1941-51.

As stated by E.H. Pakynetein, Superintendent of Census operation in Assam in the District Census Handbook, Cachar, (1961) 'economically, Cachar district is not as good as the other districts of Brahmaputra valley.' In 1960-61, the district's per capita income was Rs.295/- for the year against Rs.311.1 p. for the state of Assam.

But the consumer's price index number for Cachar tea-garden artisans—staff group and also for labour, show a trend of growing consciousness for better standard of living as it will be apparent from the table below which show that they are gradually spending more on food than on tobacco etc.

Table—C
Consumer's price index (Base 1951—100)

Year	All groups		Food		Fuel		Clothing		Tobacco		Household requisites		Miscellaneous	
	Staff and artisan	Labour	Staff and artisan	Labour	Staff and artisan	Labour	Staff and artisan	Labour	Staff and artisan	Labour	Staff and artisan	Labour	Staff and artisan	Labour
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1955	95	82	94	78	98	87	88	85	113	110	102	102	97	93
1956	102	93	105	99	97	95	92	90	102	103	101	100	97	93
1957	108	99	112	98	103	103	97	96	108	108	107	98	100	99
1958	115	103	116	101	111	116	105	103	114	114	110	101	98	94
1959	118	109	124	108	124	125	106	102	107	107	103	106	100	88
1960	119	109	121	105	135	140	111	109	131	129	106	109	102	100
1961	119	107	118	100	142	145	122	119	138	136	109	111	105	104
1962	110	110	105	105	151	151	120	120	108	128	122	122	107	107
1963	130	123	133	120	153	156	124	119	162	155	125	129	104	104
1964	136	126	140	13	141	145	133	130	156	151	129	132	109	115
1965	157	142	168	140	146	151	138	137	178	171	136	144	116	121
1966	178	164	193	166	154	156	149	148	195	186	153	166	120	129
1967	222	209	254	221	174	181	156	154	214	203	164	182	128	145

Parity index between the prices received by the farmers from the sale of agricultural produce and the prices paid by them to meet their consumption needs and cost of production provides a broad indication of the economic condition of the agricultural population of a country. Assam started with parity index of 106.8 in the First Plan period, its average rise being 108.3 to 108.6 during the succeeding decade reaching parity index of 115 in 1961. The table below as available from the Economic Survey of India gives a picture of steady rise of parity-index in the agricultural sector of Assam.

Index number of parity between prices received and prices paid by the farmers.

(Base 1944—100)

Period	Prices received by the farmers	Prices paid by the farmers	Parity
1961	174	151	115
1962	163	154	106
1963	166	161	103
1964	188	173	108
1965	204	185	111
1966	237	203	116
1967	299	239	125
1968	344	247	139
1969	298	236	126
1970	333	253	132
1974	529	375	141
1976	392	368	107

The same statement is applicable to Cachar also with only difference that, in Cachar, number of non-working and working dependent being much greater, standard of living suffers very badly.

Employment: In terms of employment, the industrial sectors (including tea industry) other than household industry sector absorbs only about 17% of the total working population. Other industries like small agricultural implements producing units, shoes, bricks, saw mills, printing, auto-servicing and repairing units etc., also engage a small amount of the workers. The tea industry accounts for about 90% of the factory population of the district. Number of private factories which were 150 in 1974 increased to 159 in 1975 but employment in those went down from 5951 of 1974 to 5813 in 1975. This, however, shows an improvement

over 1961 when there were only 75 private firms with 9 registered private factories giving employment to 1807 persons only.

Analysis of the pattern of employment in the district shows that the bulk of the workers, that is 66%, are engaged in agriculture. The public sector has been the increasing provider of employment while the private sector has been a decreasing contributor. The table below shows the public and private sector employment indices in Cachar in the early part of the seventies.

Indices of Employment (Base year : 1969=100)

Employment index at the year end		Public	Private
31st March	1969	100	100
"	"	103.2	99.8
"	1970	113.9	96.6
"	1971	115.4	95.3
"	1972	119.9	95.3
"	1973	120.9	94.0
"	1974		

Source: Cachar District Annual Employment Market Report for the year ending March, 1974.

In the public sector, the bulk of the employment is in Government offices since practically no public sector enterprise has come up. The proposed Paper Mill in the public sector besides the tea industry is expected to be an important source of employment. Women employees constitute 32.2% of the total employees in the district (as on March 31st, 1974). As per Census of Assam Government Employees of 1973 on the 31st March of 1973 the number of Government employees in Class-I was 68, while it was 439, 5749 and 4116 in Class II, III and IV respectively. About 90% of them are in the private sector employment, especially tea-gardens. The bulk of the women labourers are uneducated and unskilled. Skills that are in scarcity are stenographers and typists, trained nurses, pharmacists, boiler attendants etc. Surplus skills are fresh Matriculates and Graduates.

Of the factories, the manufacturers of food products appear to be the biggest employer—number of employment in such industry being 5379 in 1976; while the manufacturers of woods and wood products such as furnitures and fixtures ranked next with 206 employees. Employment figures in repairing workshops in Cachar was found to be 140, while the

Workers engaged in government textile mills was 74 in 1976. This shows the extent to which the people of Cachar depend on agriculture. As per the data available from the Directorate of Employment and Craftsmanship Assam, in the quarter ended on 31st March 1977, there were about 82.98 thousand persons in regular employment roll in Cachar and it was an increase of 1.1% over the previous year's figure. This increase was due to recruitment of staff in Cachar Sugar mill and recruitment of labour during the peak season in Tea Plantation.

In public sector employment—the government offices, both Central and state, are the main employers as has already been mentioned above.

Employment of backward section: Picture of the district is not different from that of the entire country in this respect. Leaving aside the household workers, cultivators and workers engaged in teagardens and cottage industries, the number of people belonging to backward sections like women, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and listed backward classes in employment against wage or salary is very small. As per Census of Government Employees, 1973, number of women employees in offices of the district were 624 against a total of 10,683 on 31st March 1973. The following table will give an idea about employment position of other backward people of the district.

Distribution of Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes employees according to status and subdivisions of posting—as on 31st March, 1973, in Cachar.

Name of Sub-division	O. B. C.				Scheduled Caste.			
	Gazetted		Non-Gazetted		Gazetted		Non-Gazetted	
	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV
Silchar	6	26	880	1988	4	15	252	624
Karimganj	1	4	170	127	1	3	74	178
Hailakandi	2	5	117	66	3	1	64	72
Name of Sub-division	Scheduled Tribes (Hills)				Scheduled Tribes (Plains)			
	Gazetted		Non-Gazetted		Gazetted		Non-Gazetted	
	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV
Silchar	1	4	66	382	2	2	35	196
Karimganj	—	—	—	4	—	—	10	11
Hailakandi	—	—	1	1	1	—	—	—

Source: Census of Assam Government Employees, 1973 by Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Assam p.p.20-22.

It is an improvement over the sixties which will be apparent from the following figures:

Year	Caste	Total	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV
	Scheduled caste	1,145	Nil	31	436	678
1964	Scheduled Tribes (Hills)	502	Nil	5	162	335
	Scheduled Tribes (plains)	956	Nil	6	423	427
	Other Backward classes	2,674	Nil	22	737	1,915

Year	Caste	Total	
1966	Scheduled Caste	919	Total for all categories.
	Scheduled Tribes (Hills)	300	
	Scheduled Tribes (Plains)	749	
	Other Backward Classes	2343	

The Employment Exchanges in the district have not been making any real impact on the employment market. For one reason, only a small fraction of job-seekers register with them. For another, until recently and barring 1963 and 1964, the number of employers using the Exchanges and notifying vacancies has been small. Also, the placement record of the Exchanges has been poor and has been even deteriorating over the years as will be apparent from the table below. While the number of persons registered with exchanges increased fourfold between 1956 and 1974, the number of placement actually declined from 547 in 1956 to 438 in 1974. Further more, Employment Exchanges also cannot show much placement because the Central Government establishments like Railways, Post and Telegraph etc., make direct appointments through advertisement.

An idea of unemployment in the district can be had from the following table:

Employment through Employment Exchanges in Cachar district.

Period year ending 31st March.	Registration.	Placement	No. on live Register	Employers using exchanges	Vacancies notified
1956	3927	547	2005	135	831
1957	3107	376	1777	105	421
1958	4256	324	1812	79	369
1958	4055	148	2276	56	148
1960	3578	114	2074	125	181
1961	3987	241	2122	162	397
1962	5545	462	3249	189	814
1963	6274	973	3198	298	1539
1964	7044	1372	2841	273	1258
1968	6282	388	3714	153	571
1969	6021	199	3848	124	417
1970	6602	634	6894	108	727
1971	9710	273	8696	125	495
1972	9752	241	8923	N.A.	N.A.
1973	11043	243	10515	N.A.	481
1974	16155	438	14849	N.A.	556
1976	13360	426	24347	556	815

Source: District Statistical Abstract, Cachar district, 1963.

District Statistical Handbook, Cachar, 1971, and Cachar District Annual Employment Market Reports.

Judging by the figures in the table given above, it is clear that unemployment has been on the increase. The number on the live Register has increased from 2,005 in 1956 to 14849 in 1974—an increase of about 7 times. 1976 shows even more remarkable increase. There is an unmistakable trend of increasing unemployment, even if one makes allowance for the rapid increase in registration. The increase in registration was from 3927 in 1956 to 16155 in 1974—a fourfold increase as against the sevenfold rise in the number of persons on the Live Register. Employment Exchange figures, however, tell only a part of the story. Actual unemployment is often much more than what these figures reveal. In Cachar, as elsewhere, the percentage of labour force using Employment Exchanges has been small.

The National Council of Applied Economic Research in its Techno-Economic Survey Report of Assam 1962 observed that "Unemployment was rather conspicuous in Nowgong and Cachar district where 24% of the total persons of employable age 15-60 were without any job". Unemployment among the educated has been sharply increasing as the following table indicates:

Trend in Educated Unemployment.

Type of applicant	No. of Applications of Live Register.	
	As on 31-12-72	As on 31-12-73
Matriculate	2281	4696
Undergraduate	1078	2104
Graduate	1002	1358
Total	4381	8158

Source: Cachar District Annual Employment Market Report for Year ending 31st March 1974.

This table shows that even in a single year, unemployment among the educated nearly doubled.

Five-Year Plans: With setting up of the Planning Commission, the First Five Year Plan was formulated in our country to continue the tempo of development generated during the post-war years. It was a step taken by the national government towards fulfilment of the aspirations of the national struggle for freedom in the economic sphere. The main object of the First Five-Year Plan was to increase food production to meet the deficit then prevailing in the country. Main types of work undertaken for the purpose in the sphere of agriculture were (1) minor irrigation (2) power pump irrigation, (3) supply of manures and fertilisers, (4) supply of improved seeds and (5) land reclamation and development. Attention also was paid to horticulture expansion and improvement. This programme was executed through the Community Development Blocks where Extension Officers and trained Gram Savaks were placed. At the same time parallel programme for improving the breed of cattle, goat, poultry, duck and fish were taken under the Department of Animal Husbandry and Fishery. Out of 55 original pattern Development Projects taken throughout the country—two were in Assam and these were (1) Cachar Community Development Project

and (2) Darrang Community Development Project. Cachar Community Development Project thus covered a total area of 513 sq. miles with a population of 3,13,030 and covered the Lakhimpur-Sonai and Silchar-Hailakandi Tahsil.

By 1964-65, the entire State was covered with Community Development Blocks and with that there came to be fifteen Community Development Blocks in Cachar. Their names and other particulars are given below:

Sl.No	Name of the Block	Date of initiation	Number of villages	Population in 900	Area in Sq. miles
1.	Salchapra	October 1952	128	76	124.96
2.	Narsingpur	" "	115	77	156.00
3.	Lakhimpur	" "	144	70	146.00
4.	Ramkrishnanagar	October 1953	219	72	151.00
5.	Patharkandi	" "	220	59	129.00
6.	Hailakandi	" "	124	85	137.00
7.	Badarpur	April 1957	110	59	47.59
8.	Lala	October 1957	77	65	92.00
9.	Katigora	October 1960	194	92	157.71
10.	South Karimganj	April 1961	184	71	80.02
11.	Katlichera	October 1961	82	42	75.50
12.	Udarband	April 1961	107	48	114.91
13.	Rajbazar	October 1961	33	39	74.52
14.	North Karimganj	October 1961	115	52	58.50
15.	Sonai	December 1959	115	123	117.50

Having been started as Cachar Community Development Project in October 1952, the first 6 (Six) Blocks were constituted after delimitation and the Blocks were named after their Headquarters village or town. Later seven Blocks were converted to C.D. Blocks in their pre-extension stage by 1964.

Administrative set-up for extension and administration of development programmes allotted to the Blocks has been discussed in Chapter XIV. From the side of the Director of Panchayat and Community Development, Cachar has been placed under the supervision of the Deputy Director (Hills) with Headquarters at Diphu.

The table below will give an idea about the activities in Cachar Blocks in the sphere of agriculture:

Table

Physical achievement in individual

Sl. No.	Name of Block	Distribution of improved seeds					Distribution of fertiliser		
		Paddy qtl.	Others qtl.	Pulses qtl.	Oil seeds kgs.	Vegetables kgs.	Chemical qtl.	Others qtl.	Green manures kgs.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.	Lakhipur	2784	10	41	2003	131	932	86	—
2.	Narsingpur	293	2409	173	954	55	617	45	—
3.	Salchapra	144	18	—	289	400	724	100	—
4.	Ram Krishnapur	2137	12	4	210	—	513	—	—
5.	Patharkandi	155	2	6	453	3	1945	430	—
6.	Badarpur	938	6	3	91	170	529	42	—
7.	Hailakandi	131	2	—	—	—	3161	3	—
8.	Lala	532	10	20	411	82	1448	104	—
9.	Sonai	2327	—	—	—	145	3990	623	—
10.	Katigora	364	2	2	—	—	878	31	—
11.	Udarband	1022	12	532	450	—	816	77	—
12.	Rajabazar	516	12	—	—	47	5339	201	—
13.	North Karimganj	224	1	—	463	117	969	118	—
14.	South Karimganj	1944	736	5	266	192	2668	264	—
15.	Kaltichhara.	173	7	1	—	2	133	4	2942

Source—Directorate of Panchayat and C.D., Assam.

D

Blocks during 1971—72.

Distribution of improved implements					Employment-chart		Other items.				
Iron plough nos	Seed drill nos.	Threshers	Paddy weeders	Power pump	Dusters	Sprayers	Agricultural Demonstrations held	Chemical Pesticides distributed kgs.	Compost pits dug	Area under package practices and intensive cultivations Hect.	Land reclaimed Hect.
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
182	—	—	87	—	—	11	68	2286	2654	1148	52
10	—	—	12	—	—	—	58	1355	2775	384	8
—	2	—	21	—	5	6	20	14861	374	1164	10
9	—	—	67	—	—	—	16	1106	—	10071	108
16	—	—	110	—	1	4	20	1314	285	4328	17
1	—	—	99	—	—	14	18	1582	4616	2754	—
—	—	—	45	—	—	6	24	742	1938	3414	49
6	—	—	165	—	5	13	38	1384	1550	4141	2
8	—	7	87	—	7	7	8	1714	2331	3788	46
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	400	207	9207	—
—	—	—	—	—	1	2	25	1062	—	1783	—
62	—	—	34	—	2	5	26	897	1620	1981	44
—	—	—	2	—	—	2	13	695	586	168	19
17	—	—	31	—	—	—	18	4518	737	1462	19
30	—	—	13	—	3	10	21	—	—	1478	12

As the result of plan-scheme implementation in agriculture sector, more areas were brought under foodcrops in the district of Cachar between 1951-65 as will be evident from the following table; but there after a downward trend in land utilisation has been marked followed by slight improvement from 1970.

Table-E

Areas under food-grains (in thousand hectares)

Year	area	Year	area
1951-52	173	1964-65	20a
1955-56	183	1965-66	214
1960-61	199	1969-70	226
1961-62	204	1970-71	204
1962-63	204	1974-75	208
1963-64	211	1975-76	229

The above figures also show that agriculture has not improved much to meet the demand of the increasing population of the district.

Along with national stress on improved agriculture and progress in the field of cottage industries in order to bring about a rise in national income, the Community Development Blocks were staffed with area extension officers like Agriculture Extension Officer, Veterinary Extension Officer, Panchayat Extension Officer, Social Education Officer and Industries Extension Officer with a group of area workers like Gram-Sevaks and Gram-Sevikas. Demonstration units were selected in the villages to make the villagers interested in that developmental activities. But the over-all impact created by all these is very low and slow in comparison to the amount of expenditure incurred on these projects as will be evident from the Tables from D to I incorporated in the text.

Government Expenditure: The average Expenditure per Block (excluding the amount spent on special programmes) worked out to be Rs.1.98 lakhs during 1969-70 as compared to Rs.170 lakhs in 1968-69 and Rs. 2.08 lakhs in 1967-68. The table below shows the average government expenditure on development projects incurred through the Community Development Blocks of Assam.

Table-E

(Rupees in thousand)

2

Major Heads	1967-68	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71	1971-72
1. Block Headquarters	100.9	112.5	109.8	95.7	96.2
2. Animal Husbandry and Agriculture.	32.3	19.4	20.5	12.2	16.3
3. Irrigation	220.7	5.0	17.9	7.5	9.5
4. Reclamation	8.3	7.0	10.0	2.5	1.6
5. Health and Rural sanitation.	8.2	3.6	7.0	8.8	5.0
6. Education	6.5	2.2	5.2	2.2	2.8
7. Social Education	4.9	2.7	4.1	2.5	3.1
8. Communication	13.8	7.2	12.9	6.9	8.5
9. Rural Arts, crafts and Industries.	3.1	1.4	2.3	2.1	2.4
10. Housing	9.3	9.0	8.1	2.1	1.0
Total	408.5	170.0	197.8	142.5	146.4

The total expenditure incurred by the Government in the Community Development Programme in Assam since 1952-53 to 1969-70 stands at Rs. 3418.6 lakhs. The average people's contribution during 1969-70 stood at Rs. 1.6 thousand per Block.

Table-G

Head wise People's Contribution Cumulative Total since beginning of 1959-

60.

State-Assam (Thousand Rs.)

Name of Blocks	Agriculture & Animal husbandry	Irrigation	Reclamation	Health & Rural Sanitation	Education	Social Education	Communication	Village & small Industries	Housing	Other Works Programme	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Ramkrishna Nagar	43.6	0.1	-	-	1.2	-	3.7	-	-	-	48.6
2. Narsigpur	58.3	1.5	1.3	11.7	-	1.4	3.0	-	2.3	-	79.5
3. Lakhipur	44.5	4.2	-	1.2	2.6	1.9	4.8	2.0	2.6	69.9	133.7
4. Lala	50.1	14.1	7.6	0.2	3.3	25.8	6.3	1.8	2.5	12.6	124.3
5. Patherkandi	47.5	20.5	7.2	0.4	4.5	15.4	10.3	8.7	0.5	5.5	120.3
6. Hailakandi	47.1	28.4	4.5	0.9	8.4	4.0	11.7	18.1	1.6	-	124.7

CACHAR DISTRICT GAZETTEER

The impact of planning on the economic development of Cachar district has been poor as documented below.

The following tables bring out the declining trend of agricultural productivities in the district.

Table- (H)
Average yield (in Kg. per hectare)

	1955-56	1960-61	1965-66	1966-67	1967-68	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71	1971-72	1973-74
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Autumn rice	1,089	1,032	1,134	648	1,088	611	1,046	974	1,511	1,525
Winter rice	929	1,246	1,324	1,260	1,294	1,249	899	1,258	1,263	1,074
Spring rice	1,345	896	1,135	1,150	1,160	1,250	1,305	1,320	1,500	1,600
Rape and Mustard	448	511	326	326	393	283	281	376	344	736
Sugar-cane	28,020	37,385	28,127	27,250	27,647	30,799	32,529	19,132	28,928	35,403
Potato	4,273	2,701	966	3,520	2,901	3,128	6,644	1,881	4,131	1,730

Table-(I) Value of agricultural output of Cachar since 1950-51 in Lakhs				
	1950-51	1955-56	1960-61	1962-63
At current prices	1537.0	1477.7	1900.6	1820.1
At constant prices	1322.1	1560.3	1662.9	1348.4
	States	total	(Plains area)	
At current prices	15111.9	13313.7	18318.7	18555.2
At constant prices	12971.2	14748.6	15035.5	13810.2

The impact of Community Development on the economic development of Cachar district has also been not commendable as can be seen from the account below:

Physical achievements of Community Development in Cachar
(March 1973-74).

1. Distribution of improved seeds—	Quintals—30,105
2. Distribution of Chemical fertiliser—	20,101
3. Distribution of improved implements (Iron ploughs)	140

Under the special scheme of Applied Nutrition Programme (1973-74) the following physical achievements were scored in Cachar district.

School and Pre-school children fed	Expectant and Nursing Mothers fed	Milk supplied	Vegetables supplied	Egg supplied
(Nos)	(Nos).	(Litres)	(Kg.)	(Nos).
8,533	21		275	3,100

Cachar is one of the districts in the country where the Integrated Agricultural Development Project (I A D P) was introduced. This package programme had a considerable impact on the agricultural development of the district.

Yield Rate (Quintals per hectare) of rice in Cachar and other areas.

	Year	I A D P district(Cachar)	Assam Excluding Cachar
Autumn rice	1963-64	9.1	7.3
	1964-65	10.2	6.7
Winter rice	1963-64	11.7	10.8
	1964-65	13.5	9.3
Rice	1963-64	11.1	10.0
	1964-65	12.5	8.7
Total			

Source: Report of the Fact-Finding Survey on Cachar District.

These figures have, however, to be cautiously interpreted as the years chosen have been characterised by different fortunes in respect of floods as between Cachar and the rest of Assam. We have already noted that the long-term trend of agricultural productivity in Cachar was one of general decline.

Communication facilities in Cachar district was very meagre in pre-independence days. With the introduction of the Five-Year Plans, a good many roads came up in the district. Shillong was properly linked with Cachar through construction of the Jowai-Badarpur Road. The bridges over the Sonapur river and the Barak river were constructed. The position of roads in Cachar prior to the introduction of Five-Year Plans and afterwards is as follows:

Total mileage of motorable roads: Sub-division-wise.

Sub-division	Road constructed before First Plan.	Road constructed during First Plan	Road constructed during 2nd Plan.
1. Silchar	226.76	33.54	71.43
2. Karimganj	123.88	77.52	102.72
3. Hailakandi	81.73	20.62	31.08

On 31st March 1969, there were found to be 192.74 km. of black topped road, 358.04 km. of gravelled road, 16 km. waterbound macadam road, all-weather earthen road 8 km. and fair weathered earthen road 75 km. Marked improvement of road communications occurred in Cachar after 1970, and by 31-3-76 there found to be 424 kilometer black topped road, 993 kilometer gravelled road and 243 kilometer earthen road in Cachar. Out of these 248 km. were covered by state High Ways, 523 kms. were major district roads and 889 were other district roads.¹³

As power supply is an essential step towards industrial development and enhancement of standard of living of the people, during the First Five-Year Plan, 14 towns were covered under Rural Electrification Scheme in Assam and in Cachar, the town selected for the purpose was Hailakandi. By 1970, 6 (six) towns and 14 villages were electrified in the district. Consumption of electricity in the whole of Cachar district in 1973-74 was 2,33,80,844 Kwh units against 1,58,67,00 Kwh in the entire State of Assam in 1957-58. It is however observed that almost the entire

13. Statistical Abstract, 1978, by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Assam, pages 140-41.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

power is utilised for domestic consumption only and no major industry has grown in Cachar in private sector uptill now save a few small manufacturing units and except 6 government factories.

Trend in Solvency: In the field of agriculture, however, much attempt has been made to improve the productivity of the district as a whole through distribution on improved varieties of major crop seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, etc., through Intensive Agricultural Development programme and also by issue of loans, etc., to the agriculturists and small traders through Scheduled Banks. The tables appended below will indicate an intensive effort to raise the economic standard of the district during the 4th Five-Year Plans. The following statistics depicting the savings positions of the district of Cachar under the post office Savings Account Scheme in 1976-77 shows that there occurred a trend of economic solvency in the district in the recent years.

Statistics of small savings by type in Cachar 1976-77.¹⁴

(Deposit and withdrawal in 000 rupees)

	Nos. of accounts	Deposits	Withdrawals
Post Office Savings bank	9340	4468	41253
Post Office Cumulative Time Deposits	1198	980	657
Post Office Recurring Deposits	2556	1014	506
Post Office Time Deposits	659	4664	3099
National Savings Certificates	N.A.	5308	2424

14. Ibid, pages 530-31

CHAPTER-X

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

There is no detailed account of the administrative system prevailing in ancient Cachar. The only information we can collect from different inscriptions, coins and historical chronicles is that the system of monarchy was prevalent in Cachar at different times till the Kachari kings settled there with their capital at Khaspur.

Cachar under the Kachari king was almost a democracy than monarchical. This system was the outcome of compulsion imposed by the circumstances of Cachar. After shifting of Kachari capital to Khaspur, majority of Kachari people remained in North Cachar and Cachar plains was gradually dominated by the Sylhet immigrants who came there in search of new fertile land. As these people had experience of Mughal administration, they considered themselves to be superiors to the Kacharis and so though they accepted the political safeguard of the Kachari king, in administrative, revenue and judicial matters, they adopted a *khel* system of their own. The Kachari king had to convene an assembly on every state matter, and each *Pargana* consisting of a number of *khels* was to be represented in the Assembly. These representatives were appointed annually and they were to stay in the capital for the year of representation. This was known as *Olkata* and the represented *Parganas* were called *Uls*. All matters arising in the Council were decided on the opinion of these representatives finally consented to by the king.¹

The kingdom was divided into a number of sections. These divisions, however, did not confine to any geographical area. Every village and *Pargana* had a part of it belonging to each of these divisions. These divisions were practically the endowments made in the past on the royal personages, priests and deities. The following list will give an idea about these endowment division:

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Divisions	..	Endowed to
Khelma	..	king
Mahadevi	..	Queen
Dhumkari	..	Queen mother
Bhisingsa	..	God
Deka Jurai	..	Prince Regent
Sang Jurai	..	Princess
Patrayala	..	Royal officers
Patwari	..	Revenue officer
Brahmottar	..	Priest
Sibottar	..	Deity 'Siva' etc.

After the treaty of 1824 between the Kachari king Govinda Chandra and the British, Govinda Chandra divided Cachar plains into 7(seven) divisions and placed one *Uzir* each in these divisions. These were (1) Bikrampur, (2) Gorerbhitur, (3) Dudhpatil, (4) Joypur, (5) Kalain, (6) Sonai and (7) Hailakandi.

There were *Moktars* appointed by the king and they were the lowest court where the minor offences were tried. There were *Dharmadhyakyas* who were appointed from the Sylhetee Brahmin settlers, to give the verdict on social offences while the trials of social offences were conducted by *Deshmukhyas* the area representatives of *parganas*. Serious offences were tried by the king himself and he was aided by his *Patramantris* in the matter.²

In order to raise fund for the royal treasury, Govinda Chandra sold out royal titles against consideration of money. As the result of this policy, both Hindu and Muslims received these titles. These titles were (1) Choudhury, (2) Majumdar (3) Laskar and (4) Bhuyan in order of prestige. These titles were attached to each of the endowed divisions mentioned above. The title-holders enjoyed some special privileges, prestige and power assigned to their respective endowed divisions and title. They were considered as royal representatives in their respective spheres. Even after transfer of Cachar to the British, the new government maintained the system in existence for some time and utilised their services in courts and in revenue collection matters.³

2. U. Guha : *Kacharer Itibritta*, 1971, P. 132.

3. *Ibid*, pp. 131-132.

1. U. Guha: *Kacharer Itibritta*, 1971, pp.- 121-122.

On annexation of Cachar, i.e. the territory of Govinda Chandra; it was formed into a district with headquarters at Silchar and was placed in charge of a Superintendent who was subordinate to the Governor General's Agent in Assam. In 1836, the district was annexed to the Commissionership of Dacca and the title of the Officer-in-charge was subsequently changed from Superintendent to the Deputy-Commissioner, who functioned as a Magistrate, a Collector and a District Judge. The Deputy Commissioner also exercised political authority over the wild tribes on the frontier. The Judge of Sylhet acted as Sessions Judge for Cachar. In 1854, Tularam's territory in the North Cachar Hills was resumed and added to the North Cachar sub-division, the headquarters of which was at Asalu. This sub-division, since 1839, was a part of the Nowgong district. In 1866, on the formation of the Naga Hills district, North Cachar sub-division was closed and the territory was divided between the Naga Hills, Nowgong and Cachar. Thus Cachar gained a tract of the North Cachar Hills including Asalu. It was only in 1880 that North Cachar Hills were formed into a sub-division of Cachar district with headquarters at Khanajang (Gunjong) and placed in charge of an Assistant Superintendent of police. In 1895, its headquarters were shifted to Haflong. In 1884, Frontier Tract Regulation was extended to it. The Scheduled District Act was also in force there. With the exception of the Hailakandi sub-division, the limits of the Civil, Criminal and Revenue jurisdiction were not coincident. As a result of the creation of Pakistan, the Karimganj sub-division of Sylhet was added to Cachar district. In 1951, the North Cachar sub-division of the district was taken away to form United Mikir & North Cachar Hills district.

For general administrative purposes, the district was initially divided into two sub-divisions viz, Silchar (Sadar) sub-division and Hailakandi sub-division. Silchar, the district headquarters of Cachar and sub-divisional headquarters of the Silchar sub-division was under immediate charge of the Superintendent (after Deputy Commissioner). He was assisted by two subordinate Magistrates and one Sub-Deputy Collector. Hailakandi was entrusted to an Assistant Magistrate, who was almost invariably an European, and who was assisted by a Sub-Deputy Collector. The North Cachar sub-division as reconstituted and added to Cachar in 1880, increased the number of sub-divisions to three. As already mentioned, this sub-division was placed under the charge of an Assistant Superintendent of police. Separate officers were in charge of the police, forests, public works, Medical Department etc. The new judicial cadre was constituted in 1956 and the Civil suits were decided by the Munsiffs, Sub-Judge and the District Judge. It may be noted here that in

1967, the judiciary was completely separated from the executive and since then, all criminal as well as civil cases are being tried by the Munsiffs and the Judicial Magistrates.

The district has now three civil Sub-divisions in Silchar, Hailakandi and Karimganj. At present, besides the Deputy Commissioner, there are a number of other officers in the district. They are, one Additional Deputy Commissioner, one Sadar Sub-divisional Officer at Silchar, two Sub-divisional Officers one in each of the other two Sub divisions, one Assistant Commissioner, a number of Extra Assistant Commissioners and Executive Magistrates, one Treasury Officer, one Deputy Director of Supply, one Superintendent of Excise (State), one Superintendent of Sales-Tax, and one Sub-divisional Planning Officer besides some non-gazetted officers. The Deputy Commissioner and the Assistant Commissioner belong to the Indian Administrative Service, the latter being a new recruit placed on probation. The Additional Deputy Commissioner generally belongs to the Assam Civil Service (Senior Grade). The Extra Assistant Commissioners belong to the Assam Civil Service I. From time to time one or more officers of Assam Civil Service II designated as Executive Magistrate and Sub-Deputy Collectors are appointed for assistance to the Deputy Commissioner.

The Deputy Commissioner and his office: The Deputy Commissioner is the pivot of the district administration. He is the agent of the government in the district for all purposes whether he is empowered or not. The functions of the Deputy Commissioner in the district have been increasing day by day after the independence of the country. In regard to judicial functions, the Deputy Commissioner tried criminal cases and heard appeals from lower courts in the capacity of the District Magistrate till 1967 when the Judiciary was separated from the Executive. He exercises even now the magisterial powers primarily under the exigencies of his executive functions. As a Collector, the Deputy Commissioner is to supervise collection of land revenue, the of collection of Excise (State) duties and other special taxes and the stamp revenue. also. Under the present administrative setup, he is linked up with the departments of the district under the State Government. Thus the Deputy Commissioner is the Chairman of the Regional Transport Authority, ex-officio Chairman of various educational institutions etc. He exercises some control over the district police organisation although the Superintendent of Police is the district head of it. He is directly or indirectly concerned with the developmental activities carried out by other departments such as Agriculture, Veterinary, Industry, Medical, Public

Health, Panchayat, Public Works Departments etc. Thus the multifarious functions of the Deputy Commissioner form a sprawling net that fringes the area of operation of some departments and overshadows entirely that of a few others.

The office of the Deputy Commissioner is a miniature secretariat and the important branches of his office are Revenue, Nazarat, Bakijal, Loan and relief, Magistracy, Election, Land Acquisition & Requisition, Excise, Passport and Citizenship, Textile, Supply, Housing, Treasury and Accounts, Developments, Registration, Establishment and Confidential. The Excise (State), Supply, Election and Registration are separate branches of the state departments yet the district-offices of those departments are under the immediate control of the Deputy Commissioner. Almost all subjects whether public or Governmental are dealt with in various branches of the office from which the multiplicity of the functions of the Deputy Commissioner can well be imagined.

The Revenue branch is the biggest branch in the Deputy Commissioner's office and is headed by a Revenue Shrirastadar who is the seniormost member of the ministerial staff. One Principal Revenue Assistant, who is a member of the Assam Civil Service I, assists the Deputy Commissioner in the revenue matter. There are several branches or units namely, Land Ceiling, Bakijal and Land—sale, Touzi, Encroachment, Relief, Fisheries, Grazing Reserves, etc. under the Revenue branch. The duty of the Bakijal is to realise loans and advances and various other arrears of government dues. Touzi branch deals primarily with the collection of revenue. The encroachment branch deals with the matter relating to eviction of the encroachers from Government land, reserves etc. The relief branch makes necessary arrangement for relief to the sufferers in the event of any natural calamity in any part of the district. The Land Ceiling branch deals with the implementation of the Land Ceiling Act and the Land Acquisition branch with acquisition and requisition of land for public purposes. Other land reform measures have been implemented by the Revenue branch itself. The branch under Registrar Kanango, who is a member of the ministerial staff, maintains permanent records of land settlements.

Another important branch of Deputy Commissioner's office is the Nazarat which is under the Nazir who is assisted by one or more Assistant Nazirs. He is the cashier of the office of the Deputy Commissioner and serves all processes issued from various revenue courts of the Deputy Commissioner's office through a group of Jarikaraks or process servers.

The other functions of the Nazir are to maintain accounts of stores and receipts of the Circuit House and the Dak Bungalow under the Deputy Commissioner and also to help the revenue officers in execution of the orders of eviction passed by the Deputy Commissioner or some other revenue officers under him.

In the district of Cachar, the Collector of Cachar as the administrative head holds general charge of the Stamp Department. There is no other officer in the district specially in charge of Stamps. The work is done by the Treasury Officer, Silchar. He is responsible for the maintenance of the stock of stamps, their distribution to different vendors as well as their sale to public. In Sub-divisions, the sub-Treasury Officers are also executing the same function.

To suit public convenience, stamps are sold not only at the local depot and the branch depots, but also at various other centres by Vendors authorised by the Government.

The Magistracy branch under the Deputy Commissioner till the separation of the Judiciary from the Executive, handled all matters relating to criminal courts of the lowest level and these courts were generally known at the D.C.'s court under which a number of criminal courts under one Magistrate in each were functioning. All these Magistrates at that time belonged to the State or Central Civil Service. But since separation of the Judiciary from the Executive, this branch is dealing with issue of arms licenses, matters relating to law and order situation in the district, disposal of criminal cases of executive nature in the different courts of the Executive Magistrates, matters relating to the compensation under Workmen Compensation Act, etc. Till some years back the Treasury was entrusted to a Magistrate who had done all the works relating to the Treasury in addition to trying cases. Since some years past the Treasury Officer has been appointed from the Finance and Accounts Service of the State Government. He deals with all Government bills and vouchers and maintains the stock of various kinds of stamps.

Both the Deputy Commissioner and the Additional Deputy Commissioner exercise concurrent powers of the District Registrar under whom one sub-Registrar is appointed in the district for the work of registration of documents. But the Registration Department of Government regulates the transfer, posting, promotion etc. of the sub-Registrars.

Other Offices under the Deputy Commissioner :

Supply Branch: The supply department in the district is headed by the Deputy Director of Supply who is under the Director of Supply, Gauhati; but is under immediate control of the Deputy Commissioner. The ministerial staff of the department belongs to the amalgamated establishment of the Deputy Commissioner who exercises control over all Supply matters through its officers. Under the Defence of India Rules, the Deputy Commissioner is empowered to fix prices of essentials and control their distribution as and when necessary.

Election Branch: It is under one Election officer who belongs to the Election Department. It is, however, an important responsibility of the Deputy Commissioner to conduct elections to the State Assemblies and the Parliament. The Election Officer and other officers assist the Deputy Commissioner at such elections.

Housing Branch : The Housing Branch under the Deputy Commissioner deals with the applications for housing loans and other matters connected with the loans. The Housing Officer and the Housing Inspectors are under the Director of Housing Corporation.

Textile Branch: The Textile branch deals with the issue of permits to textile dealers and the enforcement of the government orders relating to sale and distribution of the textile goods in the district.

Development Branch: The Development office, headed by the Sub-divisional Planning Officer deals with the Community Development Blocks. He exercises all the powers in regard to the administration and execution of Government programmes for the development of the community.

The District Information and Public Relation Office: The office is headed by one District Information and Public Relations Officer. He is under the Director of Information and Public Relations Department, Gauhati and also under immediate control of the Deputy Commissioner. The District Information and Public Relations officer issues Press-release of Governmental activities and acts as a Press Liaison officer of the Government in the district. He collects information on developmental activities in each Block and other departments and focuses the public attention on them by issuing feature articles to the press. In his office there is a District Information Centre. This officer arranges public meetings, group discussions on subjects—Civil Defence, increased production of food, Family Planning etc. Necessary arrangements are made by this officer or his office for wide broadcasting of All India Radio news, important

announcements etc. Arrangements are also made for occasional cinema shows, exhibitions etc. which are the important functions of this department.

The Rural Broadcasting system in the villages and in the suburbs of the towns is also conducted by the District Information and Public Relations Officer. The community radio sets are installed in the village libraries and Sanghas to popularise the governmental and other nation developing activities in the rural areas. Generally 25% of the total price of the radio is borne by the honorary keepers of the radio and the rest is being paid by the government.

The Deputy Commissioner, besides exercising a thorough supervision on all units of the administration in the district, takes up himself the matters relating to maintenance of law and order, border problems and liaison with defence services, welfare schemes for Tribal and Backward classes, removal of untouchability, supervision on Local Self-Government, issue of international passport and Citizenship Registration, procurement etc.

Excise Branch (State): As regards administration of Laws relating to Opium, wine and Bhang or Ganja, there is one Excise branch which is under the Commissioner of Excise and immediate control of the Deputy Commissioner for its day to day administration in the district. This branch is headed by a Superintendent who is assisted by a Deputy Superintendent and a number of Excise Inspectors and peons. This branch deals with the implementation of the Prohibition Acts enforced by the government and the detection of cases for bringing the offenders in to the book.

The general administration of the district has expanded rapidly along with expansion of the functions of the Government. Many new officers and departments have been established commensurate with the wider governmental activities. The administrative setup, functions etc. of the other departments in the district such as Education, Agriculture, Veterinary, Co-operative, Excise (State), Police, Forest, Industries and the Judiciary have been discussed in detail in the relevant chapters and hence they are not dealt with here.

Sub-division : There are three Sub divisions in Cachar district. The sub-divisional administration is just like that of the district administration. The Sub-divisional Officers is in charge of the over-all administration in his Sub-division and responsible to the Deputy Commi-

ssioner for all executive works carried in his Sub-division. As such approval of the District Authority is required to be obtained on all policy matters and major issues of the Sub-division. As the Sub-divisional officer is at the helm of the Sub-divisional administration, he presides over Boards or Committees constituted for the purpose of execution of development works under the plans in the Sub-division. He is assisted in his executive works by the Extra Assistant Commissioners, the Sub Deputy Collectors and other officers and staff.

Detailed information regarding administration of the Civil and Criminal Justice is given in Chapter XII.

APPENDIX

A list of officers at the District and Sub-divisional head quarters in the district of Cachar.

1. Project Administrator, I.D.A., Silchar.
2. District Agricultural Officer, Silchar.
3. Assistant Labour Commissioner, Silchar.
4. Divisional Forest Officer, Silchar.
5. Assistant Employment Officer, Silchar.
6. Fishery Superintendent, Silchar.
7. Superintendent, Weaving, Silchar.
8. District Transport Officer, Silchar.
9. Town & Country Planner, Silchar.
10. Executive Engineer, P.W.D. (R & B), Silchar, Cachar Division.
11. Executive Engineer, P.W.D. (R & B), Karimganj Division, Karimganj.
12. Executive Engineer, P.W.D. (R & B) Hailakandi Division, Hailakandi.
13. Executive Engineer, Mechanical Division, Silchar.
14. Executive Engineer, Medical College Construction Division, Silchar.
15. Superintending Engineer, Southern Assam Circle, Silchar.
16. Superintending Engineer, Silchar.
17. Superintendent of Police, Silchar.
18. Superintendent of Excise (state)
19. Superintendent, Sericulture, Silchar.
20. District Information and Public Relation Officer, Silchar.

21. Relief & Rehabilitation Officer, Silchar.
22. District Registrar, Silchar.
23. Settlement Officer, Silchar.
24. Deputy Director of Supply, Silchar.
25. District & Session Judge, Silchar.
26. Deputy Registrar, Co-operative Societies, Silchar.
27. Labour Officer, Silchar.
28. Assistant Registrar, Co-operative Societies, Hailakandi.
29. Assistant Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Silchar.
30. Election Officer, Silchar.
31. Superintendent of Taxes, Silchar.
32. Assistant Director of Cottage Industries, Silchar.
33. Assistant Examiner, Local Accounts, Silchar.
34. Inspector of Weights and Measures, Silchar.
35. Principal, Polytechnic, Silchar.
36. Inspector of Factories, Silchar.
37. Treasury Officer, Silchar.
38. Superintendent of District Jail, Silchar.
39. Employment Officer, Silchar.
40. Deputy Director, Employment, Silchar.
41. Deputy Inspector of Schools, Silchar.
42. Executive Engineer, Flood Control & Irrigation, Silchar.
43. Election Officer, Hailakandi.
44. Executive Engineer, Flood Control & Irrigation Division, Hailakandi.
45. Superintendent of Jail, Hailakandi.
46. Superintending Engineer, Flood Control & Irrigation Circle, Silchar.
47. Manager, Sales Emporium, Silchar.
48. District Social Education Officer, Silchar.
49. Deputy Director, Animal Husbandry & Veterinary, Silchar.
50. District Social Welfare and Probation Officer, Silchar.
51. Inspector of Schools, Silchar.

Most of the district-level officers have got their subordinate officers in Karimganj and Hailakandi Sub-division to help them in the discharge of the day to day official duties. Similarly, the Divisional and Zonal Officers also have their subordinates. In some departments officers of equal rank and status have been posted both in Karimganj and Hailakandi Sub-divisions for proper and smooth administration.

Over and above these officers, there are many officers belonging to semi-Government, Quasi-Government and autonomous Bodies and institutions functioning in the district.

The Central Government have some officers in the district. A list of these offices is given below:

1. The Officer in-charge of Civil Aerodrome, Kumbhirgram.
2. Superintendent of Post Office, Silchar.
3. Assistant Collector, Central Excise, Silchar.
4. Assistant Engineer (Civil), All India Radio, Silchar.
5. Garrison Engineer, Arunachal, Cachar.
6. Assistant Engineer, Barak Investigation Division, C.W. & P.C., Silchar.
7. Recruiting Officer, Silchar.
8. Officer i/c Aeromautical Communication Station, Kumbhirgram.
9. Superintendent of R.M.S. "S" Division, Silchar.
10. Telegraph Traffic Supervision, i/c D.T.O. Silchar.

CHAPTER-XI

REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

(a) Land Revenue Administration and Management:

The history of land revenue assessment and management of Cachar is the history connected with the Kachari rule of the district. It came under the British rule in 1830 as is narrated by W.W.Hunter in his Imperial Gazetteer of India in the following words.

"The plains portion of Cachar lapsed to us (the British) in 1830 on the death of the last native Raja, Govinda Chandra without heirs. British authority has gradually extended itself over the hill tracts at various times, the last annexation, that of Tularam Senapati's Country, being effected in 1854."¹ The present district of Cachar is composed of the plains portion of old Cachar excluding the hill tracts of North Cachar Hills and the four thanas, namely, Karimganj, Ratabari, Badarpur and Patharkandi of British Sylhet which were left with India after partition of India in 1947. These thanas now form a separate sub-division of Cachar district under its original name Karimganj sub-division. The district of Cachar (excluding Karimganj Sub-division) was formally annexed to the British territory by proclamation on the 14th day of August, 1832 and was then placed under the administration of a Superintendent, subordinate to the Governor-General's Agent in Assam. Captain Fisher of the Survey Department was appointed the first Superintendent of the district.

In 1836, the district was annexed to the Commissionership of Dacca and the title of the officer-in charge was subsequently changed from Superintendent to Deputy Commissioner who exercised the powers of a Magistrate, Collector, and of a Civil Judge, besides exercising political authority over the tribes on the frontier.² By Act V of 1835, Cachar was, like the five upper districts of the Brahmaputra Valley, placed under the control of the Board of Revenue, Lower Bengal, in revenue matters. In 1833, Mr. Mill, a Judge of the Sadar Court at Calcutta, recommended in his report on Cachar that the district might, with

1.W.W.Hunter : *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. I p.345.

2.W.W.Hunter : *A Statistical Account of Assam*, pp.362-63

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much benefit to the people, be subject to the same laws as those by which the five upper districts, of the Brahmaputra Valley was governed. A similar report was made in 1859 by Mr. Allen of the Board of Revenue, who pointed out that although Cachar was what was then called a "non-regulation" district, the District Officer administered the district in spirit of the enactments in force in Bengal; and this system of administration continued in force until the passing of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation in 1886.³

(b) System of Land Revenue Administration under the Kachari Rule:

During the time of the native rulers of Cachar all rights in the soil vested in the Raja alone. Although lands were alienated by the occupants or inherited by their heirs, these rights were exercised simply on sufficiency and were at any time liable to be overridden by the superior rights of the sovereign. A curious feature in the early revenue conditions of this district was the way in which numbers of Bengali settlers combined to hold land from the Raja.⁴

It may be noted here that certain associations which were called Khels were formed purely on commercial principle for the purpose of taking up the lands and never extended to community of profits or of capital. This practice of taking up and holding land jointly on what is locally known as Mirasdari tenure was common in the district until the settlement of 1900.

At first the rents were extremely low, the earliest mentioned rates being a he goat, a pair of fowls, a duck and two coconuts from each holding, irrespective of its size. Subsequently the rent was fixed at 12 annas (0.75 paise) for each hal (about 4 d. i.e., pennies per acre). Kartik Chandra raised the rate for the hal to Rs.3/- and it is said that Govinda Chandra, the last of the Cachar Rajas, obtained from some lands as much as Rs.6/- per hal or about 2 s. 6 d. per acre. The lands, which of course were originally under jungle, were settled not with individuals, but with corporations called Rajas. Each Raj, again was subdivided into minor corporations or Khels which formed the real units of the revenue system. Each individual in the Khel was held jointly and severally liable for the revenue assessed on the Khel and similarly each Khel was responsible for the payments of its Raj. The Khel elected its own mouthpiece, known as a Mukhtar. Certain portions of the area

3. *The Assam Land Revenue Manual, Vol.-I*, Eight Edition, Introduction, p.cxxix.

4. Ibid.

allotted to each khel was appropriated rent to the persons of standing; and of the lands remaining, every man received as much as he could cultivate. The system of rent free grants was discontinued by Govinda Chandra⁵. Revenue on land was so assessed that every seed-land and land under cultivation had to pay revenue. After the Treaty of 1825 A.D.; Govinda Chandra was to pay annual revenue of Cachar to the British at the following rates, which were also the revenue rates already fixed by Govinda Chandra.⁶

1. Cleared cultivable land—Rs.5/2/- per kuble or 5 acres of land.

2. Char or Seed land—Rs.3/3/- per kuble.

3. Homesteads and tanks were rent free.

However, in the early days of the British administration the chief titles within the khel were sold by the Government at different rates.

"The head-man of the raj and khel were primarily responsible for the revenue, which was collected in the following fashion: A Cachari peon was sent to the house of the head-man with a demand for payment. The head man then sounded a drum, or fired a gun, if the demand was urgent. When the people came together, the revenue was forthwith collected. Defaulters, after being allowed a short respite were arrested and brought before the Raja. If it appeared that they had no means, the sharers in the Taluk, or separate estate were invited to enter upon the defaulter's land on condition of satisfying the arrears. If they declined, the holding was given to the Khel. If the Khel failed to pay, the land lapsed to the Raj, which could not refuse. In no case were outsiders admitted."⁷

It has been noted earlier that on certain occasions, particularly in case of default, the defaulter's holding was given to the khel. The term khel (agricultural community) was also applied to certain localities, which either had to supply the Raja with certain definite commodities such as betel-nuts or firewood or the rents which were assigned to certain functionaries or institutions of the state. Thus Paikan Khel was the name of an estate the rent of which was devoted to the expenses of worshipping the goddess Rana Chandi, rents of Vishnughar Khel was appropriated to Lakshmi Narayan; and that of Bhisingsa Khel to Shyam

5. W.W.Hunter : *A Statistical Account of Assam, Vol.II*, p.413.

6. D.Dutta: *Cachar District Records*, 1969, p.208.

7. W.W.Hunter : *A Statistical Account of Assam, Vol II*, p.415.

or Kali. Later on, many of this last-mentioned class of khels were called mauzas.

There was another kind of land called Khatnee land which were under the occupation of the Mirajders. The Mirajders paid rent for these lands directly to the Rani and he held the right of proprietorship over these.⁸
Land Settlement during the British :

When Cachar was annexed in 1830, Government stepped into the position of the Raja as absolute owner of the soil. The old rate of assessment were then continued until 1838-39, when a five year's settlement was made with the actual cultivators pending a scientific survey of the district. Captain Fisher continued the native revenue system which he found in force. In 1830, revenue demand including the miscellaneous in Cachar was Rs.26,042/- which was raised to Rs.44,569/- in 1835 A.D.⁹. The Choudhuris and Majumdars collected revenue in their mauzas and got 2/ or 3/ annas as commission on account of each mahal. But in 1837 38 Mukhtars were appointed at 6% commission on collected revenue. In 1842-43 Tahsilidars were appointed.¹⁰

The district was professionally surveyed in 1842-43 by Lieutenant Thuillier, and a periodic settlement for 15 years commencing from the year 1843-44 was made. At this settlement, a uniform rate of Rs.3/- per hal or Kubla (about 5 acres) was adopted for all reclaimed land including homestead except in some remote tracts, where the rate was fixed at Rs.2/- per hal. The total settled area at this time was 20,325 hals or 97,560 acres with a revenue of Rs.58,517. Waste lands were leased revenue free for the first five years followed by an assessment of Rs.1.80 (Rs.1.50) per hal for the next five years and Rs.3/- per hal for the rest of settlement. The revenue demand rose to Rs.65,759/- in 1852. In 1852, there were a very few ryots in Cachar; most of the tenure holders were Mirajders holding land under Kubla and paying revenue direct to the government. There were 113 tribal villages with 2,324 houses and only house tax of Re.1- per house was assessed on them.¹¹

A twenty-year settlement was made in 1859 at which all cultivated lands were divided into two classes, the first consisting of level lands easily irrigable and the second of undulating land the irrigation of which was a matter of greater difficulty. Each of these two classes was again divided into three sub-classes according to advantage of situation and

other similar circumstances, and the assessment was fixed at rates varying from Rs.2/- to Rs.3.8.0 (Rs.3.50) per hal for first class lands and from Re.1-8-0 (Rs.1.50) to Rs.3/- for second class lands. This settlement was based on the survey of 1841-42, which was brought up-to-date by local Amins. The area assessed was 1,32,077 acres and the revenue Rs.92,712. Waste lands producing the thatches and reeds, was settled at the full rates charged for cultivated land in the neighbourhood, but the wastes that required much clearing was leased at progressive rates commencing with a revenue free term of three years and closing with a term in which the lands were assessed at full rates.¹²

In 1875-76, there were 3 classes of rice growing estates. These were (1) *awal*—for which rate of revenue was fixed at Re.1/- per acre; (2) *deem*—rate of revenue for which was 12/ annas (.75 p) per acre and (3) *Stem*—the 3rd and last class of land in gradation, rate of revenue for this kind of land being 10/- (.62 p) per acre. There were two revenue-free tenures. These were (1) *Baksha* and (2) *Lakhiraj*.¹³

On the expiry of 1859-79 settlement a fresh survey was made and a settlement was affected for fifteen years upto 31st March, 1893. This survey was known in the district as the *Khasra* survey. There had been two surveys in the course of the previous settlement but neither was made use for assessment purposes. A *thakbust* survey was affected in 1861 and was followed by the revenue survey in 1864-65. It showed the boundaries of grants and mauzas and also of cultivation and waste but not individual holdings. For the purpose of this settlement the three fiscal divisions known as the Katigora tahsil, the Hailakandi tahsil and the Sadar tahsil were dealt with separately.

In each tahsil, the soil was divided into four classes viz., (i) homestead, (ii) cultivation, (iii) tea, and (iv) waste and each tahsil was divided into four homogenous net profit tracts called circles, bearing differential rates of assessment for each class of land. The rates assessed on each class of land (homestead, cultivation, etc.) in one tahsil differed with those assessed on the same class of land in the corresponding circles (first second, third or fourth) of another tahsil. The constitution of the circles was based on the consideration of the following circumstances:—

- (i) The fertility and productivity of the soil,
- (ii) Communication facility,
- (iii) The liability to inundation;

8. D.Dutta; *Cachar District Records*, 1969, p.100.

9. Ibid, p.43.

10 Ibid, p.212.

11. Ibid, p.209-11.

12. *Assam Land Revenue Regulation*, Introduction, page cxxx.

13. W.W.Hunter; *Statistical Accounts of Assam*, Cachar; p. 411-16

(iv) The exposure to the ravages of wild animals;

(v) The nearness to dense forest.

The rates fixed at this settlement varied from Rs.4-12-0 (Rs.4.75) to Rs.8-4-0 (Rs.8.25) per hal for cultivable and homestead land, from Rs.3-12-0 (Rs.3.75) to Rs.7-2-0 (Rs.7.12) for tea with an uniform rate throughout the district and Re.1 per hal for waste.

At this settlement after Khasra survey, the total area settled was found to be 2,53,728 acres of which 1,49,499 acres were cultivated and 1,04,279 acres were waste. Reported unsettled area was 6,791 acres. The revenue was assessed on 2,21,589 acres. But by 1884, an additional area of 3,71,202 acres was held under the Jangalbari lease.

The next settlement which was carried out by Raja Bahadur Sarat Chandra Banerjee, was preceded by a professional survey of the whole district by a Survey of India party. Complete re-survey was necessitated by the fact that the previous survey had excluded tea garden grants and all Jangalbari leases. All villages were broken up into blocks of convenient size and all boundaries were permanently demarcated with stones. After survey, the settlement party took up record writing and assessment. The method of assessment adopted represents the first effort made in Assam to discriminate between different classes of the same kind of land within the village.

The land was primarily divided into homestead, rice land, other crop land and waste. Rice land was divided into four classes and the class of the majority of the rice land determined the class of the village. All tea land was assessed at 11 annas (Re.0.69p.) a bigha. The rates finally adopted were as follows :

	Annas per bigha			
	1st Class	2nd Class	3rd Class	4th Class
	1	2	3	4
Homestead	13	11	8	6
Rice	11	9	7	5
Other Cultivation	8	7	5	4
Waste	2	2	1	1

Note: One anna = 6 paise.
four annas = 25 paise.

There was a special rice land rate of four annas a bigha in certain flooded villages. For waste land there was provision that it should not pay less than it was paying before, a proviso which was important

in the case of Jangalbari estates, where an all-round rate of 8 or 4 annas (50 P. or 25 p) bigha was in force. The old corporations of land holders (Rajes or Khels) which had held land in large blocks from the time of Kachari Kings, were broken up in accordance with the facts of actual possession so that the number of estates was increased from 11,292 to 61,284. The total area re-settled was 375,464 acres and the revenue was increased from 3,05,624 to Rs.44,51,563 or by 46 per cent.

The actual increase in rates was about 30 per cent, the balance of enhancement was due to the re-classification of formerly waste land as cultivated. The settlement was for 15 years from 1st April, 1900.

The Jangalbari Leases 1864, 1875 and 1882:

Waste lands settlements known as Jangalbari leases were made on progressive rate in Cachar, as it was done in the rest of Assam, since the British acquired possession of the district; though rates and principles were a little different. In 1864 however, the Government of Bengal issued fresh orders and revised the principles. These orders are generally known as the Jangalbari Waste Land Reclamation Leases of 1864. Under these leases lands were settled for special as well as ordinary cultivation. According to the new principles, (1) the leases are to be issued for thirty years; (2) revenue was exempted for the first 3 years, (3) for the next 5 years revenue was to be assessed at 3 annas (19 paise) per acre which was doubled and redoubled every five years till it became Rs.1½ (Rs.1.50) per year. This rate stood for the following term of years of the lease.

The lease holder had right of resettlement at the expiry of the lease on acceptance of the settlement offered to him who is never to pay more than 50 per cent enhanced rate on re-assessment. No permanent settlement was promised. The lessee was to clear the three fourth portion of the original settled area to be eligible for fresh offer of lease of the entire estate.

These leases were subsequently cancelled by the Bengal Government in 1873 and revised in 1876 as per the suggestion of the Chief Commissioner. The new rule reduced the term of lease to 20 years, after which the lands covered by the leases were to be settled at the current district rates.

Terms of the new lease were as follows:- (1) The first two years, there was to be no revenue (2) for the next four years revenue was to

14. *Assam Land Revenue Manual*, Eighth Edition, 1968, Introduction, page. cxxxii-cxxxiii.

be assessed at 3 annas (.19 paise) per acre, (3) for the subsequent four years revenue was to be realised at 6 annas (37 paise) and (4) revenue for the next period would be decided by the Government, which was generally 12 annas (.75 p.) per acre.

In 1876, the new Thirty Years Waste Land Lease Rules, which were originally intended for the Brahmaputra Valley districts only were issued as different sets of rules for different parts of the same state caused great inconveniences. The Rules of 1875 were however, applied only to the special cultivation and it was finally decided in 1882 that leases for ordinary cultivation should be in a form somewhat different from that laid down in the Rules of 1876, the conditions of the lease being also less favourable to the lessee. The main conditions of this lease were as follows:

- (i) The term of the lease was 20 years.
- (ii) for two years the land was to be revenue free.
- (iii) for the next four years the assessment was to be 3 annas per acre,
- (iv) for the next four years the assessment was to be 6 annas per acre,
- (v) for the next ten years the assessment was to be 12 annas per acre, and
- (vi) for the rest of the term the land was to be assessed at the full settlement rates prevailing in the neighbourhood for similar land.
- (vii) The lease conferred on the lessee the rights and liabilities of a Mirasdar in the district of Cachar, as defined by law or customs.¹⁵

These rules were also equally applied to lands taken up for special and ordinary cultivation. As this rules conferred title on the lease holder, the tea planters infinitely preferred them to the Waste Land Rules of 1876 which did not assure any permanent settlement. As the result only 15 leases covering 4,904 acres were in existence in Cachar under the 30 years Lease Rules.

The Jangalbari leases began to fall in before the general settlement was effected in 1900. From 1900 onward, the lands were re-settled with the rest of the district. The only distinction made was that the waste lands in expired Janagalbari mahals continued to pay the all round waste rate previously fixed under Jangalbari or Waste land Reclamation Leases of 1864.

15. *Assam Land and Revenue Regulation*, Eighth Edition, 1968, Introduction, p.cxxxv.

After 1900, Jangalbari mahals continued to fall in until 1912, and at each fall it was re-settled at the rate approved in 1900 for the village in which it lay. All settlements were made to expire in the year 1915 along with the other periodically settled lands of the district.

Settlement of 1913-18 : The next settlement was made by W.L.Scott, I.C.S. In this settlement operation the methods of the Assam Settlements of 1902-12 were followed. The maps of the cadastral survey were brought up-to-date. The records were also revised with the help of Kanungos and Patowaries who were appointed after 1900. In this settlement, lands were classified into six classes viz.,

- (1) Bari or good homestead.
- (2) Bhit or poor homestead (also new homestead)
- (3) Sailura or land growing transplanted winter rice.
- (4) Asraura or land growing broadcast winter rice.
- (5) Chara or land growing miscellaneous crops other than rice.
- (6) Patit or waste.

There were six assessment groups and a special rate report was submitted on land held under periodic lease for special cultivation. The area re-assessed was 1,010,854 bighas held for ordinary cultivation and 366,185 bighas held for special cultivation. The revenue on land held for ordinary cultivation was enhanced from Rs. 4,37,238 to Rs. 5,84,488 and the incidence per settled bigha from Rs. 6-7 annas to Rs. 8-10 annas (from Rs. 6.45 p. to Rs. 8.65 p.) or by 34.11 per cent. Tea garden lands were assessed on a dual system. A fixed rate of 15 annas (.94 p.) per bigha was taken for land actually growing tea and a rate of 3 annas (.19 p.) per bigha for waste land in tea gardens. Land which was classed otherwise than as "under tea or waste" was assessed like land under ordinary cultivation in the villages around. The result of the assessment of tea garden lands was an enhancement in revenue from Rs. 1,19,612 to Rs. 1,51,149 and in the average incidence per bigha from 5-8 annas (Rs. 5.50) to Rs. 6-12 annas (Rs. 6.75) or by 22.91 per cent. Taking ordinary cultivation and tea gardens together, the enhancement of revenue was from Rs. 5,33,171 to Rs. 6,99,964 and of average bigha rate from Rs. 6-3 to Rs. 8-3½ annas (Rs. 6.20 to Rs. 8.17) or by 31.77 per cent. The settlement was made for 20 years from 1st April, 1918, land taken up subsequently to the settlement was to be liable to re-classification and re-assessment in the 11th year of the period. The revision was carried out in 1928-29 and resulted in a small decrease in demand.

16. *The Final Report on the Re-settlement of Cachar, 1913-18*, by Mr. W. L. Scott, I.C.S. (1918).

The revenue-free estates in Cachar are commonly known as 'baksha'. They were originally granted by the Cachar kings to their priests or servants. As for want of record it could not be considered as permanently revenue free estates; when their validity was enquired it was decided to acknowledge their status as Lakhiraj estate so long as they remained in the family of the original holder. As a consequence of the working of this rule, the number and area of such estates, which was 142 estates with 2,381 areas of land in 1895-96, came down to 98 estates with 1,039 acres in 1915-16. In 1928-29, it further came down to 77 estates covering 711 acres, while in 1954-55 there were only 49 estates with an area of 171.24 acres.

As the next settlement operation could not be held due to the 2nd World War, the term of Mr. Scott's settlement was extended upto 31st March 1948, and the settlement of the district excluding Karimganj Sub-division and Silchar town was taken up in 1949. The classes of estates in this settlement were practically the same as in the previous one, except the 39 years lease rules grants added to in the last operation. Complete survey was done in respect of the district during this settlement operation with the help of the Assam Traverse Party and the entire operation was conducted in accordance with the Revised Assam Re-settlement Manual of 1948. Two more classes were added to the land classification adopted by Mr. Scott. The new classes were beel and trade-site. Beel class was assessed at 10 per cent of the annual value of the beel (fisheries on Patta lands) and trade sites were assessed under Executive Instruction 138 of the Assam Re-settlement Manual. The same six assessment groups of the previous settlement was retained. Excluding town land, the total area re-assessed was 10,69,572 bighas held for ordinary cultivation and 3,60,750 bighas held for special cultivation. The revenue on lands held for ordinary cultivation was enhanced from Rs. 5,66,089 to Rs. 8,43,773 and the incidence per settled bigha was raised from Rs. 8.05 to Rs. 12.62, i.e., by 48.47 per cent. The revenue on lands held for special cultivation was enhanced from Rs. 1,49,180/- to Rs. 2,49,007/- and the incidence per settled bigha from Rs. 6.57 to Rs. 11.04, i.e., by 68.04 per cent. The tea garden lands were assessed as in the previous settlement in a dual system. Lands classed as Tea were assessed at a flat rate of Rs. 1.25 per bigha for all lands under tea and the rest were assessed like land under ordinary cultivation in the villages around.

As the Assam Assessment of Revenue Free Waste Land Grants Act 1948, made all waste land grants under all previous Waste Land Rules liable to assessment with effect from 1st April 1948, the assessment of these grants was also carried out along with the settlement operation

of the district by a separate Assessment Officer under the Act. A special staff of Patowaris and Kanungos under a senior sub-Deputy Collector was engaged for the purpose. The maps of the grant prepared in Cadastral survey were thus brought up-to-date and a separate rate report on the assessment of these grant lands was prepared.

The revenue demand for the Revenue Free Waste Land on new assessment came to Rs. 3,21,845/- for an area of 4,42,741 bighas or 1,46,36,066 acres showing an enhancement of 34.56 per cent. The period of assessment was made conterminous. The 99 years lease grants, however, were reassessed on expiry of their existing leases. Application of deferred enhancement rules in this settlement operation resulted in surrender of Rs. 1,44,816/- on account of the revenue free waste land grants and an amount of Rs. 11,98,661 in all respect of other Khiraj estates settled for ordinary and special cultivation.

Karimganja Sub-division : Some reference must now be made to the land which has fallen within the jurisdiction of Karimganj Sub-division now forming a part of Cachar district. On partition of India, the district of Sylhet, a portion of the former province of Assam, was merged with former East Pakistan, leaving with India only four Police Stations of erstwhile Karimganj Sub-division, which now forms a separate Sub-division in the original name of Karimganj Sub-division. The whole history of the land revenue system in Karimganj Sub-division is nothing but a part of the history of the land revenue system of Sylhet district.

The district of Sylhet, of which Karimganj Sub-division was a part, had been in the province of Bengal upto 1875 and therefore, unlike in Cachar proper, with Sylhet, Permanent Settlement Rules of Bengal prevailed in Karimganj Sub-division, so far as Land Revenue and early settlement is concerned. Karimganj Sub-division practically came into its existence as a sequel to the decennial settlement of Bengal. Estates which existed during the decennial settlement were made permanent in 1793. The revenue of the estate so created was made permanent and the persons owing the estates had permanent, heritable and transferable right subject to the payment of land revenue only. The administration of land revenue matters of permanently settled areas included realisation of land revenue, partition of union of estates, registration, sale, and such other matters as were expressly provided under the relevant Acts and Regulations. The settlement holders of temporarily settled areas were of different classes, the highest class being the land-holder as defined in the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation. Land holder had got permanent, heritable, and transferable rights on the land settled with him subject to

payment of revenue to be assessed from time to time. But it was found later on that after the creation of the permanent estates, a large area of land remained unsettled with the prepared statement of land, which was not included in the decennial settlement, and *Iiams* were issued for the statement so prepared.

In 1802, the Board of Revenue ordered the Collector to direct the *Patwaris* to furnish statement of land not included in any estates settled at the decennial settlement. On receipt of such accounts from the *Patwaris*, *Iiams* or advertisements were issued inviting claimants or objectors to come forward. The *Iiam* lands were not covered by permanent settlement. The Board then authorised the Collector to grant *Halabadi pattas* for land not brought under the decennial settlement, including not only the *Iiam* lands reported by the *Patwaris*, but also other lands found outside the areas of the settled estates of the decennial settlement, which were called *taufir* or excess land. The settlements so made were subsequently confirmed and further proceedings in the same direction were sanctioned.¹⁷ These *Halabadi pattas* were granted from 1807, and covered all lands then cultivated in excess of *Willes'* settlement. It was decided in 1869 that these *Halabadi* lands should be treated as permanently settled.

Iiam lands were first brought under regular settlement in 1836 and all cultivated lands were settled with the actual occupants. The waste for the most part was left unsettled. The term of periodic settlement was ten years.

In 1864, the principles on which these lands should be settled in future were discussed through a long correspondence and in 1869, the Bengal Government laid down certain principles and declared the proprietary right in *Iiam* lands to belong to Government, and the Government was at liberty to dispose of them as it thought proper. At the same time the existing settlement-holders were not to be ousted. In 1870, the Board of Revenue directed that settlement might be commenced at once on the principles laid down by the Bengal Government. Nothing, however, was done until the end of 1871, when Maulavi Hamid Bakhat Mazumdar was appointed Deputy Collector and took charge of the work of settling these *Iiam* lands.¹⁸ On a report by the Chief Commi-

sioner in 1875, to the Govt. of India, rules for re-settlement and re-assessment known as the *Iiam Settlement Rules* were finally issued in November, 1876. For settlement of *Iiams*, cultivable lands were elaborately classified into fourteen classes, viz., (1) *Bhit*, (2) *Barondi*, equivalent to *Bari* in the Brahmaputra Valley, (3) *Do-fasal* or two cropped, (4) *Ek-fasal* or single cropped, (5) *Chara* or seed beds, (6) *Baraj* or betel-nut and vine garden, (7) *Sugarcane*, (8) *Orchard*, (9) *Amon* or sali growing land, (10) *Murahi* or paddy called *murahi* growing land, (11) *Bawa* or oilseed crop growing land, (12) *Bata* or good harvest yielding land, (13) *Tea* and (14) *San* or thatch growing land.

Uncultivable land also was classified into as many as ten classes such as—(1) deserted home stead, (2) culturable fallow, (3) Waste jungle, (4) fallow, (5) *Haors* or swamps (6) *Jil* or marshy lands, (7) *bil*, (8) tank, (9) rivers and (10) *gopat*. In these rules the "Proprietary right in *Iiam* estates was declared to belong to Government unless such right has been alienated, transferred or resigned by Government. The rules also required the settlement of all such estates to be made according to the Board's Rules, so far as they were applicable and not inconsistent with the *Iiam* Rules, and subject to such modifications as the Chief Commissioner might from time to time direct. The *Iiam* rule requiring the *Iiamdar* on resettlement to give up all waste excluding one-fifth of the cultivation was not applied to the tea planters, and the tea planter was allowed on expiry of the lease, a re-settlement of the entire land covered by it, whatever might be the proportion of the waste to cultivation. He was, however, required to pay revenue on all land under cultivation at the time of re-settlement and also for waste to the extent of one-fifth of the cultivation, at rates paid by cultivators for similar lands in the immediate neighbourhood; and for the excess waste land he was required to pay at the progressive rates laid down in the Waste Land Rules of 1876. Leases granted on these terms were under the modified *Iiam* Rules of 1878 and were fixed to fall in all various dates from 1st April, 1898 to 1st April, 1903.¹⁹

The revenue survey was carried out in Sylhet during 1859-66 along with other parts of the country. It was a professional survey for the purpose of making accurate maps of village boundaries and sometimes of estate boundaries and of collecting other informations. The village maps of the revenue survey were in a small scale, usually 4 inches to the mile, and when estates were small it was not possible to show the boun-

17. *The Assam Land Revenue Manual*, Vol. I. Eight Edition

18. *The Assam Land Revenue Manual*, Vol. I. Eight Edition, Introduction p. cxiii—p. cxiv

19. *Ibid*, p. cvii.



daries of the estates within the village. Estates in Sylhet being small, their boundaries are not usually shown in the Sylhet revenue survey maps and therefore, for Sylhet, the records of the **Thakbust** or demarcation survey which preceded the professional survey by a year were more important. During **Thakbust** survey a Settlement Officer, or Superintendent of Survey with a suitable staff of Deputy Collectors and **Amins** demarcated on the ground the actual boundaries of villages and estates and decided all boundary disputes so that when the Revenue Surveyor took the field he would be able to carry on his work without delay. While the demarcation on the ground was being done, rough maps were made by the non-professional staff, showing the boundaries of each village with the boundaries of estates that fell within it and also the position of the demarcation marks left on the ground. It was from these demarcation marks or **thaks** that the name of **thakbust** survey arose.²⁰ The result of the revenue survey of Sylhet was that the permanently settled area was ascertained to be far in excess of that recorded at the decennial settlement with the addition of lands permanently settled since that settlement.

In accordance with the provisions of the Assam State Acquisition of **Zamindari** Act, 1951, (Assam Act XVIII of 1951), the State of Assam had acquired the interests of the proprietors, of the tenure-holders and certain other interests in the permanently settled areas within Karimganj Sub-division and appointed Revenue Officer and Settlement Officer who were mainly entrusted with the function of preparation of tenants' record-of-rights under the Sylhet Tenancy Act, 1936, in respect of the permanently settled areas and under the Assam (Temporarily Settled District) Tenancy Act, 1935, in respect of the **Ilam** areas of Karimganj Sub-division. This measure had been enacted with a view to remove the intermediaries and bring the tenants directly under the state and also to give them better rights on their lands. During this **Zamindari** acquisition operation, the Revenue Officer and Settlement officer so appointed had prepared 1,95,956 **khatians** in total of which 1,61,341 were tenant's **Khatians** and 34,615 were Ex-Proprietors. and Ex-Tenure holders **Khatians**.

To provide for acquisition by the State of lands belonging to religious or charitable institutions, the Assam State Acquisition of Lands Belonging to Religious or Charitable Institutions of Public Nature Act, 1959, was passed. In accordance with the provisions of the said Act, the state of Assam has acquired the lands belonging to 25 numbers of

20. Ibid

Charitable or Religious Institutions in the district of Cachar. Total land acquired from the religious or Charitable institutions is 1271 **Lighas** which include the lands that the religious or charitable institutions are entitled to retain under section 5 of the said Act.

From what has been said above it is clear that **Ryotwari** in the sense has been the general character of all settlement in Cachar proper. In a **Ryotwari** system of settlement each individual land holder is made directly responsible for the payment of land revenue. He holds the land without intervention of any middlemen landlord or settlement holder between him and the Government. In Karimganj Sub-division also over a large portion of permanently settled estates, the settlement is **Ryotwari** in the same sense as in the case of the permanent settlement holder where his estate is small, as majority of the estates holders of in the sub-division cultivate their own land themselves. In few cases of the Karimganj Sub-division, settlements are a **Zamindari** settlement. In Cachar, nearly all temporarily settled estates being held under periodic leases the annual settlement holders of **Khira** land are found to be negligible. The annual settlementholder has no heritable and transferable right in his land, such right being expressly denied to him under the terms of his leases.²¹ Since acquisition of permanently settled estates of Karimganj sub-division, in Cachar proper and Karimganj Sub-division, the system of **Ryotwari** was introduced and this system has been continuing efficiently till now.

(c) Revenue income from land:

The statement below shows the annual land revenue of Cachar during the period from 1948-49 to 1961-62.

Year	Amount in rupees	Year	Amount in rupees.
1948—49	9,64,116	1955—56	13,86,799
1949—50	10,02,388	1956—57	14,24,228
1950—51	13,51,918	1957—58	12,02,031
1951—52	11,06,274	1958—59	11,92,457
1952—53	11,30,402	1959—60	14,09,656
1953—54	10,64,127	1960—61	12,66,214
1954—55	11,55,463	1961—62	12,69,703

21. Section 11 of *Assam Land and Revenue Regulation and Settlement Rules*.

Land revenue demand and local rate demand from 1973—74 to 1976—77 are as follows:

Land Revenue demand:

For 1973—74	Rs.18,53,692
„ 1974—75	Rs.18,56,575
„ 1975—76	Rs.18,35,401
„ 1976—77	Rs.18,02,513

Local rate demand:

For 1973—74	Rs.4,63,423
„ 1974—75	Rs.4,64,169
„ 1975—76	Rs.4,58,850
„ 1976—77	Rs.4,50,128

Besides the land revenue and local rate, there are miscellaneous land revenues arising from the rent of fisheries and the fees from the licenses issued to the Burma Oil Company. Fisheries are of two classes in Cachar; the first class fisheries are important fisheries in main rivers particularly the Barak, the Kushiya and the Jiri, which are sold by public auction from year to year or for a short term of years; and second class fisheries are let out as village fisheries to the representatives of neighbouring village at an annual rent fixed for the settlement period. Miscellaneous land revenue for 1944-45 was Rs.1,76,990 and for 1950-51 was Rs.1,98,987.²² According to the provision of the Assam Rent and Surcharge (Land Revenue) Act, 1972, which came into force on 2.10.73, persons holding land more than 10 bighas are liable to pay additional 30% on the land revenue assessed on them, but due to certain practical difficulties in the implementation of the said Act, no annual demand has been prepared and no realisation of surcharge made upto now.

Present System of Survey, Assessment and Collection of Land Revenue:

Present System of Survey: The Survey of land for the purposes of Land Revenue Administration includes (i) creation of villages or blocks as units of survey and (ii) internal or cadastral survey. The units of villages are surveyed by means of theodolite. This Theodolite Survey is usually carried out directly under the supervision of the Director of

Survey. For the creation of small blocks or units, 'Plane Table Survey' is also resorted to on the blue prints of blocks or units that are prepared with the help of theodolite survey after traversing. Internal or Cadastral Survey is plot-wise survey which is done by means of chain survey. Offsets are obtained by means of optical squares and the distances are measured simultaneously. Then the offsets and the distances are imposed to find out the actual measurement of the plot concerned.

For each village, a large scale Cadastral map based on the Traverse Survey, showing roads, rivers, railways and other physical features of the country as well as homestead and other fields is made. A suitable large scale map already in existence is made available for the purpose. It is not necessary unless the Survey Officer directs to prepare a fresh map; and generally the existing map is brought up-to-date. According to the Assam Land Record Manual, it is the duty of the Sub-Deputy Collector to arrange under the relevant rules for the survey of any unsurveyed areas which his charge may include. Recorders, Supervisor Kanungos and Registrar Kanungos have been entrusted with specific obligation in this respect.

Present system of Assessment:—The present system of assessment or re-assessment of land revenue is the system as prescribed under the Assam Land Revenue Re-assessment Act, 1936 and the rules made there under. Section 17 of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1886 states that "Settlement operations may consist of one or more of the following :-

- (a) Survey and demarcation;
- (b) Assessment of land revenue on lands;
- (c) Preparation or correction of record of rights.

It is, therefore, clear that assessment of land revenue on lands is also a part of settlement operation. In temporarily settled areas, a assessment of land revenue is done during settlement operation after the expiry of the terms of settlement. Before issuing any notification of local rate for any class of estates, the State Govt. obtains from an officer appointed for the purpose, a forecast report explaining the main factors justifying a revision of the assessment indicating the probable financial results of the settlement as a whole. After notification of settlement, in framing of general proposals of re-settlement for each assessment group of land not being town land, the Settlement Officer shall have regard to the changes which have occurred in the locality since the fixing of the existing assessment, more particularly in respect of:—

- (i) the economic condition of those who live mainly by agriculture;
- (ii) the value of agricultural produce;

22. Assam Land Revenue Manual, Vol. 1, Fifth Edition, page xxviii-cxxxix.

- (iii) the cost of production, and
- (iv) the letting and selling value of land.

Section 9 of the Assam Land Revenue Re-assessment Act, 1936, provides for detailed assessment of estates. Sub-section (1) of Section 9 provides that in determination of the amount of the proper assessment for each estate, the villages and the fields shall be classified correctly and a fair rate per bigha shall be fixed for each class of land and in each class of village; provided that land settled or leased for special cultivation may be assessed at a fair all-round rate per bigha. Sub-section (2) of Section 9 provides that in classifying the villages within each assessment group for the purpose of determining how the revised assessment of the group should be distributed amongst them, the Settlement Officer shall have regard to their existing assessment and to their relative advantages and disadvantages, more particularly in respect of:—

- (i) the fertility of the soil;
- (ii) the economic condition of those who live mainly by agriculture;
- (iii) facilities of communication, accessibility to markets, and liability to damages by natural causes or from wild animals.

In addition to the above, there are provisions under section 12 of A.L.R.R. Act, 1936, for gradual enhancement under certain circumstances. Land used for fishery may be assessed according to the annual value of the fishery. For assessment, town lands are to be divided into the following classes:—

- (a) agricultural sites (including agricultural residences),
- (b) residential sites,
- (c) trade sites,

The Settlement Officer may make as many sub-classes under each main class as he considers necessary. The rates of revenue for agricultural, residential sites and trade sites within town are fixed in the Assam Land Revenue Reassessment Act, 1939 itself. The Settlement Officer shall submit his proposals for each assessment group in a separate report in the prescribed form to the Director of Land Records who after due publication and hearing of objections, if any, recommends to the State Govt. for orders. As the land revenue for the permanently settled areas is fixed in perpetuity, the question of re-assessment of those areas does not arise.

(iii) System of Collection of Land Revenue; Before discussing the present system of collection of land revenue it becomes necessary to know the past system of collection of land revenue with a view to understand clearly the changes that have occurred. When Captain Fisher first undertook the administration of the district in 1830, he preserved indigenous

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system of revenue collection in accordance with which the revenue due from each *Khel* was paid through the agency of a *Mukhtar*, or elected representative. In default of payment, the defaulters were liable to arrest, and their individual shares lapsed to the *khel* or agricultural community. But the Britishers subsequently levied an interest of 12% on the arrear revenue in Cachar. This rate was raised by the British authority in Calcutta to 24% in 1837. The then Superintendent of Cachar J. G. Burns resented this rise, as he considered it to be very high.²³ In 1837, this system of revenue collection was modified, and the *Mukhtars* were appointed by the Government on a fixed commission of 6 per cent on the collection.

A complete change of the system was introduced by Captain Lyons in 1844, at the time of his Fifteen Year's Settlement. The *Mukhtars* were found 45 in number and their agency was both expensive and inefficient. It was decided to substitute a *Tahsildari* system which continued with a few modifications upto the present time. The district was divided into three *tahsils*, over each of which there was a *Tahsildar* or native revenue collector with a staff of two *moharrirs* or clerks and ten *peons*. These three establishments were situated at Silchar, Hailakandi and Katigora. *Mirasdars* whose assessment amounted to more than Rs.25/- a year were entitled to the privilege of paying their revenue into the chief establishment at Silchar; all others must pay at the local *tahsil* within whose jurisdiction their estates were situated. The collecting establishment was paid by way of salary. The revenue was payable in three *Kists* or instalments, which fell due on the 31st July, 31st October and 31st January. If each instalment was not punctually paid, 3 (three) *dastaks* or summonses, were successively served on the defaulter for realisation of revenue. The first of these, which was issued on the day following the day of payment, called upon the sharers in the defaulting estate to attend at once with their revenue. Should they fail to do so, the second *dastak* was issued attaching the movable property of the defaulters. If this also failed of its effect, then the third *dastak* was issued for the sale of the movable property; and if the movable property was not sufficient to satisfy the arrears, the land itself might be put up to auction.

Besides their duty of revenue collection, the *Tahsildars* were expected to keep themselves well-acquainted with all that went on within their jurisdictions. They had to supply labourers and make provisions of boats when required; they were called upon to keep mortality records, and to supply all kinds of returns.

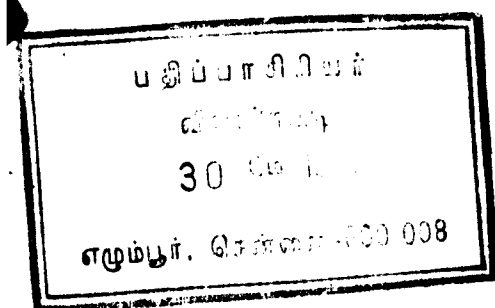
The present system of collection of land revenue is the *Tahsildari*

23. D. Dutta ; *Cachar District Records*, pp.34-35.

system. Tahsildar is a salaried Govt. servant and is different from Mauzadar who is a Commission agent. Collection of land revenue is done by the Tahsildar with the help of his staff. For realisation of revenue the Tahsildar is vested with necessary powers for taking coercive action. There are at present seven Tahsil officers in Cachar, viz., Silchar, Katigora, Sonai, Hailakandi, Karimganj, Ramkrishnanagar and Patharkandi which are co-terminous with Circle Officers at Silchar, Katigora, Sonai, Hailakandi, Karimganj, Ramkrishnanagar, and Patharkandi respectively. The Sub-Deputy Collector in-Charge of the circle is the Tahsildar or the Tahsil Officer. The Tahsildari system of land revenue collection, which has been working satisfactorily since long ago has become an important institution of revenue collection in the district. This system is free from the defects of Mauzadari system prevalent in the Brahmaputra Valley. The Tahsildari system was economic and efficient, but now for certain unfavourable factors specially arising from the inefficiency of the officer holding the charge of Tahsil or from the fact that the Tahsildar is over-burdened with other revenue works, this system has proved to some extent to be less effective and more costly.

(ii) Land Records: Section 40 of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation prescribes that the Settlement Officer shall, when making a settlement of any local area or class of estates, frame for each estate a record-of-rights in the prescribed manner. Under Rule 60 of Settlement Rules it is provided that the Settlement Officer shall make a final copy of the Chitha and Jamabandi and the final copy of the Jamabandi shall be the record-of-rights of proprietors and settlement holders within the meaning of section 40 of the Regulation. A note to Section 40 provides that the record-of-rights is the Jamabandi based on the Chitha and the field map. Chitha which is written according to serial numbers of field dags as indicated in the map of the village is a field index maintained in Assam Schedule XXVII, form No. 1. According to Settlement Rule 62, the Chitha contains the following particulars in addition to any, which may be specially directed by the State Government.

1. Number of the fields.
2. Area of the fields.
3. Name, father's name, and residence of proprietors or settlement-holders.
4. Tenure.
5. Assessment class or classes and area of each class of land in the field.



The Jamabandi contains the following particulars, in addition to any other specially directed by the State Government.

1. Number of the estate.
2. Name, father's name and residence of the proprietor or settlement-holder.
3. Number of each field.
4. Area of each field.
5. Class of each field.
6. Area of each class in each field.
7. Revenue (if any).
8. Local rate.

There are provisions under the rules 78 and 82 D of the Settlement Rules for preparation and distribution of record-of-rights of tenants and adhiars. Settlement rule 82 B says that the final record of tenants' and adhiars' rights shall be in the form of Khatians, and the Chitha or field index shall not form part of it.

In Cachar proper record-of-rights are being prepared under the Assam (Temporarily Settled Areas) Tenancy Act, 1971. In Karimganj Sub-division where no reliable register of permanently settled estates is available, record-of-rights has been prepared in respect of the permanently settled areas, under the Sylhet Tenancy Act, 1935 and in respect of Ham areas, it has been made under the Assam (Temporarily Settled District) Tenancy Act, 1935. It may be noted here that the spirit of the Assam State Acquisition of Zamindari Act, 1951, has been duly maintained in order to bring the tenants of Karimganj Sub-division directly under the State on completion of the Settlement Operation. Either for preparation of the record-of-rights of land holders and settlement-holders or for preparation of the record-of-rights of tenants and adhiars, the main agency for maintenance of record-of-rights is the Sub-Deputy Collector; who with the help of his land record staff effects changes in the entries of record-of-rights, when and where necessity arises. Against the order of the S.D.O. for alteration of record-of-rights, appeal lies to the S.D.O. in case of Sub-division in certain cases, and in case of Sadar-Sub-division and against the appellate order of the S.D.O. appeal lies to the D.C. whose function is normally discharged by the Addl. D.C. The Addl. D.C. has got power under section 151, A.L.R.R. to call for proceedings of subordinate Officers and pass necessary orders effecting change in the record-of-rights.

(iii) Revenue Courts: The Revenue Courts of the district consist of the Courts of (a) Deputy Commissioner; (b) Additional Deputy Commi-

sioner, (c) S.D.Os. (both at Sadar and at Sub-division), (d) Assistant Commissioner, (e) Extra Assistant Commissioner and (f) Sub-Deputy Collectors. During Settlement or Re-settlement operation, some more additional revenue courts such as the courts of the Settlement Officer, Senior Assistant Settlement Officers and Assistant Settlement Officers also function. As a court of original jurisdiction, these courts deal with the original revenue matters upto a prescribed limit laid down under various revenue laws. Appeals lie to the Sub-divisional Officer or the Deputy Commissioner (the Addl. Deputy Commissioner, who functions as Deputy Commissioner) as the case may be from the orders passed by the Sub-Deputy Collectors or other Revenue Officers of the district. The Assam Board of Revenue with its headquarters at Gauhati which has been functioning under the Assam Board of Revenue Act, 1962, entertains appeals against the orders of the Deputy Commissioner and the Settlement Officer. The Commission whose headquarters is at Gauhati remains in over-all charge of the revenue administration (excepting land records and survey). The Commissioner acts as a link between the district officers and the Govt. particularly on revenue matters.

The Revenue Courts afford reliefs mainly in respect of registration, partition of joint estates, questions as to the validity or effect of any settlement, questions as to the amount of revenue tax, cess or rate to be assessed and the mode or principle of assessment, formation of record-of-rights, the distribution of the land or allotment of revenue on partition, claims connected with or arising out of the collection of land revenue and arrear of land revenue, claims to occupy or resort to land under Sections 13 and 14 of A.L.R.R. and disputes as to the use and enjoyment of such lands, claims to have an allotment made under section 13 or Section 14 of A.L.R.R., claims to a remission or refund of any revenue, cess, tax, rate, fee or fine payable or paid under the Regulation, etc.

(iv) Land Tenures: The land tenures of Cachar proper may be arranged in the five following classes:—

- (1) The Mirasdari tenure of Major Stewart's settlement;
- (2) Grants still existing under the old Assam Rules;
- (3) Grants in Fee Simple including both those originally made under the Waste Land Rules and those commuted under the old Assam Rules;
- (4) Leases of waste land for terms of thirty years; under the old and new Mirasdari Rules;
- (5) Revenue free tenures, such as Baksha and Lakhiraj

The only sub-tenures, in the district are those held under the Mirasdari by Paikhans, whose status is that of yearly tenants. In Karimganj sub-division, after the implementation of the Assam State Acquisition of Zamindaries Act, 1951, the permanently-settled estates stand abolished. Only Ilam lands, which are temporarily settled estates, are found at present. In the permanently-settled areas, tenants record-of rights under the Sythet Tenancy Act, 1936 are being prepared.

(d) Land Reforms: The object of Land Reform Laws in Assam including Cachar is to provide security of tenure to the cultivator, to protect him from exploitation of big land owners and tenure holders, to enable him to establish a direct relationship with Govt. and to fix ceiling on land holdings. With this ends in view, a series of legislative measures have been taken since Independence. The first of the series is the enactment of the Assam Adhikar Protection and Regulation Act, 1948, to regulate crop-sharing with a view to safeguarding the interest of the share croppers. The Act was amended in 1952-1957 and 1960 to provide greater measures of protection to the Adhikars, in consensus with the policy of the Government. In 1951, the Assam State Acquisition of Zamindaries Act was passed which provided for acquisition by the State of the interests of proprietors and the tenure-holders in the permanently settled areas of the State. The Assam Fixation of Ceiling on Land Holding Act, 1956 as amended up-to-date was enacted for imposition of limit on the amount of land that may be held by a person. The purpose of this Act is to acquire the surplus agricultural land and to distribute them amongst the landless peasants. To provide for acquisition, by the State, of land belonging to religious or charitable institution, the Assam State Acquisition of Land belonging to Religious or Charitable Institutions of Public Nature Act, 1959 was passed and under this Act, lands measuring 1,271 bighas belonging to 25 numbers of religious or charitable institutions of Cachar district have been acquired. With a view to increasing the agricultural production, the Assam Consolidation of Holdings Act, 1960 was passed, to overcome the problem posed by fragmentation of holdings and to effect consolidation by way of exchange and amalgamation of small holdings. And again to facilitate the Gramdan and Bhudhan Movement, the Assam Gramdan Act, 1961 and the Assam Bhudhan Act, 1965 were enacted. The most important Legislative measure taken recently to regulate the relationship between landlord and tenant, and to enable the cultivating tenant to become owner of land that he has possessed and occupied on rent, is the enactment of the Assam (Temporarily Settled Areas) Tenancy Act, 1971. This Act has been ex-

tended throughout the Plains districts of Assam including the erstwhile permanently settled areas of the State.

Prior to independence of India there were two Acts for regulating the relation between the landlords and tenants, and both these Acts also were applied to Cachar. The Assam (Temporarily-settled District) Tenancy Act, 1935 was extended to the districts of Kamrup, Lakhimpur (undivided) and to Silchar and Hailakandi Sub-divisions of Cachar; and the Sylhet Tenancy Act, 1936 was applicable to the former district of Sylhet which included Karimganj Sub-division.

(1) Measures taken to secure the interests of tenants and the relation between landlord and tenant in Zamindary areas:

First of the series of land reform measures taken mainly for securing the interests of tenants is the Assam (T.S.D.) Tenancy Act, 1935 which was applied to the Sadar, i.e., Silchar and also Hailakandi Sub-divisions of Cachar. This was enacted to regulate by law the rights and liabilities of agricultural tenants and their landlords in respect of certain lands. The said Act under section 4 provides for different classes of tenants, such as, (1) Ryots or tenants holding immediately under a proprietor, land-holder or settlement-holder; and (2) Under-ryots or tenants holding lands under ryots and the following classes of ryots, namely—

- (a) Privileged ryots who are entitled to hold at rates of rent exceeding the revenue rates,
- (b) Occupancy ryots having a right of occupancy in the land held by them and
- (c) Non-occupancy ryots not having such a right of occupancy. This Act gives to the tenants certainty in respect of tenancy and rents.

Policy of Land Settlement: under the settlement rules incorporated in the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, all the waste land under the disposal of the Government can be settled with any citizen of India. Under these rules a large section of the non-agricultural population became the owners of the bulk of the cultivable land. The Government of Assam formulated certain land settlement policies, keeping in view interests of the actual tillers of the land. These policies were implemented by the officers who were authorised to make settlement of land. The Policy of land Settlement (1968) of the Government of Assam lays down the following principles to be adhered to in giving settlement of land;

(i) Settlement of land will be given on the basis of a family consisting of husband and wife, as the case may be and sons and daughters (excluding married sons and daughters having separate mess).

(ii) All settlement of Government agricultural land for ordinary cultivation shall be made with the actual tiller of the soil only.

(iii) No person already having more than 10 bighas of agricultural land either in his own name or in the name of any member of the family will be allotted new Government land for the purpose of cultivation.

(iv) The area to be settled per family, whose existing total holding is less than 10 bighas, (about 1.3 hectares) shall be so much as will, together with any land already held make the total holding equal to 10 bighas, but priorities in settlement shall be determined in the following order:—

- (a) those who have no land;
- (b) those who have lands below 5 bighas (about 0.6 hectares);
- (c) those who have lands between 6 bighas and 8 bighas (between about 0.6 and 1.04 hectares);
- (d) those who have lands above 8 bighas (above 1.04 hectares);

(v) Land for homestead purposes may be settled upto a maximum of 2 bighas (about 0.3 hectares) with a homeless rural family. This would be exclusive of the land mentioned in (iv) above.

Besides, for the purpose of settlement of homestead lands, settlement-holders who have been rendered landless due to flood, erosion, requisition or acquisition, will get preference over other landless persons.

(vi) In case of all new planned settlements in large blocks of 100 bighas (about 13 hectares) or more, except those which have already been taken up under the Five-Year Plans, Gram Sabha will be formed on the line of a Gram Sabha under the Gramdan Act to manage and plan the pattern of cultivation in general and also to watch that allottees do not make any transfer of their allotment without the permission of the Gram Sabha. However, cultivation on co-operative or collective basis will be encouraged even in lands under such Gram Sabhas. In giving settlement on the Gramdan pattern, the names of individual allottees should be distinctly recorded and possession of their lands clearly demarcated.

Further, it should be ensured that facilities for co-operative finance to the allottees on the Gramdan pattern are made available, as otherwise, due to non-transferability of land, such allottees may find difficulty in raising finance for agricultural operation. For that purpose, the members of the Gram Sabha should be encouraged to form Co-operative Credit Society.

(vii) While encouraging formation of Co-operative Farming Societies the district authorities shall ensure that no person having lands above

10. **bighas** (about 1.3. hectares) may get new land by being a member of any such society. Such person may, however, be allowed to join such Co-operative Society only when he agrees to pool his own cultivable lands with the co-operative of landless tillers.

(viii) Selection of allottees for settlement of land in any case which involves more than 10 **bighas** (about 1.3 hectares) will henceforward be made in consultation with the local land Settlement Advisory Committee. A panel of landless cultivators should be prepared by every **Gaon Sabha** formed under the Panchayat Act and this panel should be consulted when selecting allottees for settlement of land in rural areas. Government, however, reserves the right to earmark special areas of homestead and cultivable lands for settlement with people rendered homeless due to flood, erosion, requisition or acquisition and with displaced persons whom Government undertake to rehabilitate.

(ix) When surplus lands from tea gardens are requisitioned and acquired for cultivation by landless cultivators, an area upto 50% of such land should be allotted to the unemployed tea garden labourers who have no land for cultivation.

The relationship between landlord and tenant in the permanently-settled areas of Karimganj Sub-division was governed by the Sylhet Tenancy Act, 1936, as amended up-to-date. Formerly, the tenants were at the mercy of their landlords or **Mirasdars** in respect of the lands they possessed; but with the passage of this Act that situation changed. The Act bestowed specific rights on tenants and landlords, and recognised six classes of tenants such as:

- (a) Tenure holders,
- (b) Ryots,
- (c) Under ryots, i.e., tenants holding immediately under ryots,
- (d) Ryots holding land at fixed rate (including ryots holding immediately under a proprietor or a permanent tenure-holder either without rent or at rent fixed in perpetuity,
- (e) Occupancy ryots having a right of occupancy in the land held by them and
- (f) Non-occupancy ryots not having such a right of occupancy.

In accordance with the provisions of the Assam State Acquisition of Zamindaries Act, 1951, the State of Assam had acquired the interests of proprietors, tenure-holders and certain other interests. There were about 3,617 permanently settled estates in Karimganj Sub-division and all have been acquired by the Govt. as per the spirit of the Act. The Revenue Officer and Settlement Officer, who

were appointed to prepare the tenants' record-of-rights in respect of the acquired permanently-settled estates of Karimganj Sub-division, had issued 1,95,956 **Khatians**, in total of which Tenants' **Khatians** were 1,61,341 and Ex-proprietors', Ex-Tenure-holders **Khatians** were 34,615. Besides, out of 1,271 **bighas** of land acquired from 25 Charitable or Religious Institutions of Cachar under the Assam State Acquisition of Lands belonging to Religious or Charitable Institution of Public Nature Act, 1939, the portion that has been under the occupation of the tenants has been settled with them. The provisions of the Sylhet Tenancy Act, 1936, and the Assam (Temporarily Settled Districts) Tenancy Act, 1935 are found to be inadequate in the present-day society; and to satisfy the growing demands of the tenant class and to make the cultivating tenant the owner of the land he possessed, the Assam (Temporarily Settled Areas) Tenancy Act, 1971, was enacted. This Act has repealed the Assam (Temporarily Settled Districts) Tenancy Act, 1935, and the Assam Adhikar Protection and Regulation Act, 1948, as the cropsharers are given the status of tenants in the Assam (Temporarily Settled Areas) Tenancy Act, 1971. In order to extend this Act to the former permanently-settled areas of Goalpara district and Karimganj Sub-division of Cachar district, the Assam Land Holdings (Adoption of Relationship under the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1886 in the Acquired Permanently-settled Estates) Act, 1974, has been enacted. It has repealed the Goalpara Tenancy Act, 1936, and enforced the Assam (Temporarily Settled Areas) Tenancy Act, 1971, in the erstwhile permanently-settled areas. In the district of Cachar tenants so far recorded under the Assam (Temporarily settled Areas) Tenancy Act, 1971 are 84,974 in total. The most important legislative measure taken recently to secure the tenants' interests is the Assam (Temporarily Settled Area) Tenancy Act, 1971 which has been enacted to regulate the relationship of landlord and tenant, and to enable the cultivator tenant to become the owner of the land that he has possessed and occupied on rent. The Assam Fixation of Ceiling on Land Holdings Act, 1956, as amended up-to-date has helped to some extent in securing the interests of the tenants. In settling lands acquired under this Act, preferential treatment has been made to the existing tenants who do not possess land above ceiling limit.

Other Legislative measures on Land Reform: Various Acts have been implemented in the district to bring about the land reforms in respect of conferring virtual ownership of the agricultural land on the actual cultivators and to reduce the holding of the owners of vast esta-

tes. The followings are some of the important legislative measures implemented in the district.

(1) **Ceiling on Agricultural holdings:** The State Government has enacted the Assam Fixation of Ceiling on Land Holdings Act, 1956. The main object of this Act is to make the actual tillers of the soil the owners of the land. This Act extends to the districts of Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, Nowgong, Darrang, Kamrup, Goalpara and Cachar. According to this Act, no person either by himself or through members of his family shall be entitled to hold as owner or Tenant, lands which exceed the limit of one hundred and fifty bighas in aggregate. For the excess land required by Government, compensation is to be paid to owner of the land.

But this Act makes certain in exception with regard to land belonging to any religious or charitable institutions of a public nature; lands held for special cultivations of tea and purposes ancillary there to; lands exceeding 150 bighas utilised for large scale cultivation of citrus in a compact block by any person before the 1st January, 1955, etc.

The Act was amended in 1957. To advise the Government in respect of Land Reforms there is a Land Reform Board in Assam consisting of six members of whom two are non-official members nominated by the State Government, three State Government Officers, namely the Commissioner of Plains Division, the Secretary to the Government of Assam in the Revenue Department and the Land Reform Officer who is the Secretary of the Board, and a Chairman nominated by the State government.

Meanwhile necessity for another Legislation to fix the ceiling land holdings to reduce the disparities of wealth and also to redistribute excess lands available from large holdings among landless cultivators in rural areas was strongly felt and consequently the Assam Fixation of Ceiling and Land Holdings Act 1956, was amended in 1970. The ceiling has since been reduced to 75 bighas of agricultural land. The Act was further amended in 1975 by which the Ceiling limit was reduced from 75 bighas to 50 bighas. Distribution of Ceiling surplus land to the poor and needy agriculturists was initiated in Assam since July, 1975.

Regarding implementation of Land Ceiling Laws and distribution of surplus land among landless cultivators in Assam, the Govt. had acquired 15,74,512 bighas of Ceiling surplus land and distributed 7,32,215 bighas of land to 2,00,279 landless people upto the end of 1976 in the entire state. Acquisition and distribution of Ceiling surplus land in Cachar according to the Director of Land Requisition, Acquisition and Reforms Assam is as follows:

The Statement showing Sub-divisionwise acquisition and distribution of ceiling surplus land upto May, 1978 in Cachar.

Name of Subdivision	Acquisition		Distributions			
	Individual	Tea garden	Scheduled Caste		Scheduled tribes	
			No. of families	Area	No. of families	Area
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Silchar	25568	227998	8961	28128	862	5273
Hailakandi	10659	94468	2160	6347	316	2043
Karimganj	14866	85397	3036	10312	524	4574

Distribution						areas in bighas.
No. of families	Minority communities		Others			
	Area	No of families	Area	Allotment to agricultural farming co-operations, Co-operatives, Public Institutions, industries etc.	Area	
7	8	9	10	11	12	
2493	9303	8092	28253	2	16	
—	—	12171	40360	—	6630	
592	2121	12212	41015	—	—	

Source: Director of Land Requisition, Acquisition and Reforms, Assam.

(e) **Agrarian movements, Bhoodan and Peasants Organisations:** Agrarian movements styled as Krishak Samities, and Krishi Kalyan Samities (Associations for the betterment of agriculturists and the cultivators) have been active in the district since the days of alien rule. These movements in the sphere of agriculture gathered momentum in course of time and gradually enlisted greater popular support and gained enthusiasm from the various legislations which were enacted afterwards in order to promote the welfare of the cultivators and the peasants.

Formerly there were instances of agrarian movements by interested tenants which went usually against particular landlords. But these have taken a new shape to-day and the present agrarian movements are mainly centered round the abolition of serfdom. In fact, the agrarian movements as exist now are of recent growth and, so to say, backed by political parties. It may be pointed out that the Sarbodaya spirit and the 'Bhoodan Spirit' have also extorted unstinted popular support in this part of the country in re-building our rural economy and rejuvenating our villages. The district as a whole, although could not make any remarkable

contribution towards Bhoodan movement, has of late started activities towards contributing its mite and giving a fillip to this great enterprise of Binovaji to solve the problem of scarcity of land for our growing rural population, the main stay of our agricultural economy.

Rural wages and the condition of agricultural Labour: The records of the Statistical Account of Assam by W.W.Hunter in respect of the wages of agricultural Labour which prevailed in 1873 in the district of Cachar provided interesting reading. The said source provides that an agricultural day-labourer in 1873 got 'four annas per diem against one anna which prevailed in former times'. The rates of wages of agricultural day-labourers after about 87 years, i.e., in 1960 in some of the selected places of the district are as follows:

Wage rates of some selected months of the year 1960 of three selected places of Cachar as per man, woman and children labour 24

Name of the selected villages	Type of labour	Agricultural labour (in cash)	Month
1	2	3	4
Saidbung	Man	2.00	January
	Woman	1.50	
	Child	1.25	
Krisnopur	Man	2.25	
	Woman	1.75	
	Child	1.00	
Purbagool	Man	2.00	
	Woman	1.50	
	Child	1.00	
Saidbung	Man	2.00	
	Woman	1.50	
	Child	1.25	
Krisnopur	Man	2.87	August
	Woman	1.75	
	Child	1.00	
Purbagool	Man	2.00	
	Woman	1.50	
	Child	1.00	
Saidbung	Man	2.00	December
	Woman	1.50	
	Child	1.25	

24. District Census Handbook, Cachar, 1961, pp. 407 to 410.

1	2	3	4
Krisnopur	Man	2.24	December
	Woman	1.62	
	Child	1.00	
Purbagool	Man	2.00	
	Woman	1.50	
	Child	1.00	

Although instances of subletting are prevalent in other parts of the district it is not in vogue generally in Karimganj Sub-division as the most of the tenants of that part of the district are peasant proprietors, i.e., holding *miras* right to the land they own. Persons owning the land but not actual cultivators, or person holding big *Khamars* (or agricultural holding), whether they are tenants or peasants proprietors, usually employ agricultural labourers for the cultivation of land under them. A labourer gets his wage either in money or in kind. The money wages vary from Rs.50/- to Rs.60/- generally per labourer per month. The wage in kind varies according to the contract entered upon during harvesting seasons. The share of crop or the wage in kind does not exceed 50% of the yield of the particular plot or holding. The latter system is better known as *Adhibhagi* or *Borga*. Formerly, there were much disputes in the system. But with the implementation of the Assam Adhlar Protection and Regulation Act, 1948, much of the irregularities in the process has since been removed and the interest of the Adhlar has also been protected. According to the present system, if the land owner does not require the land once let out on *Adhibhagi* system the Adhlar has the right to cultivate the land year to year subject to the payment of actual quantity of crops contracted upon the owner of the land. The Assam (Temporarily Settled Area) Tenancy Act, 1971 has repealed the Assam Adhlar protection and Regulation Act, 1948 and the cropsharers are given the status of tenants. But agricultural labour has become scarce since the last World War owing to the opening of various avenues of employment and better earning. It is noticed that while labour wages in other professions become lucrative the wages for agricultural labour remained static or meagerly increase.

According to 1971 Census, agricultural labourers in Cachar district which constituted 19.93 per cent of the total population (the percentages of the male and female workers stood at 20.46 and 13.96 per cent respectively).

The rates of daily wages of agricultural labourers in the State of Assam as a whole since 1965 to 1972 were as follows. 25

Type of labour	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972
Man	3.01	3.33	3.49	3.29	3.73	4.15	3.90	3.91
Woman	2.29	2.12	2.68	2.52	—	—	—	3.04
Children	1.31	1.42	1.96	1.80	—	..	—	2.31

The above table shows that the rates of wages of agricultural labourers are marginally low. The subject not only attracted the attention of the State Government but also of the other indigenous organisations and consequently measures were thought out for improving the lot of agricultural labourers. The Government carried on investigation in the matter and collected information to enable them to fix the minimum living wage of agricultural labourers. Recently some changes have been made in this direction, but the measures so far taken have proved quite inadequate to the problem. The State Government has enacted certain laws on the subject as some sister states have done in this sphere, but for effective enforcement the results are not as desired.

(f) Administration of other sources of revenue by the State:

Formerly revenue from land had been the main source of the State income, though there were seven other sources of revenues from which the State exchequer collected fund. These sources were—(1) Ganja, (2) Spirit, (3) Opium (4) Ferryghat, (5) Salt-well, (6) Jalkar and (7) House tax. In 1852-53, Rs.2324/- was collected as revenue from House tax, Rs.619/8/- annas from 42 fishery mahals, and expected Excise revenue from Ganja, Opium and spirit was about Rs.6000/-. Besides, a very small amount of toll were collected at Sealtekghat for traffic on forest goods and other commercial goods like cotton, wax and ivory.²⁶ The satt lakes were put up to auction and were sold out on a lease for 3 years.²⁷ The scope of activity in the last century was also limited. The State was mainly concerned with maintaining law and order and collected necessary revenue for that purpose. The main feature of the state finance in those days was the relative inelasticity and complete inadequacy of revenues and the

25. *Statistical Handbook, Assam*, 1973, p.130.

26. D.Dutta: *Cachar District Records*, 1969, p.211-12.

27. *Ibid*, p. 23.

unduly small per capita expenditures in nation building. Other social service activities were also meagre. In 1937, the new popular Government attempted not only to expand the nation building departments like Education, Health, Agriculture, Co-operation etc., but also to create a welfare state by paying attention to the well-being of the lower income groups and the backward classes in society. After the close of World War II and the attainment of Independence by India, an allout effort was being made both to promote the welfare of citizens and to build up a socially directed economy. As a result of all these changes the sources of revenue have expanded to a very great extent to cover up almost all the spheres of life.

Sales Tax has now become one of the most important sources of revenue to the State, because it contributes to the exchequer more than any other head of revenue, except State Transport, Excise and few other important sources of revenue. A general sales tax was first introduced in 1947 by an Act known as Assam Sales Tax Act, which has since undergone various amendments by the legislature.

According to this Act, all dealers liable to pay the tax had to register themselves as such and pay the tax on all goods sold by them except those which were exempted. Under the Act, all goods subject to a few exceptions are liable to a general tax and a few of the goods exempted from the general tax are subject to a special tax.

The schedule of goods, which are not subject to the general tax, is composed mostly of necessities of life such as cereals and pulses, betelnuts, firewood, fish, fresh eggs, milk, salt, vegetables, etc. They also include cattle, sheep, goat, etc.

There are special goods—mostly luxury articles, jewellery and special stores which are liable to a special tax. Most of these articles are liable to both the general tax and the special tax.

For the purpose of the administration of the Assam Sales Tax Act, 1947 (including the Assam Professions, Trades, Callings and Employments Taxation Act, 1947), the Assam Sales of Motor Spirit and Lubricants Taxation Act, 1939, the Assam Amusement and Betting Tax Act, 1939; the entire district of Cachar had been placed under one Superintendent of Taxes. The office of the Superintendent of Taxes, Cachar is at Silchar and has been functioning since 1-2-48 in the district of Cachar. The Superintendent of Taxes is also being assisted by a few Inspectors of Taxes in his executive works.

The following statement will show the extent of different taxes collected in Cachar from 1963-64 to 1976-77.

Statement showing the collection of Taxes in the district of Cachar, Act-wise.

Taxation Acts.	1963—64	1968—69	1970—71	1971—72	1972—74	1973—76	1976—77
1. The Assam Sales Tax Act, 1947.	5,95,165	8,55,498	8,78,709	10,48,001	13,37,101	21,23,526	23,64,950
2. The Assam Finance (Sales Tax) Act, 1956	4,66,308	17,38,516	16,43,090	17,87,562	19,76,426	34,91,454	36,79,624
3. The Assam (Sales of Petroleum and patrols products including Motor spirit and Lubricants) Taxation Act, 1956.	33,190	9,027	90,433	12,732	5,357	5,004	8,166
4. The Central Sales Tax Act, 1916.	1,78,256	9,84,173	13,57,998	13,23,256	10,41,445	10,33,974	6,95,209
5. The Assam Purchases Tax Act, 1967.	—	—	—	—	1,04,270	48,872	1,78,298
6. The Assam Amusement & Betting Tax Act, 1939	2,21,117	6,94,900	7,63,925	9,86,792	12,84,994	17,07,128	19,13,936
7. The Assam Professions, Trades Callings and Employments Taxation Act, 1947.	1,24,213	1,62,074	1,89,835	1,96,142	2,18,980	3,52,514	4,07,172
8. The Assam Passengers & Goods Taxation Act, 1962.	2,75,937	2,62,708	2,53,000	2,67,293	2,54,765	4,08,896	5,33,124
9. The Assam Electricity Duty Act, 1964.	—	75,929	77,959	1,85,493	3,18,168	6,94,352	7,49,656
10. The Assam Agricultural Income Tax Act, 1939.	8,85,294	2,26,848	70,568	20,45,392	19,10,977	40,67,412	37,15,359
11. The Assam Taxation (on Goods Carried by Road or Inland Water-ways Act, 1961 (arrear collection)		3,822	12,784	7,63,365	1,16,187	5,09,872	3,41,886

Source: Commissioner of Taxes, Assam.

The Stamp Department: Introduction of stamp duty in Cachar was first suggested by the District Superintendent in 1840 and came into force a few years later.²⁸ At present, as in the other districts, the Superintendent of Stamps, Assam, is the authority who controls the supply and the sale of State Stamps in the state.

It may be pointed out that there is a constant flow of income from the sale of both judicial and non-judicial stamps and the total income realised from the stamps forms one of the main sources of the revenue.

Excise duty imposed by the Government of Assam on sale of various items such as liquor, wine, methylated spirit, opium, ganja etc. is also a good source of revenue to the state. The District Superintendent of Excise posted with a host of sub-ordinate field and office staff at Silchar helps the Deputy Commissioner, who is the collector of the District, to collect excise duties to be deposited into treasury under appropriate head. But since prohibition Acts on these goods had been passed and enforced, this source of revenue has stopped almost totally. At present, only Central Excise Duties on some goods like tea, tobacco etc., yield revenue to the Central Government.

The statement below provides a picture of the Excise revenues collected in the district since 1955-56 to 1974-75.²⁹

(Figures in rupees)

Year	Amount Collected	Year	Amount Collected
1955-56	5,67,412	1965-66	6,53,753
1956-57	4,55,778	1966-67	7,17,578
1957-58	4,64,141	1967-68	8,02,348
1958-59	5,40,163	1968-69	9,35,739
1959-60	5,34,739	1969-70	9,26,896
1960-61	5,42,698	1970-71	10,90,606
1961-62	5,52,300	1971-72	8,13,013
1962-63	5,27,475	1972-73	9,60,611
1963-64	5,45,490	1973-74	14, 01,807
1964-65	5,83,736	1974-75	20, 91,040

28. D.Dutta : *Cachar District Records*, 1969, p.87.

29. Source : *Superintendent of Excise, Cachar, Silchar*.

REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

In 1966-67, the excise duty received from country spirit only amounted to Rs.6,63,476 while Rs. 34,624 was collected from sale of foreign liquor and Rs. 19,219 from commercial spirit in the district. This indicates to what extent the district is addicted to liquor.

Registration of motor vehicles, issue of driving licenses, Vehicle fitness certificate and road permits also accrue good amount of revenue to the state. The income of the Motor Vehicle Department in the district for the last few years is furnished below:-

Statement showing income from Road-transport and Motor Vehicles in Cachar, 1956-78

Year	M.V.Tax and fees	R.T.A.'s Tax
1956-57	Rs. 3,79,717.37	— — — —
1957-58	Rs. 3,91,774.93	— — — —
1958-59	Rs. 3,88,141.50	— — — —
1959-60	Rs. 3,96,310.50	— — — —
1960-61	Rs. 4,13,173.50	— — — —
1961-62	Rs. 4,38,829.40	— — — —
1962-63	Rs. 4,84,655.13	Rs. 5,894.00
1963-64	Rs. 8,24,615.50	Rs. 6,435.00
1964-65	Rs. 8,14,691.84	Rs. 7,127.00
1965-66	Rs. 9,16,821.51	Rs. 1,612.00
1966-67	Rs.10,22,916.48	Rs. 809.00
1967-68	Rs.12,04,777.00	Rs. 1,912.00
1968-69	Rs.13,01,238.50	Rs. 6,291.00
1969-70	Rs.13,06,226.75	Rs. 2,024.00
1970-71	Rs.12,45,265.00	Rs. 1,827.00
1971-72	Rs.15,08,980.50	Rs. 4,042.00
1972-73	Rs.16,50,289.30	Rs. 6,605.00
1973-74	Rs.16,49,644.50	Rs. 4,871.00
1974-75	Rs.14,65,728.00	Rs. 3,584.00
1975-76	Rs.17,54,178.00	Rs. 4,838.00
1976-77	Rs.18,30,871.70	Rs. 5,941.00
1977-78	Rs.20,09,952.00	Rs. 5,895.00

Source: District Transport Officer, Cachar, Silchar.

Income Tax Department also earns considerable revenue in the district. The Department is working under the Assistant Commissioner of Income Tax for Assam, Tripura and Manipur. There are two Income Tax

Officers, a few Income Tax Inspectors and other non-gazetted staff. The jurisdiction of the office covers the whole district of Cachar including Mizoram and North Cachar Hills districts.

Like the Income Tax Department, the Indian Post and Telegraph Department is also a good revenue earning department in the district of Cachar. Its unit in Cachar works under the territorial jurisdiction of the Post Master General, Assam.

The following statement will give an idea about the fluctuating state in collection of Central Taxes and their arrears from 1960-78, in Cachar district.³⁰

Year	Collections	Arrears	Remarks
1960	37,995.99		
1961	81,143.91		
1962	40,011.32		
1963	47,861.60		
1964	1,87,775.27		
1965	2,97,751.45		
1966	3,43,754.35(a)	15,58,017.38(a)	Arrears from
1967	6,17,142.73		1960 to up
1968	6,74,929.20		to-date,
1969	5,50,144.28		i.e. 1978
1970	7,99,331.68		
1971	9,19,154.41		
1972	10,92,567.71		
1973	7,51,515.99		
1974	7,70,185.68		
1975	7,08,157.92		
1976	2,71,087.46		
1977	3,48,089.16		
1978	3,70,920.92		

30. Source: 1. Superintendent of Taxes, Silchar.

2. Income Tax Officer, Silchar.

CHAPTER- XII

LAW, ORDER AND JUSTICE.

(a) Incidence of crimes in the district:

(i) **In early times:** It is difficult to assess, crimes in Cachar district in early times and even during the rule of the Kachari kings, as no such record was maintained. It was the sacred duty of the king to protect his subject and to give them security of life, property and belief.

At the time of the advent of the British, there was chaos and anarchy and internal disturbances in Cachar. With the consolidation of the British administration in Assam, normalcy was, however, restored. Civil and criminal courts were established at Silchar. Records relating to the trial of cases have started to be maintained in the district headquarters.

Generally criminal cases, complained of, in the Court of the Superintendent, was of abortion, swindling, bribery, murder, and grievous hurt. Number of such cases was, however, very small. Most of the cases were of civil dispute concerning lands and forest timbers.

From the letter of E.R. Lyons, Officiating Superintendent of Cachar, addressed to the Registrar, **Saddar Dewani Adalat** (Sadar Diwani Adalat) on 1st July 1839, it is found that a number of cases were frivolous and spiteful in order to cause the defendants absent from land and thereby to inflict pecuniary loss.¹ From another letter of the same Superintendent it is found that 'vast proportion of the cases tried in the Cachar Courts were unfounded.' As Mr. E.R. Lyon says "they are out of an old grudge or enmity existing between **Jaminders** who put their cases in the hands of **Vakeels** and whose sole aim is gratification of gaining a case at the expense of their antagonist, for the loss of a case amongst natives of respectability is considered to reflect highest disgrace on the unfortunate party. So to attain their object, they give money without compunction to the **Amlah** who cannot withstand temptation and who always receive bribes and presents through the **Vakeels**." ² As per the letter of E.R. Lyon dated 9th May, 1846, there were only 38 convicts in Cachar Jail on the date while the capacity of the jail was for 58 persons. There were very little crime in Cachar, affrays occurred very seldom and most of the disputes were over land. ³

1. D.Dutta : *Cachar District Records*, 1969, pp. 75 and 133-34.

2. Ibid :

3. Ibid , Pages -105 and 142

As reported by B.C. Allen in the District Gazetteer Cachar 1905; in 1902, there were 9 Stipendary and 2 Honorary magistrates in Cachar plains. The Stipendary magistrates decided 775 criminal cases while the Honorary magistrates decided only two cases. In 1902, altogether 987 cases were returned as true under the Indian Penal Code and most of the cases were either theft or house-trespass. During the 20 years ending 1899, there were seven cases of murder or homicide reported annually. In munsiff courts, there were 2,080 civil suits and less than one-sixth of these suits were contested. Of these suits majority were money suits. The most daring decoity reported at that time and occurred in Cachar in 1903, when a gang of 27 men from Afganistan raided a very rich businessman's residence in Kalachara Tea Estate.

So, as far as the nature of crime in general in the district is concerned even during the British regime, no special kind of crime peculiar to the people of the district was noticeable. It was similar to the nature of crimes committed in the districts of the Brahmaputra Valley. No moral *modus operandi* could be applied to them. Even now, organised criminality in the district is rare. One common nature that is found among the litigants of the district is the institution of false cases in order to harass the opposite party.

With the advent of the 2nd World War, crimes related with smuggling, adulteration of food, misappropriation of public money and normal turpitude nature increased in the district as it happened throughout the country. People lost the older sense of traditional values and developed a more materialistic tendency which resulted in increase of crimes against both person and property. No account of these crimes in figures can be given here as these were not available. Besides, many of such cases were also not reported to police against whom a general repugnant outlook developed as a strong side-effect of Freedom Movement. Further, general people also did not dare to approach Police or Court, redresses from both of which became very costly affairs.

Incidence of crime after Independence : Though, with the independence, both the police and the court became more approachable to people and also increased in number, the public is still very shy of police as well as court. However, it can be surmised from village panchayats as well as from police report that with the increase of population, crimes also are in increase. Phenomenon is, however, very negligible as much as it shows the number of registered cognisable offences with police in 1974 to be 3,568 against 1,079 of 1874, while population has increased from 2,05,027 in 1872 to 17,13,318 (1971 census in Cachar plains). The following table will give an idea about incidence of crimes in Cachar from 1959 to 1976.

Incidence of Crimes in Cachar district.

Year	offences against the state and public tranquility		Murder		Other seriousDacoity offences against persons		
	Repor- ted	Convic- ted	Repor- ted	Convic- ted	Repor- ted	Convic- ted	Repor- ted
Cachar							
1959	—	—	19	7	277	35	3
1962	371	22	28	10	327	36	15
1965	331	18	23	4	406	32	13
1968	851	22	44	7	481	51	35
1970	579	16	35	2	448	16	41
1975	1,032	19	35	14	746	38	55
1978	1,061	40	45	6	697	25	12

Incidence of Crimes in Cachar district

Year	Dacoity		Cattle theft		Ordinary theft		House trespass and house breaking with intention to commit offences.	
	Convicted	Reported	Convicted	Reported	Convicted	Reported	Convicted	Reported
1959	3	86	15	691	90	642	67	67
1962	2	82	5	704	71	523	45	45
1965	—	67	6	751	65	475	41	41
1968	9	84	7	915	47	543	27	27
1970	1	65	6	970	31	686	24	24
1975	—	1,515	54	—	—	1,118	50	50
1978	—	1,238	60	—	—	819	60	60

Source: D.I.G. Crime, Assam.

But the increase in population is not the only reason for increase of crimes. The economic depredation, increase of slum areas with the increase of population, depression of moral values, influx of foreign criminals, etc., are some of the causes of crime in the district. Since it is a border district to Bangladesh, there is much scope for committing offences like border violation, smuggling, theft, etc. Moreover, present day easy communication and establishment of more police stations in the rural areas have provided much scope to the people to report cases to the police which would have been ignored in the past when there was no such easy communication.

1,825 and 3,546 non-cognisable offences were reported to the police during 1974 and 1975 respectively. The number of criminal cases disposed by the courts in 1974 and 1975 were 8,822 and 7,985 respectively. In these cases, 5,428 and 4,852 persons were convicted by the courts in these years.

All total 3,568, 5,771 and 2,911 cognisable cases were reported to the police in 1974, 1975 and 1976 respectively. Of these the maximum number of cases reported were on theft, burglary and rioting.

(b) Police Organisation:

The organisation of Police Force is placed in charge of an Inspector General of Police, at the State level and the Superintendent of Police at the district level. The District Superintendent and the Police Force of a district are under the control of the District Magistrate of the district. While all questions of policy and of the administration of Law within the district are for the District Magistrate's decision, the Inspector General of Police of Assam has to watch over the recruitment, education, housing, training and equipments of the police and to regulate their internal organisation and their methods of working so as to render them the most efficient instrument possible for the use of the District Magistrate in maintaining Law and Order situation in the district.

Under the Inspector General of Police, there are one Addl. Inspector General of Police and five Deputy Inspector Generals of Police, each in charge of one of the following divisions: (1) Range, (2) Training,

(3) Administration, (4) Criminal Investigation Department and (5) Special Branch. Below these officers are the District Superintendent of police in charge of the district. Under the law as it stands at present, the Superintendent of Police is an assistant of the District Magistrate for Police purposes although in matters falling within the jurisdiction of the Inspector General of Police, he is subject to the general control and direction of the superior Police Officers. In short, while the district Police forces are under the Inspector General of Police for the sake of administrative control, the force in each district is under the working control of the District Magistrate.

Cachar district for the purpose of police administration is placed in charge of a Superintendent of Police. There is one Additional Superintendent of Police to assist him in the general police administration. The district is divided into three sub-divisions. The organization of the subdivision police forces is as follows:

Karimganj Sub-division: There are four stations, namely Karimganj Police Station, Ratabari Police Station, Patherkandi Police Station and Badarpur Police Station for maintaining law and order in the Sub-division.

The cases sent by the Police are heard by the Magistrate at Karimganj. There is a separate Police staff consisting two sub-Inspectors, two Assistant Sub-Inspectors and six Constables attached to the court to help the magistracy.

Besides, there are four passport checking posts under the Police control for preventing the unauthorised entry of foreigners into the district. They are (1) Suterkandi, (2) Mahisashana checkpost, (3) Karimganj Steamerghat and (4) Karimganj Ferryghat. These checkposts are manned by the police personnel.

For the purpose of police administration, the entire sub-division is one Circle and is placed in charge of one Circle Inspector. The entire police including the Circle-Inspector's force is under the direct control and supervision of the Sub-divisional Police Officer of the Sub-division.

Hailakandi Sub-division: In Hailakandi Sub-division there are two police Stations, namely Hailakandi Police Station and Katlicherra Police Station. Over and above, one additional police staff is attached to the Circle Inspector of Hailakandi Circle known as C.I.'s Headquarter staff.

There is a separate town staff consisting of one Havildar and six Constables. There is also one police post at Lalabazar consisting of one Assistant, Sub-Inspector and four Constables.

For the purpose of police administration, the Hailakandi Sub-division is a single circle and is placed in charge of one Circle Inspector. The entire police of the Sub-division is under the direct control and supervision of one Sub-divisional Police Officer.

Silchar Sub-division: There are seven Police Stations in Silchar (Sadar) Sub-division. They are (1) Silchar, (2) Udhband, (3) Lakhipur, (4) Sonai, (5) Katigorah, (6) Borkhola and (7) Extra police station at Dhalai. Besides, there are following outposts—(1) Silchar (Tarapur O.P.), (2) Malugram, (3) Rangirkhari, (4) Arunachal, (5) Girighat and (6) Palanghat.

After preliminary investigation by police and the Executive staff, the cases are sent to the court at Silchar. There is separate police staff attached to Silchar court to help the Magistracy in conducting the cases sent for trial.

Besides, there is one investigation centre located at Borkandi area under Lakhipur P.S. and one security Out Post at Kumbhirgram air field.

For the purpose of police administration, the Sadar Sub-division is divided into two circles, namely, Silchar East Circle and Silchar West Circle. Each of the circle is placed in charge of one Circle Inspector. The police force of the Sub-division is under the control and supervision of one Deputy Superintendent of Police, (Headquarter) who is responsible for his work to the District Superintendent of Police, Cachar.

In short, there are 13 (thirteen) police stations, 9 (nine) out-posts, 2 (two) town out-posts, 1 (one) investigation centre, 3 (three) police courts, 1 (one) Security out posts and 7 (seven) patrol posts which are scattered over the whole district for the prevention and detection of crime, the maintenance of Law and Order, the apprehension of offenders, escorting and guarding prisoners and for helping the prosecution of offenders.

There are some special units, over and above, to help the regular police force mentioned above. There are (1) Criminal Investigation Deptt. (C.I.D.), (2) Prohibition Squad, (3) Anti-Corruption Squad, (4) Radio-Wireless Organisation, (5) D.S.B, (6) Armed Branch (7) Village Defence Unit, (8) Home Guards, and (9) Security Forces (10) Secret Intelligence Bureau and (11) G. R. P.

Criminal Investigation Department of the district is at present operating under one Deputy Inspector General, C.I.D., who is immediately subordinate to the Inspector General of Police, Assam. In Cachar district, one Deputy Superintendent of Police has been placed in charge of the C.I.D. under the supervision of the district Superintendent of Police.

Anti-Corruption Branch: There is an Anti-Corruption Branch of the Police Deptt. working at the capital of the State under one Deputy Inspector General of Police, Assam. The present cell is a small one and one Superintendent of Police has been placed in charge of the Anti-corruption branch of the State. Its organisation is not district-wise but for the whole State. For the purpose of administrative as well as to conduct on the spot inquiry, Skeleton staff is being maintained almost in every district.

The Silchar Zonal Anti-Corruption Branch Office was first set up in the year 1953 with one Inspector, one Sub-Inspector, one Assistant Sub-Inspector and three constables. Subsequently, to cope with the increasing volume of work, the posts of a Deputy Superintendent of police and another Sub-Inspector were sanctioned in the year 1962. The main task of the Anti-Corruption Branch is to prevent and detect corrupt practices amongst Govt. officials and members of public.

Prohibition squad: There is no regular Prohibition Squad in the district, but a section of armed constabulary under one Havildar from the regular armed branch of the district is meant for excise raid duties. They use to work in collaboration with the State Excise Department of the district.

Radio-Wireless Units: There are some Wireless Stations and mobile wireless sets in the district.

D.S.B.: There is one Deputy Superintendent of Police placed in charge of the District Special Branch in the district. The Headquarter of the officer is at Silchar. As per existing procedure he is to help the District Superintendent of Police, Cachar, in all I.B. works. There is one I.B. Inspector in the headquarter of the district who is also assisting the officer in his day to day work.

Armed Branch: This is a special branch unlike district Executive Force, consisting of armed constabulary to help the regular police force

in maintaining peace and tranquillity in the district. There are mainly two sections of the police force armed and unarmed. The armed section is generally meant for security duty, while the other section has been deployed in the different police stations, police courts, out posts etc., for the maintenance of law & order. The duties of the Armed Branch generally are providing guard at Treasuries, State Bank and Police Magazine, escorting Govt. money, prisoners, convicts etc., escorting V.I.P.s and providing them with guard of honour; participating in ceremonial parades on the occasion of Republic Day and Independence Day, functioning as an additional police force for eviction duties, excise raids, prevention of breach of peace, maintenance of law and order in cases of wide-spread and serious troubles where unarmed police are not to cope with the situation.

Village Defence Organisations: This can be termed as modern form of group defence which has sprung up from the primordial instinct of mankind for self defence against any apprehension of danger to life or property. Necessity for group defence felt even in the ancient society in situations where the individual could have remained as a helpless spectator, and it is felt far more indispensable in villages where regular police help is not readily available, particularly during the riot time.

The present day village defence organisation is modelled on the ancient group defence which at the beat of drum the villagers used to assemble with weapons and help one another against any danger.

The District Superintendent of police is in charge of the whole village defence organisation in the district. In addition, there is Honorary Deputy Adviser, V.D.P. to assist the S.P. Every able bodied male person of the village is eligible for membership of a village defence party. Unlike the Home guards, informal training is imparted to them. Uniforms are not given to them; only few articles such as torch, whistles, and other articles are given to them to conduct the usual patrol duties within the village areas. A small amount of money is given to the president of the party to meet the incidental expenditure such as to provide tea, cigarette and betel-nut etc., to the village party during patrolling period.

In the Cachar district, there are 655 registered and 77 unregistered village defence organisations. There are 15 circle organisers and one Police Sub-Inspector who organise the village defence organisation. They work under the direct control of S.P. The total annual expenditure for the organisation in the district is estimated to be rupees one lakh and fifty-two thousand.

Like Home Guards units, they do not exercise any power except

that they are the right hand of the police force of the district in the sense that they apprehend law breakers and sometimes if such law breakers are caught, then they are handed over to the police.

The village defence organisation in Assam is not still a statutory body like Home Guards. But efforts are being made to make it a statutory and permanent body.

Home Guards: In pursuance of the Assam Home Guards Act 1947, the Cachar district Home Guards Units was started on May, 1963. It is a voluntary body established to supplement the ordinary police force for the protection of persons, property, and public safety and for such other services to the public as it may be called upon to perform.

In charge of the Home Guards organisation in the State is the Director of Civil Defence and Home Guards, Assam, with headquarters at Gauhati and under him are Commandants in each of the district who control the district staff. The Home Guard organisation is a non-political body and non-communal in character. All members have, on enrolment, to sign a pledge to the effect that they will well and truly serve the Government without fear, affection, and malice or will assist to the best of their ability in the maintenance of peace and prevention of crime against persons and property. Any person who is between the ages of 16 to 40, who knows how to read and write in the regional language is eligible for enrolment. The Home Guards are trained in squad drill, lathi drill, use of arms, control of traffic, elementary law, and mob fighting. They are encouraged to take up social work. When called out on duty, they enjoy the same powers, privileges and protection as a personnel of the police force appointed under any Act for the time being in force.

The aims and object of the organisation are to have corps of men and women, who in spite of having their normal avocations, are ready to render voluntary services to the authorities to fulfil such task and functions that may be allotted to them during normal or emergency time. In short, the Home Guards are assigned the following roles (a) to serve as an auxiliary to the police and render help in maintaining internal security (b) to help people in natural calamity, (c) to act as a functional units providing essential service such as motor transport, pioneer and engineering groups, fire brigade, nursing and first-aid.

The Home Guards when called out for duty are eligible for duty allowance at the rate of rupees five per day per head, Re.1.00 per day per head as conveyance allowance are paid to those whose place of residence is beyond eight km. from the place of duty.

There were 390 urban and 1,944 rural male Home Guards in 1977 in Cachar district. The official record discloses that these figures were static in the three preceding years. The rural Home Guards are trained in the district training centre and urban Home Guards are trained in urban areas. But no permanent training centre has yet been opened in Cachar district. There are altogether 19 Instructors in Cachar district. In the District Home Guards Training Centre, there are 2 Subedars, 11 Havildars, 1 Havildar clerk, and 2 Platoon Commanders. The Urban Wing Training Centres are located at Silchar, Karimganj and Hailakandi having one Platoon Commander in each centre as Instructor. In addition to these, there are some paid staff in the district headquarters and in the district training centre.

After completion of proper training, the Home Guards are deployed by the various government agencies viz., Supply Deptt, Police, Forest and other govt. undertakings. One important development of the Home Guards in recent past is that in pursuance of the Govt. of India's direction, 2 Companies of Border-Wing Home Guards Battalion are being raised in the Cachar district. So far, one Company completed its basic training and is presently undergoing advance training with 82 B.S.F. at Bikaner.

Government Railway Police: The railways running through the district are under the charge of a Superintendent of Railway Police whose headquarters is at Haflong. The Railways running through the State is regarded a separate district for the purpose of police administration and the Superintendent of Railway Police, is therefore, responsible for the police administration of the Railways of the State. He must however, obey the instructions of the Inspector General of Police, Railways, Assam, if the latter authority desires to communicate any instruction in the interest of the public services. There are regular police staff consisting of Inspector of Railway Police, Sub-Inspector or Thana in-charge, Asstt. Sub-Inspector and constables attached to Railway Police stations and they are under direct control and supervision of the Superintendent of Railway Police, Assam. The following are the Govt. Railway Police Stations located at various places in the district of Cachar.

Karimganj G.R.P.S.

Badarpur G.R.P.S.

Police Fire-Brigade: There are three fire stations in the district each being located at Silchar, Karimganj and Hailakandi town. The units are under the direct control and supervision of the State Police Department. They are attending mainly fire calls and sometimes special service calls.

CACHAR DISTRICT GAZETTEER

Silchar fire station is the main station which is placed in charge of one Station Officer. The following are the staff position maintained in the main station.

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------|
| 1) Station Officer-1 | 4) Driver-5 |
| 2) Mechanic-1 | 5) Fireman-15 |
| 3) Leading fireman-4 | |

AT Karimganj town, there is a sub-fire station. This sub-fire station is placed in charge of a Sub-Station Officer. At Hailakandi, there is also a sub-fire station under the charge of Sub-Station Officer. The staff position of each of these sub-stations mentioned above is as follows:-

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| 1) Sub-Station Officer-1 | 3) Driver-2 |
| 2) Leading Fireman-2 | 4) Fireman-9 |

The sub-fire station function under the supervision of the Station Officer of the main station of the district.

Border Security Force: Unlike other districts in Assam, the Cachar district holds a very important strategic position. Walled off on the North by the Cachar Hills Sub-division and on the South by the Mizo Hills district, Cachar has Manipur on its East and East Pakistan and now Bangladesh on its West. In between it and Manipur lies the Bhuban Hills while the Patharia hills intercede between it and Bangladesh. All these leave the district in a peculiar location of mountains surrounding with a foreign country in the West.

Partition of united India in 1947 has presented numerous unknown problems of which border troubles having had no such precedence, have since assumed a gigantic proportion.

Since the second half of the year 1947, it was not possible to deploy any specialised unit to deal with border complications due to its non-availability and all out efforts were made to combat situations by increasing district resources of the Armed Police by supplementing these with personnel deputed from the R.P.F. which was the only available armed unit raised during World War II for internal security reasons and which was not disbanded after the war but retained by the State and renamed subsequently as Assam Police Battalion. This interim arrangement, however, was carried on unavoidably for some years and situations during 1951 and subsequent years were faced with extremely inadequate force.

Increasing demand for specialised units with Army background was felt actually for guarding the border and the 1st of the State Armed Forces was thus raised at Dergaon on 1.1.51 to face the prevailing border situation. Later, several other battalions of the State Armed Force have been raised and committed to different areas of the border.

Date of Inception of B.S.F. in the district: 1st Border Security Force then known as State Armed Force was sanctioned vide Govt. letter No.HPL.358/50/16 dated 18.11.50 with authorised strength of 18 service Platoons for a period of one year only in charge of one Commanding Officer of the status of Superintendent of Police assisted by two Assistant Commandants holding equivalent status of Deputy Superintendent of Police. Sanction for the temporary battalion was renewed every year till it was made permanent with effect from 1.4.58 under Government letter No.HPL.377/56/137 dated 3.6.58. The Supervision and disciplinary control of these Officers are under the Deputy Inspector General of Police, Border Security Force, Assam. The Deputy Inspector General of Police, Border Security Force, which was under the Inspector General of Police, Assam, has now been placed under the Home Ministry of the Central Government since 1st December, 1965.

The Battalion was recognised with effect from 1.2.63 to bring it in line as possible with Assam Rifle Battalions and to meet the increased demand on the border. The re-organisation resulted in sanctioning of 25 service platoons and 6 administrative platoons. There was also corresponding increase in the strength of officers (both gazetted and non-gazetted) and non-commissioned officers.

The Indo-Pak War of 1965 presented an important experience that the armed police who were charged with the duty of the border security were not fully competent to combat the border troubles as they had

no knowledge of modern war weapons and techniques. The necessity was felt for reorganisation of Border Security Force and accordingly it was reorganised on 1st December, 1956.

At the initial stage of this reorganised B.S.F., it was manned by personnels taken from army, police and civil officials. The State Armed Forces were gradually inducted in B.S.F. and redesignated as Battalions of the B.S.F. Now the B.S.F. has started recruiting people from local employment market.

Composition: The Battalion of the B.S.F. consists of six service companies and one supporting company. The role of service companies is to defend the border and check the commission of trans-border offences. The role of the supporting company is to offer more fire power, not man-power, to other service company who needs it. Each company is commanded by an officer i.e. Camp Commander and at the battalion level, the Unit Commander who is known as the Commandant. He is assisted by junior officers in operational and administrative efficiency.

Role of B.S.F.: As the name suggests, the main function of B.S.F. is to defend the border. During peace, the role of B.S.F. is to prevent smuggling, cattle lifting, dacoities, infiltration, and similar trans-border crimes. Also to render internal security duties i.e. to maintain law and order situation, to help the civil authorities and to assist people during natural calamities are some of the duties to be rendered during peace.

(c) JAILS AND LOCK UPS ORGANISATION :

The Inspector General of Prisons, Assam, exercises, subject to the orders of the State Govt, general control and supervision of all prisons and jails in the State.

There is a District Jail at Silchar. There is another Jail at Karimganj, known as Karimganj District Jail. Besides, there is a lock up at Hailakandi which can be termed as a sub-jail as very short-term prisoners are also kept here.

Silchar District Jail : The Executive Officer in charge of the Silchar District Jail is the Superintendent, who is vested with the executive management of the prison in all matters relating to internal economy, discipline, punishment and control generally subject to the order and authority of the Inspector General of Prisons. Under him, there are one Jailor and three Assistant Jailors, three Head Wardens and 35 male and four female Wardens and one Craft Instructor. In addition, there are one teacher and one whole-time Health Officer attached to the Jail Hospital who works under the Sub-divisional Health Officer.

Though there is no Jail Reform Committee, one Jail Panchayat Committee has been functioning in this jail since 5th Feb.'61, last with 5 (five) Panchayats duly elected. The term of each batch of the Panchayat is usually restricted to 6 months only with limited power and function. The Panchayat is allowed to represent to Jail Superintendent any difficulty or inconvenience felt by any of the prisoners. There is a proceeding book maintained in the Jail to record the proceeding of the meetings held now and then in jail.

There is no system of payment of wages nor there is any system of release on parole and furlough. But long-term prisoners engaged in the jail industries are given daily wages according to output which are deposited in the Post Office Saving Bank Accounts opened in their names. The average number of inmates in the Silchar Jail were 394.23, 442.20, and 372.25 in 1974, 1975 and 1976 respectively. Of 1.1.78 in Silchar Jail there were 106 under-trial Prisoners and 112 convicts. The watching is carried on by the Male and female wardens. There is no police personnel or armed constable engaged in the jail for this purpose.

Prison Discipline: Prison discipline is maintained in high level. Major offences are very rare. There being only minor offences no major punishment was given to any prisoner during last few years except minor warning.

Facilities: The convicted prisoners are trained in Bamboo and Cane-works and other crafts such as smithy, and carpentry. It is now Government's policy that prison tasks should be of useful occupations, and non-productive labour should be eliminated as far as possible. In the case of prisoners convicted for long-term, the aim is to train themselves as far as practicable in some particular handicraft industry so that they will, on release be able to secure employment easily at least to earn their livelihood by honest means. For the purpose of training, a trained Craft Instructor has been employed since 7.7.61 by the State Khadi and Village Industry Board. As most of the inmates come from villages and are agriculturists, they are taught in gardening also. In a word, vocational training which will serve some useful purposes in future is usually given to the prisoners in Jails.

So far as educational facilities are concerned, the prisoners upto the age of 30 years are taught in the Jail School. They are also allowed to read books available from the Jail library. They are also supplied with some approved news papers as well as religious books from the library section. There is one permanent teacher to impart lesson to the prisoners in the District Jail at Silchar.

Recreations are also allowed according to Jail Manual. The convicts are allowed to play both indoor and out-door games such as volley ball, carrom etc. Films are also shown to them on important occasions. They are also allowed to stage a drama once in a year in the Jail. Generally such functions are held during the day time. Necessary expenditure upto the extent of Rs.30/- is also borne by the Govt. on the occasion. There are selected Hindu, Muslim and Christian religious instructions to impart moral lessons to the prisoners once in a week preferably on Friday and Sunday. On important state festival occasions Radio sets with amplifier are provided for their amusement.

The Board of Visitors consisting of six members both official and non-official i.e., Deputy Commissioner, Cachar as Chairman and four male and one female leading citizen, pays regular visit to the district Jail. The District Magistrate is the official member of the Board. The members used to examine the foods (supplied to the prisoners) along with other important articles, and hear all complaints that may come from the convicts as to their living in the jails. The Board records in the visitors books its observation on the result of the detailed inspections of the jails. Any remark deserving special and prompt disposal is also forwarded by the Superintendent to the higher authority for necessary orders with such remarks as he may desire to offer.

Special classes of prisoners are treated according to prescribed rules provided for them in the Jail Manual. Juvenile prisoners whether convicted or under-trial are always kept segregated from adult male prisoners in separate ward. Political prisoners when confined in the jail are also treated according to their status or class.

Karimganj District Jail: Superintendent of District jail at Karimganj is the officer who has been placed in charge of the District Jail, Karimganj. He is also being assisted in his work by two Assistant Jailors who are sub-ordinate Executive Officers under him.

The strength of the staff attached to Karimganj District Jail including all categories is as follows:

1. Superintendent	....	One
2. Assistant Jailors	....	Two
3. Medical Officer	....	One part-time
4. Pharmacist	....	One part-time
5. Head Wardens	....	Two regular post
6. Wardens	....	16 male and two female.

There is a Prisoner's Welfare Committee functioning at the Sub-divisional level at present. No wage system for the prisoner has so far been introduced except gratuity which is paid only to convicts having sentence for a period of one year or more.

There is one Board of Visitors consisting of three non-official members and one official member which (viz. Sub-divisional officer) pays regular visit. The Sub-divisional officer presides over the Board's meeting. The Board inspects on the working of the administration, hears complaints that may come from convicts and records their note in the Visitors Book. Any remark deserving special and prompt disposal is also forwarded to the higher authority for necessary orders with comments of the Superintendent of Jail, if he desires to offer.

The average number of inmates in the Karimganj jail was 220.78, 238.81, 204.38 and 185 (approx.) in 1974, 1975, 1976 and 1977 respectively. On 1.1.78, there were 160 male and 16 female inmates. Of these 145 were U.T.Ps and 15 were convicts. Others were either non-criminal lunatics or were arrested under prohibitory order.

Hailakandi Lock-up (Sub-jail): Unlike other lock-ups, the lock up at Hailakandi has provision to keep short-term prisoners. The average number of inmates of this sub-Jail was 62.37, 96.79, 71.83 and 68 (approx.) in the year 1974, 1975, 1976 and 1977 respectively. This lock-up is under the supervision of one Asstt. Jailor who is assisted by five male and one female wardens. But the lock up is under the direct supervision of the Sub-divisional Officer, Hailakandi. On 1-1-78, there were 78 U.T.Ps and 1 one convict in Hailakandi lock-up.

Treatment of Juvenile delinquents: Among the social legislations that aim to protect children and juvenile adolescents and young adults from becoming habitual criminal, the Probation of Offenders Act, 1958, occupies an important position. In the State of Assam, Probation of Offenders Rules, 1962, is in operation almost in every district. So far as Cachar district is concerned, the Act as well as Assam Probation of Offenders Rules came into force with effect from 1.6.63. While the benefit of probation could be awarded to any offender irrespective of whether he is a minor or major or a habitual or first offender, it is specially applicable to those who are under 21 years of age.

The Unit is at present working under the Government of Assam, Social Welfare Department, with Director of Probation at the top and Chief Probation Officer just below him with District Probation Officer

in each district. It is purely an official machinery both at the State and district level in Assam.

As regards offenders dealt with under the Central Probation of Offenders Act as well as Assam Probation of offenders Rules, 1962, the work of the District Probation Officer consists mainly in making preliminary enquiries regarding the cases of alleged offenders referred to him and carrying on, in selected areas, supervision of offenders released on Probation.

While keeping in touch with the offender (the Probationer) and advising and assisting him whenever necessary, it is the duty of the Probation Officer to tell the probationer his responsibility, his obligations in regard to the supervision order passed by the court, and what is liable to happen to him if he commits breach of probation and other offences. He is to see that the probationer understands and observes the order and report upon his progress to the Magistrate.

The self respect of the offender is the greatest determining factor in awarding him the benefit of Probation. On being aware that he does not carry the stigma as does a convict if he is given the benefit of probation, a self conscious offender will sincerely try to improve himself and take the full advantage of the chance which the society generously offers him. The readiness of his family, his employer or of his neighbourhood or community is considered essential to a considerable degree in awarding the offenders the benefit of Probation.

After-care Programme: The term 'After Care' pre-supposes a period of care and training within a correctional institution, like jail, Reformatory, certified schools etc. The work of After-care is intended to complete the process of rehabilitation of the person who was receiving treatment and re-education for that purpose in a Care institution. The object of that treatment and re-education is the total rehabilitation of that individual so as to prevent him from re-entering into a life of crime dependency.

The State After-care Home was established at Silchar in January, 1960, in a hired building. The home has been shifted to its permanent building at Meherpur at a total cost of Rs.1 lakh.

The Home as stated above, is designed to accommodate those discharged prisoners who need shelter because of their insurmountable difficulties in returning back to society due to traditional prejudices and stigma attached to Jail life. The present strength of inmates of the Home is 32. But these inmates are brought from all the districts of Assam. They are trained at the State Home Production Centre, Silchar and

also in private workshops outside the Home. Rehabilitation grant is paid to deserving ex-convicts.

(b) ORGANISATION OF COURTS:

A short historical account of the Judicial Administration of Cachar:

The early history of Cachar is inadequate for drawing a comprehensive history of the judicial administration prior to the British rule. To compile it now from sketchy informations and insufficient materials available will not be safe and accurate.

Facts about civil, revenue, judicial and police administration in Cachar are yet to be explored; and extensive as well as intensive research on the subject is very much necessary for throwing light on the civilisation in that area in the ancient past. However, from epigraphic evidences and historical accounts available in the old and ancient literature, we can surmise that the system enforced by the ruling monarchs of Kamrup and the kings of Tripura who held the Cachar area under their sway from time to time, was also prevailing in Cachar at different times of their occupation. After it became the permanent site of the Kachari king, the laws of the district were the making of the Kachari king. As under the rule of the Kachari king too the system of a administration was Monarchical, the king was the only source of justice then. In administering justice, the king was assisted by the chiefs of clans called **Semphang**. After settling in Cachar, the Bengali settlers refused to be administered as per Kachari-law. The Kachari king there upon engaged Bengali Brahmin priests to decide the issue in dispute and whatever was the decision of the priest, the king consented to it through expressed words. The Kachari kings of the later period formulated laws in Sanskrit and administered it. But that law and administration of justice were quite inadequate. Another idea that we can have about the administration of justice in early Cachar is from the village administration in North Cachar Hills where Kachari people are still living in their village committees with their headman and his assistant aided by village elders. For peace and orderly life in a village, the headman **Khunaug** was responsible to the king. The king made very little intervention in civil disputes, however, he gave his final decision in his council with his minister only when such cases were referred to him by the **Khunaug**. The **Khunaug** had an assistant called **Dulu** and also an envoy **Haf-fai-sagao**. The envoy who was a faithful agent of **Khunaug** who rendered service of courier in emergent situation when offences of very grave nature was committed and peace and tranquility of a village was threatened or disturbed.

Petty offences and civil suits were decided by the Khunaug whose powers are even now recognised by administrative authority in the North Cachar hills. In those days the forms of punishment were mostly fine and dire consequence of ex-communication.

In Cachar, the Bengali Barhmins dominated the court of Kachari kings since the eighteenth century and they were the immigrant Bengali Barahmins who administered civil and criminal justice in the district. A code of criminal law was drawn up in Sanskrit presumably in the light of codes of Hindu law given sometimes between 1810 and 1820 A. D. during the reign of Krishna Chandra and Govinda Chandra. In this code, the offences were peculiarly classified of which no parallel is found in the modern code. The Brahmins were more favoured caste than the others, and the code was applied only on their courts. The administration of justice in the village however remained with the Khunaug.

After the assassination of the last Kachari king Govinda Chandra, the British Govt. took the possession of Cachar in 1830 according to the terms of the treaty of 1824. Captain Fisher, of the Survey Department, was appointed the first Superintendent in 1832, subordinate to the Governor General's Agent in Assam, i.e., the Commissioner of Assam. He also started functioning as the Judge of the district and principal court of civil justice and when in 1833 the district was transferred to the Commissionership of Dacca, he was invested with all powers of Magistrate and Collector as well. Under him was a subordinate Panchayat court for civil justice which consisted of three Indian judges, one of them being the senior and the other two juniors. When the senior agreed with atleast one of his juniors, the judgement was deemed to have been passed subject to the appeal to the Superintendent. If any of the juniors could not agree with the senior, the matter had to be referred to the Superintendent for decision.

After formal annexation of Cachar in 1832, Captain Fisher was placed as Superintendent of Cachar under the Commissioner of Dacca. The Superintendent was then allowed to act both as the Magistrate and as the Collector. Besides him, there were two Civil and Revenue Courts. Number of these courts by 1870-71, increased to nine civil and revenue courts and five magisterial courts.

The lower courts were called Native Courts and the courts of the British Agent at Cachar was called Superintendent's court. In the words of J.G. Burns, Superintendent of Cachar, in 1837, 'the Native courts took cognizance of suits for personal property to the amount of Rs. 100/- and the cases in Superintendent's court were chiefly confined to

claims of land appeals and suits where Amlas were parties.⁴ Mukhtiers and Vakils were allowed to place cases. Mukhtiers were generally British employees engaged for collection of revenue and also were allowed to decide revenue matters. The staff working in native courts were 1 Burra Bhandari, 2 Bitra Dolyees, and 1 Mohureer. For 2 native courts 3 local people preferably Kacharies were appointed as members who worked as joint-bench, and in case of differences of opinion with the junior members, the case is referred to the Superintendent for final decision.⁵

It is seen from the record that the Superintendent also exercised the power of Sessions Judge which was anomalous with powers given to him by the Sadar Dewani Adalat. The Sadar Nizamat Adalat at Calcutta took note of it and regularised the anomalies noted above. Quickly after this, the Session Judge of Sylhet was invested with the powers for trying session cases and hearing criminal appeals from Cachar.

Vakils were allowed to appear before the courts on obtaining licence from the Superintendent who issued licences annually. Court-fees were levied upto the middle of 1939 after which it was suspended. But absence of court fee led to filing of many fictitious cases. In order to avoid multiplicity of frivolous cases court-fee was re-introduced in Cachar. At the same time, Munshiff court in Cachar with its venue at Katigorah was established in May, 1939.

The Panchayat court of three judges followed the pattern of village administration of justice by Khunaug and his assistants which was in vogue during the time of Kachari kings. Though two of them could hardly write their names, their honesty, sincerity and integrity were beyond doubt. But this court ceased to function when the Munshiff court came into being.

During the forties of the nineteenth century, courts of Munshiff in full force were functioning in Cachar. However, jurisdiction, both territorial and pecuniary, were not well defined at that time. But some knowledge of procedure became inevitable with the increase of complications. Bengali language which got the status of court-language due to predominant influence of Bengali immigrants, was replaced by English with appointment of English knowing officers.

The Deputy Commissioner of Cachar was invested with powers of Sub-Judge to try civil suits. From the decision of the Sub-Judge,

4. D. Dutta : *Cachar District Records*, page.43.

5. Ibid page. 74.

appeals could be preferred to the Sadar Dewani Adalat and after its abolition to the High Court of Calcutta.

Rules of procedure laid down by the Sadar Dewani Adalat and later, High Court of Calcutta, were followed till the Civil Procedure Code passed in 1882 was brought into force.

The next phase of judicial administration in Cachar was to be recovered from the time of the creation of Assam as a separate province. At that time we find both civil and criminal courts functioning at Silchar. The judges were used to come on deputation from Sylhet for limited period for hearing Sessions cases and contested civil suits with pecuniary jurisdiction over Rs.1000/-

The judicial administration of Cachar after independence of India underwent a complete change. The High Court of Assam was established only after independence. Cachar district was at first included in the judicial jurisdiction of the District and Sessions Judge, Upper Assam Division on 15th November, 1948, with headquarter at Jorhat. This Judgeship was bifurcated and a separate Judgeship for Cachar district with headquarter at Silchar was created on 7th September, 1956. After the creation of the Assam High Court, the overall control and supervision of the Calcutta High Court over all the courts of Assam ceased to exist.

Present Organisational set up: The civil courts and officers, subordinate to the High Court are guided by the Civil Rules and orders issued by the High Court of Assam. As a principal civil court of Cachar district, the District Judge is empowered to withdraw *suo-moto*, or on motion of either party, any civil suit, miscellaneous case, execution case, or any civil appeal from the file of any subordinate court and transfer to any competent court having jurisdiction to try.

(1) **Civil Court:** The District Judge, Cachar, is the highest judicial authority in the district. It is the principal court of original jurisdiction in the district and also the court of civil appeal from all decrees and orders upto the value of Rs.15,000/- passed by subordinate civil court from which an appeal can be preferred. The District Judge exercises general control over the civil courts and their establishment and inspect the proceedings of these courts and submit notes on inspection to the High Court. This power cannot be vested in the Addl. District Judge. For civil matter there are at present, excluding District Judge Court, seven Civil Courts in the district, two Assistant District Judges Courts at Silchar and five Munsiff Courts. Of these Munsiff Courts, two are at Silchar, two at Karimganj and one at Hailakandi. But the Munsiff of

Hailakandi has also got the powers of 1st class Judicial Magistrate.

The district Judge and the Asstt. District Judge have unlimited pecuniary jurisdiction and their jurisdiction extends to the whole district. In absence of the Asstt. District Judge who is the appellate authority over the Panchayat Adalats, the District Judge entertains and disposes of revisional petitions arising out of the decision of Panchayat Adalat under section 105 of the Panchayat Act, 1972. The District Judge can distribute civil suits and other court matters which normally fall within his jurisdiction to the Assistant District Judges. But having the exclusive jurisdiction in granting Succession Certificate and Divorce decree under the Hindu Marriage Act, he cannot transfer these cases to the Subordinate Courts. The District Judge is also authorised to deal with cases under the Hindu Marriage Act, cases under the Land Acquisition Act, Guardian and Wards Act, Indian Trust Act, Provincial Insolvency Act, 1920, and Indian Succession Act, 1925.

The Assistant District Judges have following powers:

- (a) to hear appeals arising out of the decision of the Munsiffs.
- (b) to hear appeals from the decisions of Adhi-collection Board.
- (c) to try suits from Rs.2,000.00 to the unlimited jurisdiction.
- (d) to try cases transferred by the District Judge.
- (e) to hear appeals or revision petition arising out of the decision of Panchayat Adalat u/s 105 of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1972.

So far the powers of the Munsiff are concerned, they are to deal with civil suits upto the value of Rs.5000.00 within their local limit. The Additional District Judge (I) and the Munsiff (I) at Silchar are the filing courts in civil matters. In Karimganj, the Munsiff (I) and in Hailakandi, the Munsiff court are the filing courts. The Munsiff (I) of Karimganj and the Munsiff of Hailakandi have been given extraordinary power to try cases of succession certificate and the Munsiff of Hailakandi has been given criminal power of a Magistrate of a first class and as such he can try criminal cases also.

(II) **Criminal Courts:** The District Judge, Cachar, is also the Sessions Judge of the District. The Sessions Judge tries criminal cases which are committed to his court by judicial magistrate after preliminary enquiries and hears appeal against the decisions of subordinate Magistrate.

In addition to the Sessions Judge, there are two Assistant District Sessions Judges at Silchar who are also the District Judges in the civil side. Over and above these courts, there are six courts of Judicial Magistrates in the district, of which there are 3 at Silchar, 2 at Karimganj,

and one at Hailakandi. These Magistrates are put under the direct control and supervision of the Chief Judicial Magistrate posted at Silchar and the Sub-divisional Judicial Magistrate one each posted at Hailakandi and Karimganj. To sum up, there is one Sessions Judge court, two Asstt. Sessions Judge courts, one Chief Judicial Magistrate court, two Sub-divisional Judicial Magistrate courts and six Magisterial courts in the district. The Chief Judicial Magistrate and Sub-divisional Judicial Magistrate were formerly known as Addl. District Magistrate (Judicial) and Sub-divisional Magistrate (J) respectively. The Sessions Judge or the Addl. Sessions Judge can pass any sentence authorised by law; but death sentence passed by him is subject to the confirmation of the High Court of Assam. An Asstt. Session Judge can pass any sentence authorised by law except a sentence of death or transportation or imprisonment for a term exceeding ten years.

After enforcement of the Criminal Procedure Code of 1974 (Act No. 2 of 1974), the Magistrates are invested with two classes of powers first class and second class. A Magistrate in the initial stage is invested with second class power; he is conferred with first class power by the High Court only when he gathers sufficient experience and efficiency.

All criminal cases in the first instance are tried by the Magistrates according to their powers as laid down in Section 28 and 29 of the Cr. P.C. In a case triable only by a Court of Sessions, it is sent to the Court of Sessions when it is found that a prima-facie case is duly established. On receipt of such commitments, the Sessions Judge either keeps the case with him for trial by himself or transfer it to the Asstt. Sessions Judge for disposal after examining the nature of the offence involved. All criminal appeals are in the first instance filed in the court of Sessions Judge. Appeals from the decisions of Magistrate may be tried by the Asstt. District Judge when transferred. Appeals against the decisions of the Session and Asstt. Sessions Judges lie before the High Court. The Sessions Judge also exercises powers u/s 397-399 of Cr.P.C. over all Judicial Magistrates of the district. Local trials by Magistrate is not uncommon. It gives the trying Magistrate an opportunity to study the circumstance under which the alleged offences are reported to have been committed. Often the Magistrates hold mobile court upon streets within their local limits to detect offenders on the spot under the Municipal Bye-Laws, and Motor Vehicle Acts and try the detected cases summarily.

Other Law Officers: For conducting prosecution in sessions cases and for appeals and revision before the Sessions court, there is one

Public Prosecutor. He is assisted by a panel of Assistant Public Prosecutors who conduct the prosecution in the other courts. They are selected from amongst the lawyers in the respective Bar. They are entitled to get remuneration in accordance with the scale of fee as laid down in the Assam Law Department Manual. A panel of defence lawyers is also maintained to give legal assistance to poor and deserving persons who are to be tried for offences where death sentence or imprisonment for life is prescribed as punishment in law. Such Defence Lawyers are also entitled to remuneration in accordance with the scale of fee as laid down in the above Manual.

(i) **Nature and volume of cases:**

Civil suits: All total 3,695 civil suits were instituted in 1975 as against 3,757 in 1974 in Cachar. After disposal of 3,866 cases in 1974, the cases numbering 5,435 remained pending. These cases together with cases numbering 3,695 instituted in 1975 came up for trial during 1975. Position of cases and appeals instituted, disposed of and pending during the year 1974 and 1975 in the district are given in the table No.1.

Table No. I

Classes of cases	Instituted during		Disposed of during		Cases pending during	
	1974	1975	1974	1975	1974	1975
1) Original	17,66	1,842	2,072	2,253	3,078	2,811
2) Misc. Judicial	1,002	1,015	952	1,126	757	663
3) Regular appeal	308	249	198	250	689	697
4) Misc. appeal	139	143	168	185	193	151
5) Execution case	542	446	476	490	718	678

At the end of the year 1975, civil cases numbering 5,000 were found pending, recording a decrease of 435 cases over the year 1974. The main reason of pending cases is due to lengthy procedure prescribed by Civil Procedure Code, callousness of the people handling the case, and delaying tactics followed by either party of the suit just to harass the opposite party of the suit. These cases were instituted in different Civil courts of the district. The number of original cases decided by the different Civil Courts are shown in Table No.2.

Table No. 2

Courts	No. of case decided during 1974		Cases decided during 1975	
	Contested	Uncontested	Contested	Uncontested
1) Dist. Judge.	—	16	2	29
2) Asstt. Dist. Judge.	61	99	45	95
3) Munsiff.	529	1,367	497	1,585

Source: Registrar, Assam High Court, Gauhati.

Criminal Cases: All total 12,049 offences were reported to the district courts during 1974, which increased to 14,586 in 1975. In 1975, cases numbering 3,908 were found to be pending from the previous years and in 1975, the number of cases brought forward from the previous year were, 5,474, showing an increase of 1,566 cases over the previous year. This is perhaps because of inadequacy of number of criminal courts in the district and many cases were later found either to be false or dismissed for default. 3,289 and 2,258 cases were dismissed on either ground during the year 1974 and 1975 respectively. The number of cases brought to trial during 1974 and 1975 were 11,728 and 11,989 respectively. The rate of disposal of cases decreased to 7,985 in 1975 over 8,823 disposed of in 1974.

The study of nature of offences committed in the district and cases instituted thereof during the year 1974 and 1975 shows an over-all decrease during the year 1975. A considerable decrease of offences against public tranquillity, offences of murder, attempt to murder, culpable homicide, kidnapping, dacoity and robbery is noticeable with the only exception that the number of offences of unlawful assembly slightly increased during 1975. Table 3 next page will indicate the true position.

In 1974, total number of persons convicted of these offences were 5,428 and in 1975 the number decreased to 4,852.

(ii) Local Agency for disposal of Civil and Criminal Cases :

Under the Assam Panchayat Raj Act, 1972 as amended upto December, 1974, 38 Gaon Panchayats have been formed in a number of villages in Cachar district. These institutions were invested with judicial power to try petty civil and criminal matters by the Government

Table No. 3

Nature of offences	No. of cases reported on		No. of cases dismissed and found to be false		No. of cases found to be true.	
	1974	1975	1974	1975	1974	1975
A) Offence against public tranquillity	991	813	561	425	295	417
i) Rioting	453	381	285	271	88	94
ii) Unlawful assembly	401	432	274	154	92	322
iii) Other	137	—	—	—	115	1
B) Offences against human body	1,953	1,574	898	677	513	1,088
i) Murder	55	32	—	3	32	60
ii) Attempt to murder	47	10	—	—	52	12
iii) Culpable homicide	18	12	—	—	9	9
iv) Wrongful restraint	60	11	38	6	15	11
v) Wrongful confinement	21	18	16	9	8	8
vi) Rape & Kidnapping	117	35	67	36	25	65
C) Offences against property.	3,741	2,694	1,778	1,119	853	424
i) Robbery	335	86	26	223	76	40
ii) Dacoity	98	17	28	13	27	41
iii) Dacoity with murder.	4	—	—	—	6	—
iv) Other offences	3,304	2591	1,724	893	1,010	343

Source: D.I.G. Crime, Assam.

of Assam under Section 83 of the said Act. Section 84 of the Act empowers the Gaon Panchayat members to select five persons who are not members of the Gaon Panchayat, Mahkuma Parishad, the Assam Legislative Assembly or the Parliament, to act as member of the Panchayati Adalat. The District Judge is empowered to select the Chairman out of those five selected members of the Adalat. The District Judicial Magistrate has got power to transfer a case from Panchayati Adalat to any other court of competent jurisdiction or a Magistrate can transfer a case from his record to the Panchayati Adalat if the case is cognizable by the Panchayati Adalat. The Panchayati Adalat has got power to try following offences including abetment or attempt to commit such offences thereof.

Under the Indian Penal Code 1860; Section-269, 277, 283, 323, 352, 355 to 358, 379, 426, 504, 506 (first point) and 510.

Under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1890: Sections 4, 5, 5A, 6, 6C and 7.

Under the Cattle Trespass Act, 1871: Sections 20-24.

Under the Vaccination Act, 1880: Section 6 and 18.

Under the Northern Indian Ferries Act, 1878, all offences except those under section 26 and 28.

Under the Assam Students Invidious Smoking Act, 1923; all offences under the Act.

Although 38 Gaon Panchayats are established in the Cachar district, not a single Pandchayat Adalat has been officially notified by the Govt. of Assam so far.

Appeals or revision from these cases are allowed to the Asstt District Judge vide section 119 of the Act.

With a view to help the poor litigants, the Purvanchal Legal Aid Centre was opened with headquarter at Gauhati. A district unit of it was also opened in Cachar district. But no activity has been noticed so far of the Centre.

(ii) **Separation of Judiciary from Executive:** In exercise of the powers conferred by Article 237 of the Constitution of India, the Governor of Assam is pleased to apply the provisions of Chapter VI, part VI of the said Constitution to those Magistrates in the Districts of Nowgong and Cachar who are exclusively allotted Judicial work in the said districts. This has come into force with effect from 2nd January, 1965.

In accordance with the scheme of separation drawn by the State Government in consultation with the High Court, the following arrangement is made.

The separation of Judicial and Executive functions has been designed within the framework of the Code of Criminal Procedure. All the functions of a Magistrate under the Criminal Procedure Code and various other Statutes fall broadly into three categories.

- (a) Functions which are Police in their nature, e.g. dealing with unlawful assemblies.
- (b) Functions of an administrative character.
- (c) Functions which are essentially judicial, e.g., trial of criminal cases.

After the separation of judiciary from executive, the purely judicial functions are transferred from the district Magistrate and the Magistrates subordinate to him to a new set of Magistrates who are under the control of the High Court. The functions falling under category (a) & (b)

mentioned above are to be discharged by the District Magistrate and his sub-ordinates. Magistrates, who are vested with purely judicial functions will be designated as Judicial Magistrates and those who would continue to do the Police & Administrative functions are designated as Executive Magistrates.

Thus, there are two hierarchies of Magistrates in the districts when the separation is given effect to viz., (i) Judicial Magistrates attending to purely judicial work. They are under the control of the High Court and District Magistrate is not responsible for supervision of their work. (2) Executive Magistrate doing magisterial work of administrative nature subordinate to the Government through the District Magistrate. All the functions and powers of a Magistrate as defined in the Code of Criminal Procedure and various other Acts have been allotted between these two categories of Magistrates. Where administrative convenience justifies, some of these powers have also been declared as concurrent.

The Deputy Commissioner remains as the District Magistrate of the district as defined U/S 20 of the Criminal Procedure Code. But the head of the Judicial Magistracy in the district is called the Chief Judicial Magistrate and have the powers of an Addl. District Magistrate U/S 12 (1) of the Criminal Procedure Code and he is responsible for supervision of work of the Judicial Magistrates in the district. He is also responsible to ensure that all the functions allotted to him and the Judicial Magistrates are performed properly. He is the connecting link between the High court and Judicial Magistrate in his district.

Similarly in a sub-division, all these functions would be performed by the principal Judicial Magistrate who is designated as Sub-divisional Judicial Magistrate.

The powers of the Police such as those under Chapter XIII of the Criminal Procedure Code are not affected by the scheme. The police continue to have all the powers and to discharge all the functions they hitherto had. In so far as administrative and police matters are concerned, the police is to continue to address the District Magistrate, but in regard to purely judicial matters, for example calling for a copy of judgement of any Judicial Magistrate, the Police is to address the Chief Judicial Magistrate.

The allocation of powers between the two categories of Magistrates is based on the principle enunciated above, namely, matters which are purely judicial in their nature is strictly within the purview of the Judicial Magistrates, while matters which are purely administrative

or executive in their nature, within the purview of the Executive Magistrates. The two categories of Magistrates will exercise powers and discharge functions set forth in the Cr.P.C. Should a question arise whether a matter falls within the province of the Executive Magistrate or of the Judicial Magistrate and the matter is one of urgency, the District Magistrate will decide the question pending receipt of clarification from Government acting in consultation with the High Court. The allocation of Executive and Judicial functions will be made on the following principles:

(i) Matters which involve the appreciation or shifting of evidence and the formulation of a decision which exposes any individual to any punishment or penalty will properly be in the province of the Judicial Magistrate.

(ii) Matters which are clearly administrative or executive in their nature and are connected with maintenance of law and order situation such as the granting of licence, the suspension or cancellation of a licence, sanctioning of prosecution, withdrawing from a prosecution and passing of prohibitory orders and the like should be in the province of the Executive Magistrate.

(iii) Where any enactment requires that information shall be given to a Magistrate, the public would be deemed to have discharged their duty if they pass on the information to either class of Magistrates.

(iv) The power to issue warrants and various other processes are concurrent.

(iv) **Allocation of powers under the Code of Criminal Procedure:**

1) All offences under all laws in force triable by Magistrate will be tried by the Judicial Magistrates and the Executive Magistrates will have nothing to do with the trial of offences.

(2) In regard to Sections 108, 109 and 110 of the Criminal Procedure Code, normally the Judicial Magistrates of 1st class have the jurisdiction to conduct proceeding. The information to which reference is made in these sections originate almost always from the Police and they can lay the information directly before the Judicial Magistrate. Section 108 deals with the spreading of seditious etc. matters, section 109 with persons of suspected behaviour who have no ostensible means of livelihood or who cannot give satisfactory account of themselves, and section 110 with habitual offenders.

(3) Judicial and Executive Magistrate will have concurrent powers to direct the police to investigate.

(4) In cognisable cases the police will normally deal with the Executive Magistrate and only at the stage of the submission of the final report the case is sent to the Judicial Magistrate. However, in

cases where the Executive Magistrate has directed the police to investigate, unless the enquiry results in a charge sheet, the final reports should be submitted to the Executive Magistrate. This will enable the Executive Magistrate to decide whether there should be further enquiry or not. If enquiry results in a charge sheet, the Judicial Magistrate, will try the case thus instituted.

(5) The District Magistrate and the Chief Judicial Magistrate will act independently of each other in their respective spheres of work. Neither will interfere in the discharge of work by the other.

(6) In case of proceedings U/S 133, 145, 146 and 147 Cr. P.C. at the initial stages, the Executive Magistrates on the police report will draw up necessary proceedings and shall attach the immovable property involved in the dispute wherever necessary. Thereafter, if the matter is found to have involved some question of civil right, the proceedings shall be transferred to the Judicial Magistrate for final decision.

(E) LEGAL PROFESSION AND BAR ASSOCIATION:

Upto the year 1910, the Bar Association was housed in a temporary shed near the present site. In the year 1907, when the membership of the Bar rose 13, representation was made to the Government for the grant of permanent house to the Bar Association at public cost. The Lieutenant Governor of Assam was pleased to grant the prayer and a building was constructed in 1910 at government cost and the building was handed over to the Bar Association on certain terms and conditions. In later years, when the membership of the Association further increased, the building had been extended to its present position by the Bar Association at its own cost. At one stage the members had to raise loan by pledging their personal credit to meet the expenses of extension of the building. The library was started for the Bar Association at Silchar. Now the District Bar Library had sufficient number of books which include annotated Statutes by standard authors, important law reports and Holdbury's laws of England. The Association subscribes A.I.R., I.L.R. (Assam) Cr.L.J., Labour Law journal, Current Indian Statutes and Assam Gazette. Originally, admission fee for a new entrant to the Association was Rs. 10/- and monthly subscription was Rs. 1/-. The admission fee has been gradually raised to Rs. 500/-, but the monthly subscription is same as before.

Silchar district Bar Association had always been at the vanguard of all progressive movements of the country and it had the proud distinction of being affiliated to the Provincial Congress Committee of Bengal for the purpose of electing delegates to the Congress sessions and

upto the year 1920, the Association elected delegates to Congress sessions at the various places from amongst its members and prominent public spirited outsiders.

History of Muktiers' Bar Association: Silchar Muktiers Bar Association came into being in 1874 in the year on which the Chief Commissionership of Assam was formed. There was no Muktiership examination at that time. The Deputy Commissioner used to grant *Sanads* to practise as Muktiers in Criminal, Civil and Revenue matters.

At the outset, both pleaders and Muktiers were the members of the same Association and used to sit in together in one building. In 1910, however, the pleaders, on certain political undertakings obtained concession of the construction of a new building at public cost for themselves. The Muktiers had constructed a separate house for their exclusive use with the materials of the old kutchra joint shed purchasing the share of the pleaders' at the cost of Rs. 50/-.

When the older section of the present set of Muktiers joined the Bar, they formed the present association as it was in the year 1928. In 1924, construction of the present building was started. The western wing of the building had been constructed in the year 1958. After construction, it was occupied on hire by the Asstt. Sessions Judge, who held his court in it for 13 months.

After Partition, a good number of Muktiers from Pakistan migrated here and joined this Bar. Bar is not yet over crowded, and there is still scope for talented young people. There is a library and it contains about three hundred law books and reference books and law journals.

There are two Bar Associations also at Karimganj, one for the pleaders and another for the Muktiers. Both are separately managed having respective managing committees. Each Association has its own President, Secretary and Asstt. Secretaries and members. Each Bar has its own income by sale of *Vakalatnama* or *Muktianama* and from other sources.

Besides the Bar Association noted in the foregoing paragraphs, there is one Bar Association at Hailakandi.

OTHER DEPARTMENTS

(1) Public Works Department :

The Public Works Department in Assam was first started in 1861 along with the creation of the Assam Circle under one Superintending Engineer. This officer was empowered to work as Chief Engineer and Secretary to the Commissioner in the Public Works Department. His headquarter was initially at Gauhati but subsequently shifted to Shillong. The convention of the Chief Engineer acting as the Secretary of the Department also continued till 1972 and since then the works done by the Chief Engineer as the Secretary have been entrusted upon the officer designated as Secretary, Public Works Department.

Taking up some important major construction works under the First Five-Year Plan period and also some massive flood control projects during the early fifties led to the bifurcation of the Public Works Department on January 30, 1956, into two wings namely (1) Public Works Department (Roads and Buildings wing) and (2) Public Works Department (Flood control and Irrigation wing). Later on, these two wings were converted into two separate Departments and placed under two Chief Engineers who worked as the technical as well as the administrative heads of the respective Departments. Construction of roads, bridges, buildings etc. was under the Public Works Department (Roads and Buildings wing) while other Department dealt with embankments, river training, flood control and irrigation works. The Public Works Department (Flood Control and Irrigation) was subsequently renamed as the Public Works (Embankment and Drainage) Department. Its nomenclature was further changed to Flood Control Department and its irrigation works were placed under a newly created department namely Irrigation Department with effect from January 1, 1974. All the irrigation and drainage works formerly dealt with by the Flood control and Irrigation Department and also by the Agriculture Department were transferred to this Irrigation Department.

For administrative convenience each Department is split up into circles comprising one or more districts or a part thereof and each circle is placed under one Superintending Engineer. Again each circle is further divided into Divisions under Executive Engineers, and each

Division into some sub-divisions under Sub-divisional Officers and each Sub-division into sections under Sectional Officers.

Public Works of the Cachar district in the early years of this present century, as B.C. Allen describes, vested "in charge of an Executive or Assistant Engineer who is usually assisted by two upper and three lower subordinates." The Public Works Department was entrusted with the construction and maintenance of all the larger public buildings like Jail, the Public offices, Schools, and Post and Telegraph Offices at the district and sub-divisional headquarters, Circuit Houses, D.A. Bungalows, and Inspection Bungalows on provincial roads. The important roads of communication under the Public Works Department were:-

(1) the road from Badarpur through Silchar to Girighat on the Manipur frontier; and (2) the road from Silchar across the Chatra Haor through Somairkona to Hailakandi, which a little to the north of Hailakandi, divided into two branches, one going to Badarpur and the other to Salchapra railway station.

Such works under the Local Board required professional skill or engineering knowledge were generally made over to the Public Works Department for execution. The Department faced difficulties for execution of works owing to absence of an artisan class, and dearth of unskilled labour. These two factors caused heavy expenditure on Public Works in the Cachar district.

The Public Works Department in the district came into being on 1st. April, 1909 under the Eastern Bengal and Assam Government with its headquarters at Silchar. In 1912, the Public Works Department, Silchar, came under the Assam Government due to provincial reorganisation. Subsequently three Public Works Divisions in the district under one Executive Engineer in each case have been created to cope with the increasing works under this Department. They are Silchar Division, Karimganj Division and Hailakandi Division. Karimganj Division has been functioning since 1957 and has three sub-divisions namely Karimganj, Nilambazar and Pathakandi. The latter two sub-divisions were started in 1958 and 1955 respectively in the district.

At present, there is one Superintending Engineer for the Southern Assam Circle which covers the entire Cachar district. His headquarters is located at Silchar. The organisational set-up of the Public Works Department (Roads and Buildings) at Divisional-level conforms more or less to the same pattern but the number of Divisions, Sub-divisions etc. generally depends upon the volume of works. There are four Divisions

namely Cachar Division, Karimganj Division, Silchar Medical College Construction Division and Mechanical Division. The headquarters of the last two Divisions are at Silchar. Cachar Division has three Sub-divisions viz, Silchar Road Sub-divisions (A) and (B) and Katigora Road Sub-division. Karimganj Division comprises of three Sub-divisions namely, Karimganj, Nilambazar and Patharkandi Sub-division. Medical College Construction Division, Silchar, has also four Sub-divisions.

Mechanical Division : As mentioned above there is one Mechanical Division in Cachar with its headquarters at Silchar under the control of the Executive Engineer, with a view to undertaking all repairing works of machineries used by all the public works (Roads and Buildings) Divisions of the district. This Division comprises of two sections, of which one deals with repair works and the other manages the store. Besides, this Mechanical Division has one Sub-division at Silchar under the charge of one Sub-Divisional officer.

(II) Flood Control : This Department was created on January 1, 1974. But we trace its origin in Cachar district to 1951, when an Embankment and Drainage Division with one Sub-division was created for the entire district for all embankment and drainage works therein. Its headquarter was at Silchar and the Division was under one Executive Engineer, Embankment and Drainage Division. Prior to this, all the embankment and drainage works of the district were carried out by the Public Works Department (Roads and Buildings). In 1955, the Public Works Department was bifurcated to two wings namely, Public Works Department (Roads and Buildings) and Public Works Department (Embankment and Drainage) and the existing Cachar Embankment and Drainage Division was placed in charge of the Superintending Engineer, Nowgong. In 1959, another Division namely Cachar Investigation Embankment and Drainage Division was created for Cachar and North Cachar Hills districts. Again in 1969, a new Division namely Hailakandi Embankment and Drainage Division was created with its jurisdiction within Hailakandi Civil Sub-division and a part of Silchar Civil Sub-division. In 1971, the Public Works (Embankment and Drainage) Department was renamed as Flood Control and Irrigation Department, thereafter this Department was bifurcated into two Departments as Flood Control and Irrigation Department.

Irrigation Department : There are at present four Divisions under the Superintending Engineer, Silchar. These Divisions are Karimganj,

Hailakandi, Badarpur and Silchar Divisions and have altogether eleven Sub-divisions in the Cachar district. Badarpur Investigation, Badarpur Flood Control, Karimganj Investigation and Hailakandi Investigation Sub-divisions are under Badarpur Division; Silchar Flood Control I and II and Sona Flood Control Sub-divisions are under Silchar Division; Hailakandi and Lala Flood Control Sub-divisions are under Hailakandi Division and Karimganj and Patharkandi Sub-divisions are under the Karimganj Flood Control Division.

Organisational set up of the Department : The Irrigation Department of the Government of Assam as a separate department came into being in 1972. Originally it was only a wing of the Flood Control and Irrigation Department. In the district of Cachar, the departmental offices dealing with flood control and irrigation works continued as such till March 1975, when a new Division at Silchar was opened according to the new working plan. Simultaneously the existing Hailakandi Division was converted into an Investigation Division and local irrigational plans were taken up independently. The irrigation part of the Agriculture Department was also merged with the new Irrigation Department. Now, the department is entrusted with planning, investigations, Survey and execution of Irrigation Schemes.

The administrative head of the department is the Secretary to the Government of Assam, Irrigation Department. There is one Chief Engineer who is responsible for the works throughout the State. He is assisted by four Additional Chief Engineers, entrusted with different nature of works and Jurisdiction. There are a number of Superintending Engineers who are responsible for the works and investigation of the Circles consisting of the Divisions controlled by the Executive Engineers. The Executive Engineers are assisted by Sub-divisional officers and Assistant Engineers in the execution of the different irrigational schemes.

So far as the district of Cachar is concerned it is included in the Southern Assam Irrigation Circle with headquarters at Silchar. In the district there is only one Superintending Engineer under whom there are two Divisions; one at Silchar and the other at Hailakandi. Recently a Mechanical Division has also been sanctioned for the district.

Mention may be made here that five working Sub-divisions fall under the jurisdiction of the Works Division and two sub-divisions are included under Investigation Division. Out of the five working Sub-divisions as mentioned above three are from Agriculture (irrigation) Sub-divisions which have been merged with the new Irrigation Department.

(III) Agriculture Department ; Prior to the Second World war not much emphasis was laid upon agriculture. The agriculture

Department was first started in the district in 1928 with one Agriculture Inspector and one Agriculture Demonstrator in each thana. The Department was under the supervision of the Deputy Director of Agriculture, Surma Valley, whose headquarter was at Sylhet (now in Bangladesh). The staffs position was gradually augmented and the posts of Inspectors and Demonstrators were created and posted in the important places of the district. One Inspector was posted at Silchar in charge of Grow More Food Scheme, Irrigation and other normal works and three other Inspectors were posted for Hailakandi Sub-division and Katigora Police station. Till 1945, there was, however no noticeable increase in the strength of officers and staff. The present officers are mainly placed in charge of some Government farms, village-level demonstrations, distribution of improved seeds, and technical advice to the cultivators, formed part of their duties. The posts of Fruit and Plant Protection Inspectors were also created to expand horticulture and to popularise plant protection measures. The posts of Sectional Inspectors, Irrigation Inspectors, Assistant Irrigation Inspectors and Agriculture Demonstrators were created in the district. In the year of 1949, one District Seed Farm was opened at Salchapra under one Agriculture Inspector designated as Manager.

In order to cope with the food shortage and soaring rise of prices during the Second World War, the Government launched the 'Grow More Food' campaign vigorously with a seven point integrated programme to increase agricultural food products. So the Agriculture Department was re-oriented and expanded. The district Agriculture office at Silchar was established in 1947 with a District Agriculture Officer under the Director of Agriculture who is the technical and administrative head of the Department.

Prior to 1951-1952, the Sectional Inspector, Irrigation Inspector, and Plant Protection Inspector etc. were responsible for successful implementation the scheme under each of them but after re-organisation of the Department all the Agricultural Inspectors have been doing all agricultural works. With the inauguration of the Community Development Blocks, Agriculture Inspectors were posted as Extension officers at the Block headquarters under the immediate control of the Block Development officers. With the increase of Agricultural activities in the district, two sub-Divisional Agriculture Officers were posted at Hailakandi and Karimganj under the District Agricultural Officer.

The District Agricultural Officer at Silchar heads the district organisation of the Agriculture and is fully responsible for implementation of the programmes of agricultural development through his subordinates.

The Sub-Divisional Officers posted at Hailakandi and Karimganj to whom financial powers are also given are responsible for the implementation of the agricultural programmes. The implementation of the Grow More Food Scheme, the Jute Development Scheme, Pulse, Oilseeds, Sugarcane, Horticulture Development programme, Plant Protection programme, Land Reclamation and Agricultural Implements programme, Fertilizer and Compost Development programme etc. have been taken up and these programmes have been placed in charge of Agricultural Inspectors. One Farmer's Training Centre at Arunachal for giving necessary training to agriculturists and another workshop for manufacturing improved agricultural implement have also been set up under different Agricultural Officers.

There are fourteen Community Development Blocks in the Cachar district. In each of these Blocks there is one Agricultural Inspector designated as Extension Officer who is placed under the immediate control of the Block Development Officer, although these Extension Officers are under the District Agriculture Officer in respect of technical and administrative guidance. In addition to these Officers each Block has one Additional Extension Officer for implementation of the Rice and Jute package programmes. One Assistant Agriculture Inspector and an Agriculture Demonstrator are also posted in each community Development Block to assist the Extension Officers in their work, if necessity so demands. The details of the activities and achievement of the Agriculture Department have been fully discussed in Chapter-IV.

(IV) Veterinary Department: Originally the Veterinary Department of Assam was under the Agriculture Department with a Superintendent as the Head of the Department. Subsequently the post of Superintendent was upgraded to the Director of Civil Veterinary Department of Assam with four Veterinary Inspectors. These Inspectors were under the Director of Civil Veterinary Department and one of these Inspectors was placed in charge of the Surma Valley Circle comprising the Sylhet and Cachar districts with his headquarters at Silchar. Before 1953, this Department was known as the Civil Veterinary Department and in 1954, these four Veterinary Inspectors were upgraded to the District Veterinary Officer with class II Gazetted status and a new post of Deputy Director, Veterinary, was also created to assist the Director, Veterinary, Assam in his work. There were six Local Board dispensaries at Silchar, Hailakandi, Karimganj, Patharkandi, Palonghat and Lala at that time and each one was under one Veterinary Surgeon. Veterinary Field Assistants were also appointed under Veterinary

Surgeons. There were also one Live stock Inspector and a few Live stock Demonstrators in the district under the Local Board, Silchar.

In the year of 1959, the posts of Zonal Deputy Director of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department were also created and one of which was posted at Silchar for Cachar and Nowgong districts. In the same year the post of District Veterinary Officer was also up-graded to Class I. In 1962 two posts of Sub-divisional Animal Husbandry and Veterinary officers were created for Hailakandi and Karimganj Civil Sub-divisions with Class II status. Subsequently, different posts of Assistant Director (livestock) A.R.O., A.P.D.O. and Project Officers have been created for the smooth and efficient implementation of the schemes such as Crash Programme, A.N.P. Programme etc in the district.

Along with the inauguration of the Community Development Blocks, the district set up of this Department has been well expanded in order to cover all the Blocks of the district. Each Community Development Block is provided with a veterinary dispensary in charge of a Veterinary Assistant Surgeon. One Extension Officer (Veterinary) and a Field Assistant have also been posted in each Block. During the post-independence period some more hospitals and dispensaries have been established in the district. The district has now five veterinary hospitals at Silchar, Borkhola, Borjalenga, Sonabazar and one at Karimganj in Karimganj Sub-division. There are twenty-two dispensaries at Bashkandi, Palanghat, Udarband, Kalain, Salchapra, Lakhipur, Narsingpur, Rajabazar, Kachua-gram, Sonabarighat in Silchar-Sub-division; Hailakandi, Lala, Katlichera, Karichera, Monachera in Hailakandi Sub-division and Kaliganj, Nilambazar, Badarpur, Bazarghat, Patharkandi, Badarpur Block and Ramkrisnanagar in Karimganj Sub-division. Besides these hospitals and dispensaries the district has forty-six veterinary centres and eleven Key Village Sub-centres and one District Diagnostic Laboratory at Silchar and one Central Semen collection centre at Ghoongoor.

Each of the hospital and dispensary is managed by one Veterinary Assistant Surgeon and some Veterinary Field Assistants with one Stockman under the supervision and guidance of the District and the Sub-divisional Animal Husbandry and Veterinary officers. The veterinary Laboratory established first in the district in 1954 has now been upgraded to the District Diagnostic Laboratory under one class II officer who is assisted in his works by one Technical Assistant, one Laboratory Assistant and one IV grade officer. The Veterinary staffs in each Block work under the direct control of the Block Development officer but the over-all control in technical and administrative matters is exercised by

the District Veterinary officer.

There are two Farms namely the Government Livestock Farm at Ghoongoor and the Duck and Poultry Farm at Silcoorie. In order to improve the breed of local cattle by artificial insemination eleven Key Village centres as already mentioned have been established in eleven different places of the district. Each centre has some sub-centres under it. The Assistant Research officer of the Central Semen Collection Centre at Ghoongoor is under the Intensive Cattle Development Programme. For development of cattle, private breeders are helped by financial assistance and by improved breeds of heifers by the Veterinary Department. The district Veterinary organisation has also been rearing fodder crops such as guinea, Nipier, para, Penicitiuar and maize within the district.

There are two Managers incharge of the Farms as noted above. There is Milk Procurement Officer in charge of Milk Supply Scheme at Silchar and one Poultry Development Officer in-charge of Egg and Poultry. The Farm not only caters to the need of the district in regard supply of birds and eggs but also the neighbouring districts and states. For diagnosis and control of the diseases of animals and birds the District Diagnostic Laboratory works efficiently.

(V) **Forest Department** : Cachar Forest Division was first started in the district in 1874-75 under one Divisional Forest Officer whose headquarters was at Silchar. The Divisional Forest Officer worked under the control of the Conservator of Forest, Shillong. The Unclassed State Forests were under the control of the Deputy Commissioner. There were formerly eight Reserved Forests in the district. But Singla, Suhalia, Tilbum, Badshaitila and Longai Reserved Forest were added to the Cachar Forests Division from Sylhet after partition of India in 1947.

The Deputy Conservator is the head of the Nowgong Forest Division at the district-level with his headquarters at Silchar. He is assisted by two Assistant Conservators, eleven Rangers, twelve Deputy Rangers besides other staffs of the Division.

The Cachar Forest Division comprises five ranges viz, Karimganj, Matijuri, Sonai, Lakhipur and Sealteak, the headquarters of the first one is at Patharkandi. Each Range is under one or more Forest Range Officers who are assisted in their works by a number of subordinate staffs namely one or more Deputy Rangers, Foresters and Forest Guards; but the staff position in a Range purely depends upon the area and its importance. Each Range is usually divided into several Beats and Beats into sub-beats. Each Beat is in charge of one Deputy Ranger assisted by one or two Foresters, a few Forest Guards and one or two

Game Watchers. Similarly a Sub-beat is manned by a Forester who is assisted by one or two Forest Guards.

(VI) **Industries Department**: Formerly there was only one emporium at Karimganj and it was established in 1900. Subsequently three other Emporiums were set up at Silchar, Hailekndi and Badarpur during the period from 1910 to 1954. A Marketing Officer was posted at Karimganj in 1910. The Cottage Industries Department was established in 1958 under one Superintendent whose headquarter was at Silchar. In the same year one Assistant Director of Cottage Industries as Regional Officer in charge of the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills, district, Mizo Hills and Cachar districts was posted at Silchar. In 1959, the office of the Superintendent was up-graded to the Office of the Assistant Director of Cottage Industries who was the head of the Industries Department in the district. There are Soap Training Centre at Hailakandi; Carpentry, Blacksmithy, Cane and Bamboo, Tannery and Tailoring, Production cum Training Centre at Ramkrishnagar, and Carpentry Training Centre at Meherpur in the district. There are fourteen Extension Officers (Industries) working in the Development Blocks for the Development of cottage industries. A new scheme for imparting training to young girls in the art of knitting and embroidery was opened at Silchar in 1957-59. Besides 33 small and cottage industrial units and seven industrial units were set up in different places of the district. One Industrial Estate was established at Badarpur with all the infrastructure like water, power etc. for all-round development of various types of industries.

The Assistant Director of Cottage Industries is invested with financial powers of the organisation which he heads. He is responsible for registration of industrial units, supply of raw materials, loans and grants-in-aid to the industrial units. Thus his duties are to implement the programmes for the growth and development of cottage industries in the district. He is assisted by the Superintendents of Industries and other officers and staffs. The Marketing officers under him looks after the Government Emporiums and offers marketing facilities to the industrial units. The Extension Officers (Industries) in the Blocks keep the people informed about all industrial facilities and ensure industrial development within their respective areas.

(VII) **State Excise Department** : During the early part of the British rule in Assam the Excise Department was under the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar. In 1905, a new State namely Eastern Bengal and Assam was created and a Commissioner of Excise was appointed. In 1910, the designation of Excise Inspector was changed to that of

Superintendent of Excise and also the posts of Sub-Inspectors which were abolished in 1920, were again reintroduced in 1928. These posts were again abolished in 1948 on recommendation of the Pay Committee, 1948.

Subsequently the preventive and inspecting staffs were increased in order to cope with the increased works.

At present the Excise Department is headed by a Superintendent of Excise with his headquarters at Silchar. Originally there were four Inspectors of Excise in the district, one for each Sub-division and one in-charge of the ware house. Subsequently for better administrative purposes the Sadar Sub-division had been split up in three different circles headed by an Inspector of Excise. Similarly the Karimganj and Hailakandi Sub-divisions were divided into three and two Circles respectively headed by an Inspector of Excise for each circle. Each Inspector of Excise of the circle has one patrol party usually headed by an Assistant Inspector of Excise and number of constables. In course of time two independent check-posts one at Dholai and the other at Badarpur were created under one Assistant Inspector of Excise in each check-post. In 1975 there were nine Inspectors of Excise, 49 Excise Constables and a few Assistant Inspectors of Excise in the district. Excise revenue in the district is mainly imposed on country spirits, opium, Ganja and Bhang. Besides licence fees for cocaine and its allied drugs are also imposed and realised.

The district has now nine Excise Circles. The Inspector of Excise holding the charge of a circle has a patrol party consisting of one Assistant Inspector of Excise and three or four constables according to the need of the circle. Besides there are two independent check-posts at Dholai and Badarpur under two Assistant Inspectors.

Although liquor is not prohibited in this district, Mahkuma Prohibition Committees in all the Sub-divisions have been formed to explain the gullible and illiterate public the evils of liquor consumption so that people exercise self-control over this bad habit.

(VIII) Co-operative Department : The Co-operative Department at the district-level is headed by a Deputy Registrar of Co-operative Societies with his headquarters at Silchar. He is assisted by three Assistant Registrars posted at the three Sub-divisional headquarters. These officers are also assisted by senior and Junior Auditors who were formerly known as Deputy Co-operative Officers and Assistant Co-operative Officers respectively. Moreover, in each Development Block there is one Assistant Co-operative Officer under the control of the Block Develop-

ment Officer. The services of the Co-operative personnel are also made available to the different Co-operative enterprises viz, Weaving, Fishery, Diary, Industries, Farming, Thrift and Credit and School Co-operative Societies, besides the Marketing Societies, Consumers stores, Service Co-operatives, Farming and Industrial Co-operative Societies, etc. for ensuring improved and proper management and control. There is one Liquidator-cum-Bakijai Officer in each Zone.

(IX) Statistics : At the district-level, the Department of Economics and Statistics is functioning under the District Statistical Officer whose headquarters is at Silchar. He is assisted in his official works by one Inspector. There are some Sub-Inspectors and Field Assistants, Primary Investigators and ministerial staff in the district organisation. Social Economic Survey, Crop Estimation Survey, Annual survey of industries, Weekly price collection, Crop forecast, Compilation of crop area, Irrigation Abstract, Collection of Tea Statistics etc. are the main functions carried on by the District Economics and Statistics Department.

(X) Publicity: The district Office of the Directorate of Information and Public Relations is under the District Information and Public Relations Officer with his headquarters at Silchar. In other two sub-divisional offices at Hailakandi and Karimganj Sub-divisional Offices are headed by two Sub-divisional Information and Public Relations Officers. Their headquarters are at Hailakandi and Karimganj respectively. This Department in the district has mobile vans through which publicity is organised in the interior parts of the district. Over and above, loud-speakers are placed in the important places and informations are broadcasted through them.

Organisational set-ups of other departments like Fisheries, Sericulture and Weaving, Handloom, Health, Post and Telegraph, Tax, Education etc. have been discussed in detail in respective chapters dealing with their departmental activities.

(XI) The Motor Vehicle Department : The Motor Vehicles Department deals with the administration of the Motor Vehicles Act (IV of 1939) and the Assam Motor Vehicles Tax Act. Under the first Act all motor vehicles have to be registered, all drivers have to take licences which are issued in favour of them on their passing a prescribed test of competence. The second Act gives powers to the State Governments to subject vehicles to strict mechanical tests and to control the number of vehicles to be licensed for public hire specifying their routes and also the freight rates. Fees are leviable for registration and issue of licences.

and permits. The Regional Transport Authority issues regional permits and also collects tax against permits.

(XII) **The Registration Department :** Under the Indian Registration Act (XVI of 1908) registration is compulsory in case of certain documents and it is optional in case of certain other documents. As a rule, fees are levied for such registration, but the State Government have exempted from payment of fees on documents relating to Co-operative Credit Societies, Land Mortgage Banks etc.

In 1964 there were eleven registration offices in Cachar district. Sadar Registry Office is situated in the premises of the office of the District Registrar, Cachar in the compound of the Collector Office. Other Registration Offices are located at Palanghat, Lakhipur, Katigora, Karimganj, Bhangabazar, Tatatabari, Patharkandi, Hailakandi, Katlicherra and Ramkrishnagar, each of them being placed under the charge of a Sub-registrar. The Collector of Cachar district is the Ex-Officio District Registrar. The Registration Unit is different and separate from the Revenue staff, but the District Registrar has power of supervision over the entire district registration staffs. The Sub-registrars are appointed by the Govt. but the ministerial staff of the Registration Dept. is appointed by the District Registrar himself. The District Registrar solves the difficulties faced by the Sub-registry office and attends to the disposal of routine matters with the help of the special Sub-registrar and the joint Sub-registrar. He hears appeals and applications preferred to him under sections 72 and 73 of the Indian Registration Act (XVI of—1908) against refusals of registration of documents by the Sub-registrar under him. He is competent to accord sanction for the levy of fines under Sections 25 and 34, condone delays in presentation of documents after period of four months and in appearance of executants after the statutory period, and order such documents to be registered. He is equally competent to order refunds in case of surcharges and to grant remission of safe—custody fees in suitable cases. A will or Codicil may be deposited with him under a sealed cover. The District Registrar is also authorised to receive declarations under the Muslim personal (Shariat) Application Act (XXVI of 1937).

The sub-Registrars are immediately subordinate to the District Registrar. The Chief function of the sub-Registrars is to register documents for which the required stamp duties and registration fees are paid. He keeps a record of such registered documents and notifies whenever necessary, the facts of registration to the Revenue and Survey Officials for record-of-right and mutation of names in their Property Registers.

On application from parties he issues certified copies from preserved records and registered documents. Every sub-Registrar has some ex-officio functions such as Marriage Registration Officer. The powers of solemnising marriages under the Special Marriages Act which are also vested with the Joint sub-Registrar working at district headquarter and Sub-registry Offices.

Besides, there is one special sub-Registrar in the district of Cachar with headquarter at Silchar. He hears all appeals and applications preferred to him in the district. He inspects the Sub-registry Office and submits his report as and when needed. Among all the sub-Registrars he has got some special powers in supervising the works in the Registration Department.

His duty is mainly confined to the inspection of the technical work of the registration offices including the Central Office of record and audit their accounts. He inspects the books in the Central Office of Record and reports to the District Registrar their conditions so that those in danger of being destroyed may be re-copied and authenticated according to the law. He examines the books, indexes accounts and other records in offices of the sub-Registrars once a year and sends copy of his report to the District Registrar as well as to the Inspector General of Registration for approval. The Inspector General will pass orders in respect of such reports with his remarks or suggestions, if any, which will be complied with by the sub-Registrars.

(XIII) **Department of Central Excise and Land Customs :** The Silchar Division under the Shillong Collectorate of Central Excise and Land Customs collects the Central Excise in the district. Silchar Circle is one of the four Circles under the Silchar Division. Both the Divisional Office and the Circle Office are accommodated in the Central Revenue building of Silchar. The Division is headed by an Assistant Collector and the Circle by a Superintendent.

The Jurisdiction of Silchar Circle extends upto Silchar and Hailakandi Sub-division of Cachar district and a part of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar districts and the whole state of Manipur. Thus, so far as the district of Cachar is concerned, Silchar Circle comprises two of its Sub-divisions i.e. Silchar and Hailakandi Sub-division only. The Karimganj Sub-division falls under Karimganj Circle.

Tea and tobacco are the main Central Excise Commodities in Silchar Circle. There are altogether 97 Tea Factories in Silchar and Hailakandi Sub-divisions which are grouped in 25 Ranges each of which is placed under a Range Officer or Central Excise Inspector. The Range

Officer or the Central Excise Inspector belongs to subordinate rank in the Central Excise Department. The Ranges are Ainakhel, Mollavcherra, Boryalinga, Bhubandar, Binnakandi, Burniebrase, Chandhighat, Daloo, Dewan, Dwarband, Hailakandi, Jallapora, Kallaine, Katlicherra, Paullurbond, Rukni, Senthallia, Silchar, I and Silchar II, Silcorrie, Udarband etc. The Range Officers at Silchar I and Silchar II are located in the Central Revenue Building at Silchar. There is also a Range Office at Bikrampur T.E. Usually each Range Office is placed under the charge of a Range Officer.

Next to tea, tobacco and matches form two important items which earn considerable revenue from the district of Cachar.

In respect of Land Customs there is only one Land Custom station at Silchar. This is an inland station and is concerned with in-transit in coming and out-going goods through Bangladesh by the river route. In addition to that there is one Land Customs preventive post at Jellalpur known as Kallaine preventive post. Every Central Excise Officer is vested with the powers under Land Customs and various allied Acts so that they may work both on Central Excise and Land Customs sides.

(XIV) **Sales Tax Department** : The Sales Tax Officer exercised the powers delegated to him under the Assam Sales Tax Act and the rules formed thereunder for the general administration of the Act in his charge. He registers or issues licences to the dealers who are liable to payment of tax on sales and is invested with the powers of assessing them. He receives periodical returns from the registered dealers showing their gross turn-over during the period and the tax payable by them, and checks the returns, passes orders of assessment, and takes steps for the recovery of the tax assessed. He also detects cases of evasion of tax.

The following Acts are subsequently enforced and administered by the Sales Tax Department with effect from the date mentioned against each in addition to the Act already stated above.

1. The Assam Taxation (on goods carried by Roads or Inland Waterways) Act, 1954 from 24.4.54.
2. The Assam Finance Sales Tax Act, 1956 from 1-7-56.
3. The Central Sales Tax, 1956 from 1-7-56.

For administration of the Taxation Acts, viz., (1) The Assam Sales Tax Act, 1947; (2) The Assam Finance (Sales Tax) Act, 1956; (3) The Assam (Sales of Petroleum and Petroleum products including Motor Spirit and Lubricants) Taxation Act, 1956; (4) The Central Sales Tax Act, 1956; (5) The Assam Purchase Tax Act, 1967; (6) The Assam Amu-

sements and Betting Tax Act, 1937; (7) The Assam Professions, Trades, Callings and Employment Taxation Act, 1947; (8) The Assam Passengers and Goods Taxation Act, 1972; (9) The Assam Electricity Duty Act, 1964; (10) The Assam Agricultural Income Tax Act, 1939; and (11) The Assam Entertainment Tax. There are 2 unit-offices in the district of Cachar of which one is at Silchar and the other is at Karimganj. The jurisdiction of the Karimganj unit office also extends over Hailakandi Civil Sub-division. There is also one Zonal Office at Silchar headed by one Assistant Commissioner of Taxes. The operational jurisdictions of the Agricultural Income Tax Act, 1937, is over the entire State of Assam as one unit, but this Act is administered from the headquarters at Gauhati.

There are 5 Superintendents of Taxes and 4 Inspectors of Taxes at Silchar. Another Inspector of Taxes is at Haflong under the Superintendent of Taxes, Silchar. There are 3 Superintendents of Taxes and 4 Inspectors of Taxes at Karimganj. Another Inspector of Taxes is at Hailakandi, under the Superintendent of Taxes, Karimganj; Silchar Sub-division and North Cachar Hills district within the jurisdiction of the Superintendent of Taxes, Karimganj. The senior-most Superintendent of Taxes in the respective unit offices is in charge of the office. The Superintendents of Taxes are responsible for assessment and collection of taxes. The Superintendents of Taxes are assisted by the Inspectors of Taxes in the assessment work. The work of the Superintendents of Taxes in the district of Cachar is supervised by the Assistant Commissioner of Taxes of the Cachar Zone, Silchar. There is one Superintendent of Taxes (E.B.) and an Inspector of Taxes (E.B.) under the Assistant Commissioner of Taxes, Silchar for enforcement work.

CHAPTER XIV

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

History of Local Self-Government :

The origin of modern Local Self-Government institutions in the district of Cachar can be traced back to the formation of Municipalities and Local Boards in the three sub-divisions of the district.

Prior to the coming of the British, there was some sort of a local Government institution which was mainly connected with the revenue system of the district through a voluntary association or unit called **Khel** and had no connection with any development work whatsoever. Primarily lease of land under the king was held by the **Khel**, which, as an unit, was responsible for payment of revenue to the king and also for supply of customary labour to him. In course of time, with the growth of population the number of **Khels** increased and adjacent **Khels** were joined together into unions stepping into the second stage in the development of local self-government institution in Cachar. The larger union was called **Raj** and each **Khel** had been represented at court by its principal sharer as agent, he or the head man of the chief **Khel** being elected by the **Rajas** was its own representative. This elected representative, in case of revenue default, exercised some kind of fiscal and judicial power in order to prevent further default and this power was presumed to have royal sanction. Even in case of civil or criminal disputes this **Khel** or **Raj** representative, as its head man, was entrusted with certain criminal and fiscal power, the extent of which, depended on the representative status of the league heads. This representative however, was the league representative of **Bikrampur**, the first Hindu Bengali settled in Cachar under the **Kachari** king and hence it became hereditary in nature, losing its democratic flavour.

The present system of Local Self-Government : The present system owes its origin to the British Rule in India, it comprised of Municipalities in towns and Local Boards at Sub-divisional Level in the villages.

In 1872, the management of the District road was entrusted to the committee presided over by the Deputy Commissioner. The funds at its disposal were partly obtained from tolls and ferries on Local roads and miscellaneous sources but principally from grants made by the Bengal Govt. from the amalgamated District Road Fund.

The District Improvement Fund was then started in 1874 and the administration of its resources was as before entrusted to the Deputy Commissioner assisted by a Committee. In 1875-76, the total income of District Funds of the province was only 1,85,000/-. The Assam Local Rate Regulation was passed in 1879. It was enacted to defray the expenditure already incurred or to be incurred for the purpose of relief. The regulation was introduced in Cachar on 1st. April, 1880. For the execution of the Assam Local Regulation the District and Branch Committees were formed in 1879, by the Chief Commissioner, from among the persons suggested by the Deputy Commissioner. The District and Branch Committees were entrusted with the functions of the preparation of the Budget, the allotment of fund for the development of Local roads as well as management of Schools. These Committees could, however, engage Local agents for the execution of works with the prior sanction of the Chief Commissioner in the matter of Public works. There were other committees viz., Dispensary Committee, School Committee etc., the existence of so many Committees created confusion in later years with the result of one committee which was finally constituted in each district.

Local Boards were established in 1915 in each sub-division of the province under Notification No.3774, dated 18.8.1915 and the Assam Local Self Govt. was brought into force with effect from 1.9.1915. The Assam Local Self Govt. Act intended to repeal the Assam Local Rates Regulation of 1879. Initially the Deputy Commissioner became the Chairman of the Board at the headquarters Sub-division and Sub-divisional Officer became the Chairman of **Hailakandi** Local Board, similar S.D.O. became the Chairman of **Karimganj** Local Board of **Karimganj** sub-division which was then in the district of Sylhet. These Local Boards were entrusted with the maintenance of all local staging bungalows and Dispensaries, supervision of village sanitation, vaccination and the district post. Local Boards were in charge of Primary education subject to general control of the Education Department and were empowered to make grants to schools of higher grade subject to certain rules. For these, the Govt. placed all Local rates levied under Assam Local Rate Regulation of 1879, as well as surplus income of pound and ferries and some

minor receipts. The provincial Govt. used to make grants to supplement this. But the actual amount was not adequate because there were hundreds of villages under one Local Board. Though in 1926, the Assam Rural Self-Govt. Act was passed yet this remained ineffective till the Assam Rural Panchayat Act was passed in 1948.

In 1927, as per amendment of the Local Self Govt. Act, 1926, for election of members, three constituencies, viz., Muhammadan, non-Muhammadan and Planters were created for Local Boards in Cachar district.

Local Boards were constituted through election and the constituencies were as follows:-

Sub-division	Tea Planter	Non-Mohammadan	Mohammadan
Karimganj	6	8	9
Silchar	7	7	5
Hailakandi	5	5	6

The constituency was again divided geographically which, may be shown in the following table:

Sub-division	Constituency	No. of members.
Karimganj	General	Karimganj P.S. including Town
		Badarpur thana
		Patharkandi
		Ratabari
		Jadup
	Mohammadan	Karimganj thana including town
		Badarpur thana
		Patharkandi
		Ratabari
		Jaldup
	Planters	1. Single Valley
		2. Longai Valley
		3. Jeeri Valley

Sub-division	Constituency	No. of members
Silchar	General	Silchar thana including Silchar Municipal Board
		Katigora thana
		Borkhala-Udharbond
		Lakhipur town
		Sonai thana
	Mohammadan	Silchar (including Municipality and Borkhola thana
		Katigora thana
		Udharbond thana
		Sonai
Hailakandi	Planters	Chatla Bill Dusoan
		Lakhipur Dusoan
		Happy Valley Dusoan
		North Cachar Dusoan
	General	1. North Hailakandi
		2. South Hailakandi
		3. Katlicherra
	Mohammadan	1. North Hailakandi
		2. South Hailakandi
		3. Katlicherra
	Planters	1. North West Planting
		2. Central Planting
		3. South West Planting
		4. North West Planting

A Royal Commission was appointed in 1907, with Hobhouse as its Chairman to evolve a Process of democratic decentralisation. The commission submitted its report in 1911, but the Government of Assam did not agree with many of its suggestions. However, certain important changes were incorporated in the Assam Local Board Act of 1915. This piece of legislation was a landmark in the history of Local self-government in Assam. Under this Act Local Boards were authorised to appoint District Engineers, Health Officers and Sanitary Officers. It prohibited the salaried government officials from contesting the office of the Vice-Chairman. The Act provided for appointment of committees consisting of persons who were not members of the Board. The provision of elective non-official Chairman and Vice-Chairman sought to give greater degree of democratic decentralisation to the local bodies. The elected members were divided into four classes, being elected by an electorate of its own. The four classes were the Planters representatives, head-quarters members who were elected by residential voters of the head-quarters, mercantile representative and rural members who were elected by the general electorate.

The Local Self-Government Act 1915 brought some important changes on Local Self-Government in Assam. As per recommendation of the Act, the strength of elected members was increased and number of official members for Local Boards was reduced.

In 1945, the strength and composition of the Local Boards was further revised to accommodate the Scheduled Tribes (plain) and Scheduled Castes for the proportion of reservation subject to population strength of the sub-division concerned. The Assam Panchayat Act which came into force in 1960, abolished the Local Boards.

Functions of Local Boards: Under Local Rates Regulations, 1879, the District Committees were entrusted with different Public utility works. The main functions were construction, repair and maintenance of roads and lines of communication. The improvement of canals, rivers, maintenance of embankments, bridges, repair of school houses, granting of scholarships, training of teachers, establishment of hospitals, dispensaries, lunatic asylums, tanks, rest houses for travellers were the main functions of the District Committees.

The Local Board Act, 1915 empowered the Local Board to construct, repair and maintain roads, embankments, bridges and water canals. Boards were also entrusted with planting of trees by the roadside and removal of branches of trees hanging over the roads, construction and maintenance of railways, rope-ways and establishment of steamer services as cheap means of communication. They were vested with the power

of management of primary and middle vernacular schools. Local Boards could appoint vaccinators and make provisions for sanitation, conservancy, protected water supply and drainage system.

The Local Boards had the power to construct and maintain travellers' bungalow, sarai for travellers and to destroy dangerous animals and stray dogs. The management and control of fairs and festivals and establishment of veterinary dispensaries, the provision for breeding cattle and horses were also rested with Boards.

Under the Local Boards Act, 1953, the Boards lost the powers to construct the railways and rope-ways, but were entrusted with maintenance and management of the ferry services.

Sources of Revenue : Before 1874, there was only one amalgamated fund for the welfare of the public. Later on, it was divided into two; general fund and local fund. The local fund consisted of ferry collection, net tolls from district roads, balance of the convict labour fund, balance of the cattle trespass fund and receipt from fishery. The general fund was utilised for construction of important roads and feeder roads. A portion of it was also utilised for metalling the existing roads.

The principal source of revenue of the District Committee was the local rates on the annual value of land. The rate was 0.12 paise per cultivated 0.404686 hectare. Of the total collection from local rates, 3/8th were left for works of provincial importance, the balance 5/8th were spent in the district subject to the Government of India's requirement for famine etc. Besides local rates, the other sources of revenue of the Local Boards were rents, tolls on ferries, pounds and grants from the Government. The Act of 1915 empowered the Local Boards to impose taxes on construction of railways and ropeways, but the Act, 1953 abolished the imposition of these taxes by the Boards. The Boards could levy any tax after obtaining previous permission from the Government. It was also authorised to impose taxes on cinema halls, circuses, variety shows, tea stalls etc.

Budget : Under the Local Rates Regulations, 1879, the District Committee had to prepare the budget for the Local Boards. The Chief Commissioner had the right to reject or accept the budget. Before preparation of the budget the District Committee had to consult the appropriate authority. In 1899, a slightly different procedure was evolved for scrutiny of the budget and issue of sanctions. The provision of scrutiny of the budget was also made according to the Local Self-Government Act, 1915. The commissioner was the final authority for the

acceptance or rejection of the budget. In 1953, the power was vested with Government.

The following statement shows the income and expenditure of the defunct Local Boards of Cachar district for the year 1951-52.*

	Provincial rates	Income excluding balance		
		Civil works	Other sources	Total
1	2	3	4	5
Silchar	66,018	1,28,721	87,103	2,81,842
Karimganj	51,273	1,99,906	24,538	2,75,717
Hailakandi	29,506	48,124	24,149	1,01,779

Incidence per head	Education	Expenditure		Debt	Total
		Civil works	Sanitation medical etc.		
6	7	8	9	10	11
0.45	51,771	1,47,155	46,680	39,536	2,85,142
0.49	14,412	62,748	34,251	33,034	1,44,445
0.54	17,926	39,645	19,169	20,730	97,470

Municipalities: The most important institution of Local Self-Government in the urban areas is the Municipality which has played a significant part in fostering among the people a sense of participation in administration. Currently there are three Municipal Boards in the district and they are functioning at Silchar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. Out of these the Silchar Municipal Board is the oldest and it was first started in the form of a Station Committee in 1833 with a few nominated members and the Superintendent of the district (now designated as Deputy-Commissioner) as Chairman. Later on, Silchar was constituted a Municipality under Act V (B.C.) of 1876, in 1893. In 1893, there were twelve

Commissioners, eight of whom were non-officials elected members. Only four members were nominated. There were also two ex-officio members. A regular Board entrusted with the affairs of Municipal work of the town was, however, formed in 1912 under Bengal Municipal Act, 1884. Later on, with the enactment of the Assam Municipal Act in 1923, the total number of members of the Municipal Board was raised to 20 of whom 16 were elected and the rest nominated. In 1931, the number of members was further increased and the total strength became twenty-five of whom there were 20 elected and 5 nominated members.

Subsequently, as per provision of the Assam Municipal Act, 1956, the number of nominated members had been reduced to 2. At present the term of each Board is for four years. The Assam Municipal Act had been revised in 1956 and the administration of the Board is now run as per this amended Act. According to 1971 Census, the Board covered an area of 10.00 square kilometres and for administrative purposes the entire area was divided into twenty-seven wards. In 1976, there were 29 Commissioners out of which 27 were elected and 2 nominated. There is also provision for representation of Scheduled Caste people in the Board and accordingly one seat was occupied by a member belonging to that Community. Since 1912, the population of the town can be seen from the following table.

Year	Population	Year	Population
1912	8,000	1951-52	30,000
1931-32	12,000	1961-62	42,000
1941-42	16,600	1971	52,596

The functions of the Silchar Municipal Board relate to the supply of water, sanitary arrangement, conservancy measures, provision of lighting the streets, maintenance of markets and ponds, construction and maintenance of roads and bridges within municipal area, assistance to library, homeopathic dispensary etc. The Silchar Municipality is maintaining one daily market at Fatak bazar and also one park at Gandhibag. It has started a new water supply scheme implemented through the public Health Engineering Department with a loan of Rs. 68 lakhs. Average annual income of Silchar Municipal Board is Rs. 17 lakhs 87 thousands.

Karimganj Municipality: The Karimganj Municipality was first started in 1913 under the Bengal Municipal Act when the town was thinly populated covering a small area with a few public offices, residential quarters and the bungalow of the Subdivisional Officer. But being

*Statistical Abstract of Assam, 1958 by Department of Economics and Statistics p.219

favourably situated for the purpose of trades, the place has been growing steadily in size and remarkable expansion has been noticed after partition of 1947.

At the initial stage the Subdivisional Officer was the Chairman of the Board but later on, in 1919, he was replaced by elected non-official Chairman. Up to 1959-60, there were fifteen Commissioners including three nominated members in total six wards of the Board. In 1977, the Board had 27 wards with 29 members including two nominated members.

The population of Karimganj town registered a sharp increase during the period between 1951 to 1961. In 1961, it went up to 28,775 against 15,000 in 1947. According to the Census of 1971, the total population within the Municipal area in Karimganj was 31,618.

The functions of the Board relate to the provision of amenities to the tax payers. From the sanitary point of view, Karimganj is one of the best managed towns in the district. The Board has extended water supply to the entire town area with the help of the Public Health Engineering Department. The Board has completed a planned refugee market with govt. loan. Besides, it has two Harijan colonies constructed as per standard model and provided 138 Harijan families with residential accommodation. The local Rabindra Park is also managed by the Board, where an annual mela known Netaji mela is held every year.

The principal sources of income are taxes on holding, lease fees, market share, annual rent, licence fees, rickshaw, and vehicle tax etc.

Hailakandi Municipal Board : At the initial stage it was started as an union Committee in 1906 to look after civic affairs of the town. In 1924, the union Committee was replaced by a town committee and it continued to be headed by the Sub-divisional Officer as official Chairman till 11.4.38 on which date, a first non-official was elected as its Chairman. Besides four elected and two nominated members, the Deputy Inspector of Schools and the Sub-divisional Medical Officer were also ex-officio members of this town committee without any right to vote.

The town committee was converted into Municipality in 1960 and after its conversion, the first nominated Board with Sub-divisional Officer as ex-officio Chairman and other ten nominated members took over charges of the Board. This nominated Board continued to function till 25.1.69 when the 1st. elected Board took over charge of the Municipal

affairs of the town. Before its election the town was divided into 8 wards and election was held accordingly.

At present, there are eight elected ward Commissioners and two Government nominated members one of whom is from the scheduled caste community and the other from backward community.

The Board is empowered to exercise all powers which are vested with under Assam Municipal Act and subsequent rules framed thereunder. The principal sources of revenue of the Board are Municipal taxes on holdings, realisation of taxes under special Acts, fees, fines, revenue from municipal property, Govt. grants etc. The main heads of expenditure are on establishment charges, public safety, health and sanitation, public instruction, extraordinary debt etc.

The Board has no water works upto now. The only source of drinking water is a few Municipal tanks maintained by the Board. The Board looks after the drainage and sewage problems of the roadside drains within the municipal area and makes provision of streetlights, conservancy, public health, housing, establishment of beater, clearance of slum areas etc. Powers and functions of the Municipalities are almost the same. Some of the big municipalities having good sources of income execute various schemes for the benefit of the tax payers. In the 19th century the Municipal Boards were entrusted with a few items of works relating to the civic amenities of the people of the urban areas. The area of their activities were gradually expanded particularly during the current century. Under the provisions of the Town Improvement, Act, 1850, the Municipal Boards were entrusted with the task of making repairing, clearing, lighting or watching any public street, road, drain or tank or for the prevention of any sort of nuisance or for improvement of the municipal town or its neighbouring areas. The Boards had also the power to appoint or manage their officers and could determine the property liable for taxation. They had also the power to enter into contracts. The Municipal Act, 1864 retained the same list of functions of the Board and added a few other items. The said Act empowered the Boards to remove encroachments and pull down dangerous structures and to frame bye-laws for ensuring better type of administration. The same idea persisted in the Municipal Act of 1886. In 1884 some additions and alterations were made in the functions of Municipal Board. The Act of 1923 further enlarged the activities of the Municipal Boards to provide better amenities to the citizens. The Act of 1956 though replaced the Act of 1923 yet

it retained the list of functions laid down in the earlier Act. The present functions of the Municipal Boards are multifarious in nature. They include supply of protected and pure drinking water to their inhabitants, construction and maintenance of roads, water ways and bridges. The Boards are entrusted with the maintenance of the proper drainage system. The Boards are to arrange for the street lighting, to provide for medical and Public Health facilities, to maintain proper conservancy and to keep the records of births and deaths. Besides the Municipal Boards maintain and establish some schools, libraries, and community halls and arrange for the marketing facilities for the people, providing bazar in each locality. The Boards also maintain sanitary branch to ensure proper hygienic conditions in the towns.

Finance: In respect of the sources of income it may be mentioned here that municipal rates and taxes and grants and contributions are the two major sources of income. While the taxes are levied on houses, lands, animals vehicles, professions and trade, rates are collected on water, lighting and conservancy. Grants and contributions comprise of both revenue and capital grants. It is difficult to separate the two absolutely. The revenue subventions from the State Government constitute a major share of grants.

Since the municipal rates and taxes are the major sources of income of the Municipalities, their efficiency in respect of their performance of the obligations naturally depends on their efficiency in realizing the taxes from these sources. So an important aspect of fiscal administration of the Municipalities relates to proper assessments, collections, remissions and unrealised balances of rates and taxes. Thus, on many occasions due to administrative failure, litigations, political problems etc., the elected Municipal Boards are superseded by Govt. The Municipal Boards of the district of Cachar are not exceptions to these.

The major heads of expenditure are general administration and collection charges, public health and convenience. Under the budgetary head, public health and convenience, the three major items are the conservancy, public works and water supply. In the district of Cachar only two Municipal Boards i.e., Silchar and Karimganj have undertaken the important item of water supply but the Hailakandi Municipal Board has not yet initiated water supply scheme in the town area. In terms of relative importance, expenditure for public instruction is very poor.

The Statement below shows the income and expenditure of the Municipal Boards of Cachar district for the years 1974-75 to 1976-77.

Name of M.B./T.C.	Year	Income	Expenditure
Silchar M.B.	1974-75	10,80,000.00	12,10,483.00
	1975-76	14,47,233.00	16,10,019.00
	1976-77	16,10,019.50	16,64,803.00
Karimganj M.B.	1974-75	4,82,610.67	7,07,736.56
	1975-76	5,73,500.09	7,60,325.38
	1976-77	5,93,171.92	7,89,189.09
Hailakandi M.B.	1974-75	2,80,272.00	3,43,337.00
	1975-76	2,76,321.00	3,01,260.00
	1976-77	2,99,266.00	3,08,823.00

Town Committees : Next to Municipality, Town Committee is an important agency of Local Self-Government in the urban areas of the State. According to the Census of 1971, there are only three town committees in the district namely the Badarpur Town Committee, the Lala Town Committee and the Lakhipur Town Committee. The individual accounts of the town committees are as follows.

Badarpur Town Committee : The Town Committee at Badarpur was constituted by government in 1964. At the initial stage all the six members were nominated by government. The first election of the committee was held in June, 1966 and four members were elected by the tax payers of the town and two members, one from scheduled caste community and the other from other backward classes were nominated by government. Badarpur is a small town and the area under the town committee is divided into four wards. In 1976, its total population was 12,505. The main sources of income of the town committee are (1) House tax, (2) Urban tax, (3) Latrine tax, (4) Light tax and licence fees of the shop houses, carriages, Bidmoney of the pounds, market etc. The town committee is maintaining 14 small roads, one market and one cattle pound.

Lala Town Committee : The town committee at Lala was constituted in July, 1972 with six government nominated members including the Chairman and the vice-Chairman. Since then, the committee has been functioning with extensions issued from government from time to time. Upto 1976 no election was held of the town committee. In 1976, its total area was 4.1 square kilometres with 7,489 persons. The area of the town

committee is divided into four wards for assessment and collection of taxes and also for other administrative purposes. The financial position of the committee is stated to be not sound.

Lakhipur Town Committee : The town committee at Lakhipur is functioning with effect from 30.12.59. Till 1965 it was a government nominated committee when its first election took place to elect representatives. Upto 1976 there were six members in the committee of whom four were elected and two nominated. The area of the town committee is divided into four wards. According to 1971 census, it has an area of 1.63 square kilometres with 2,941 persons. The functions of the town committee relate mainly to the repair of a few number of roads, conservancy works, maintenance of a market, public health duties, etc.

Finance : The statement below shows the income and expenditure of the above town committees of the years from 1974-75 to 1976-77.

Name of town committee	Year	Income	Expenditure
Badarpur Town Committee	1974-75	69,514.00	56,783.00
	1975-76	1,14,512.00	1,15,478.00
	1976-77	1,01,021.00	98,381.00
Lakhipur T.C.	1974-75	88,204.00	66,053.00
	1975-76	94,639.69	74,319.69
	1976-77	81,083.00	67,284.34
Lala T.C.	1974-75	53,231.00	51,570.00
	1975-76	38,802.25	20,787.00
	1976-77	36,809.00	26,050.00

Panchayats : Now-a-days the most important unit of Local Self-government is the Panchayat which has covered almost every village of the district. It may be mentioned here that the Bengal Village Chowkidari Act, 1870, was also in force in the district of Cachar. Under this system the village panchayat consisting of three to five members were either elected or nominated. Under extraordinary circumstances, the Magistrate could nominate one person to the panchayat. Usually the Panchayat members were appointed by Magistrates. The Panchayats were authorised to appoint Chowkidars and they could realise taxes to pay the salary of the Chowkidars. This system which was known as Chowkidari system continued till it was repealed by the Assam Rural Panchayat Act, 1948.

Panchayat in Assam has a long and chequered history. Reference has already been made about some forms of Local Self-government in the province in earlier times. The panchayats were, however, not officially recognised during the early part of the British administration in Assam. As early as 1871, the Governor General-in-Council vetoed the Municipal Bill which incorporated certain provisions authorising the panchayats to take up works of water supply and conservancy services. Though some forms of Panchayat organisations were formed under the Local Self-Government Act of 1915, they proved to be failure as these were not autonomous bodies. Panchayats so formed in 1926 also failed due to some lacunae in the Panchayat Act of 1926.

For the first time after Independence in Assam Rural Panchayat Act was passed in 1948 in order to constitute truly effective panchayats. Every district was divided into some Rural panchayats comprising a number of villages. Each village had a primary panchayat. Election to the panchayats was held on the basis of adult franchise. The first Rural Panchayat in the district of Cachar was formed at Kabuganj in the name of Kabuganj Rural Panchayat and within a period of two years another two such panchayats one at Behera and other at Lakhipur were formed.

Under the Assam Rural Panchayat Act, 1948, besides the Rural Panchayats, each village or a group of villages constituted a primary panchayat. Each primary panchayat had an elected executive body. Further, the Executive Committee of Rural Panchayat consisting of not more than fifteen members would be elected by primary panchayat members. Government could also appoint ex-officio members. In respect of election, the system of open voting was adopted by showing hands. The implementation of the Rural Panchayat Act was the first step in the direction of democratic decentralisation. Rural panchayats were called upon to execute government schemes and funds were placed at their disposal. The president of the rural panchayat was the executive head and he was elected by members of the panchayat. Both Rural Panchayats and Primary Panchayats were having appointed secretaries. They were authorised to settle minor village disputes. As per provisions of the Rural Panchayat Act forty-four Rural Panchayats and 344 Primary Panchayats were established in Cachar. The following list provides the names of the Rural Panchayats established in Cachar. In Silchar Sub-division, Rural Panchayats were formed at Kabuganj, Nutanbazar, Barjalenga, Bam, Sildupi, Ghungoor, Horina, Rangirghat, Lakhipur, Banskandi, Kashipur, Arunachal, Duloo, Chibitabishia, Gumra, Fulbari, Rajatilla, Bierompur, Larring, Hattichea, Salgonga and Dewan-Rajabazar. In Karimganj Sub-division, such panchayats were formed at Durlabcherra, Ramkrishnanagar, Channighat, Ratabari, Dolu-Debuduar, Kolkolighat, Loyoirpoa, Baroigram, Patharkandi, Bhanga, Shrigouri, Mohi-

sashan, Sardharashi, Kaligonj, Majigram, Katakhal, Lala, Rongpur Kallicherra, Boalipar, Monacherra, Abdullapur-Krishnapur and Jankibazar. These panchayats were entrusted to look after the works of rural water supply, communication, irrigation and similar nature of works in rural areas.

In pursuance of the recommendations of the Balwantai Mehta Committee on democratic decentralisation of power and to obtain peoples interest and initiative for rural development, the Government of Assam passed the Assam Panchayat Act, 1959 repealing the old Act of 1948. The new Act came into force with effect from 1st October, 1959. The Act provided for three-tier of panchayat organisation- the Gaon Panchayat at the village level, the Anchalik Panchayat at the Block level and the Mahkuma Parishad at the sub-divisional level.

After the enactment of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1959, the existing Local Boards and the Rural Panchayats were abolished and their functions devolved upon the three-tier panchayat system. Under the Act of 1959, altogether 343 Gaon Panchayats, 15 Anchalik Panchayats and 3 Mahkuma Parishads had been formed in the district of Cachar. These Panchayats covered almost all the villages of the district. There are also 15 Development Blocks in the district. Every Anchalik Panchayat is conterminous with the Community Development Block and the Block Development Officer is the ex-officio Secretary of the Anchalik Panchayat.

Anchalik Panchayat : The names of Anchalik Panchayats of Cachar district are as follows : (1) Sonai, (2) Narsingpur, (3) Udharbond, (4) Lakhipur, (5) Raja bazar, (6) Salchapra, (7) Katigorh, (8) Ramkrishnanagar, (9) Patharkandi, (10) South Karimganj, (11) North Karimganj, (12) Badarpur, (13) Hailakandi, (14) Lala and (15) Katigorh. All the Anchalik Panchayats in the district work as units of Local Self-Govt. An Anchalik Panchayat has been recognised as the unit of planning and development. Besides the schemes and programmes under the Community Development Blocks, programmes of different development departments are also to be drawn up and executed by the Block Agency. Officers of different development departments posted at the Block-level are to handle both the types of programmes under the leadership of the Block Development Officer and control and guidance of the Anchalik Panchayats.

Organisation of Panchayats : A Gaon Sabha consists of one or more villages with an average population of about 2,500. It has one President, one Vice-President and 11-13 members who are elected by direct voting by the electors of the concerning Gaon Sabha. The term of office of the president as also of the members is for four years. Open voting for election of members as provided under the original Act was replaced by secret voting in 1964.

The representatives of Anchalik Panchayat are elected by the electors of the different Gaon Sabhas constituting that Anchalik Panchayat. One representative is also selected to the Anchalik Panchayat by the Chairman of the Co-operative Societies. All members of Parliament and State Legislative Assembly whose constituencies extend over the Anchalik Panchayat are ex-officio members of the Anchalik Panchayat but they have no right to vote. Officers who may be appointed as members of the Anchalik Panchayat by the State Government also have no right to vote. The Act further provides for co-option of one member each from the Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribe if none is elected.

It may be recalled that the Panchayat Act, 1959, which has since been amended prohibited the President of a Gaon Panchayat from being a member of the Anchalik Panchayat. Thus, if a President of a Gaon Panchayat was elected to the Anchalik Panchayat, he ceased to be the President of the Gaon Panchayat. But in 1964, the Act was suitably amended and the President of the Gaon Panchayat situated within the jurisdiction of an Anchalik Panchayat was made an ex-officio member of the Anchalik Panchayat. The Panchayat Act, 1959, did not provide for the co-option of women. The Panchayat (Amendment) Act, 1964, fixed the number of co-opted women members at two if no women was elected and at one if a woman member was already elected. The Block Development Officer, who is the ex-officio Secretary of the Anchalik Panchayat, transacts all official business under the direct control and supervision of the President of the Anchalik Panchayat.

The Mahkuma Parishad consists of the Presidents of Anchalik Panchayats, members of Parliament and Legislative Assembly whose constituencies extend over such Mahkuma Parishad, Chairman of the Municipal Boards, Town Committees and a representative of the Co-operative Central Bank. The Chairmen of the Municipal Boards, Town Committees and the representative of the Central Co-operative Bank are ex-officio members and have, therefore, no right to vote. If no person belonging to the Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe is a member, the Mahkuma Parishad is authorised to co-opt such member from persons of such communities. The Planning Officer is the ex-officio Secretary of Mahkuma Parishad.

Functions of the Panchayats : The Panchayat Act, 1959, distributed the functions and powers among the Gaon Panchayats, Anchalik Panchayats and Mahkuma Parishads as follows :

The Gaon Panchayats are entrusted with cleaning and lighting of streets, sanitation and conservancy, burial and burning grounds, play grounds and other public recreational centres, control of public latrines, control of communicable diseases, medical relief, reclamation of unhealthy places, maternity and child welfare, grazing grounds, vaccination, planting

of trees, cattle pounds, construction of roads, control of fairs, land management, community listening, public radios, library and reading rooms, education upto middle school, youth clubs, theatres, watch and ward, fairs and festival, maintenance of land records, census of all kinds, births and deaths, distribution of relief, development plan and cattle stead.

The Anchalik Panchayats are entrusted with sanitation and conservancy, anti-malaria operation, control of communicable diseases, medical relief, reclamation of unhealthy places, maternity and child welfare, vaccination, cattle pounds, planting of trees, construction and maintenance of roads, control of fairs, dharmasalas, irrigation works, control of slaughter houses, ware-houses, land management, youth clubs, theatres, damages of offensive trades, supervision of Gaon Panchayats, approval of budgets of Panchayats, relief of the distress and education above the Middle School.

The Mahkuma Parishad scrutinises and approves the budgets submitted by different Anchalik Panchayats within its jurisdiction. The decision of the Mahkuma Parishad is final. The Mahkuma Parishad is also responsible for reviewing the works of the Anchalik Panchayats from time to time. The Parishad also advises the Deputy Commissioner/Sub-divisional Officer in the distribution of Sub-divisional Rural Development Fund. It also advised the Government in the drawing up of the district plans. It is also concerned with the co-ordination of the Anchalik Panchayats falling under the jurisdiction of the Mahkuma Parishad.

Incidentally, it may be noted here that the Assam Panchayat Act, 1972, repealed the Act of 1959 and accordingly the three-tier panchayat system as mentioned above has been replaced by two-tier system. Anchalik Panchayats were abolished. The Gaon Panchayats were reconstituted with large areas and population and Mahkuma Parishad was brought in as an Executive agency.

Under section 35 of the Assam Panchayat Act Gaon Panchayats are required to undertake various development and welfare works in their respective areas subject to the availability of funds. The Gaon Panchayats so formed under the Assam Panchayat Act, 1972 have similar functions with the Gaon Panchayats formed under the previous Act. These can also act as Executive agents of Mahkuma Parishads.

As per provision of section 36 of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1972, the functions of the Anchalik Panchayats formed under 1959 Act have been transferred to Mahkuma Parishads.

Under the new Act of 1972, the State Government may transfer institutions, development schemes etc. to the Mahkuma Parishad and on such transfer the Parishad will execute the programmes. Now the control and administration of Development Blocks are placed at the disposal of the concerning Mahkuma Parishad.

After the abolition of the Anchalik Panchayats, there were some changes in the formation of Mahkuma Parishad. According to the Act of 1959, the local members of the Legislative Assembly and the members of Parliament were members of the Mahkuma Parishads. But now they are no longer members of the new bodies. As per provision of the new Act of 1972, the Mahkuma Parishad is constituted with elected Councillors from the Gaon Panchayats who shall not be members either of the State Assembly or the Parliament. There will be also two nominated members in the Mahkuma Parishad from the tea garden areas. Besides, each Mahkuma Parishad shall have one woman Councillor and one Councillor from Scheduled Caste or Scheduled tribe population.* In addition to above, one representative from each Municipality, Town Committee, Regional Board for Education and Central Co-operative will be ex-officio councillors. Government may also appoint such other officers as ex-officio Councillors. Each Mahkuma Parishad shall elect one Chief Executive Councillor, one Deputy Chief Executive Councillor and a Chairman. There are also six Standing Committees under each Mahkuma Parishad. The executive power of the Mahkuma Parishad shall be exercised by the Chief Executive Councillor with the assistance of the Secretary, Mahkuma Parishad who is appointed by the State Government. The Executive Committee of the Mahkuma Parishad is constituted with all Secretaries of Standing Committees with the Chief Executive Councillor as Chairman. The Standing Committees are (1) Medical, (2) Public works, (3) Education, culture, etc., (4) Agriculture and Minor Irrigation, (5) Animal Husbandry and Veterinary, (6) Small scale and Village Industries and Co-operatives. These standing Committees deal with various development activities.

Besides, there is one Planning and Review Board consisting of M.L.A. M.P. with the Chief Councillor as Chairman which recommends the budget of Mahkuma Parishad to State Government and undertakes periodical review of the activities of the Parishad. The Board also deals with plan at Sub-divisional level. Currently, there are three such Boards in three Mahkuma Parishads, i.e., at Silchar, Karimganj and Hailakandi in Cachar district.

A Block Advisory Committee at Block level is constituted by Mahkuma Parishad which implements the Block schemes with the help of Block Development Officer under the guidance of the Mahkuma Parishad.

*The Act provides that if the Scheduled Caste population or Scheduled Tribe population of a Mahkuma Parishad is above 5% or more the Gaon Panchayat having highest Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe population will have reserved constituency for such community.

Financial Resources of Panchayats : Under 1959 Panchayat Act, the Gaon Panchayat had a population varying from 2,500 to 4,000. The income of Gaon Panchayat is mainly derived from contribution from Govt. including share of land revenue. Besides, Gaon Panchayat could collect house tax, licence fees, sale proceeds of Pounds and a share of sale proceeds of bazar. In Cachar, the condition of most of the Gaon Panchayats was not at all sound. Many Gaon Panchayats could not run the establishment cost and had to depend on equalisation fund to meet deficit. Anchalik Panchayats were given a contribution annually by the Govt. at the rate of 17 paise per capita of population on account of Land Revenue. Anchalik Panchayat was allowed to collect licence fee, tax etc. and it used to collect share of sale proceeds of bazars vested in Panchayat. It had income from ferry, fishery, etc. Most of the Anchalik Panchayats of Cachar district had no remunerative assests therefore, they could not find much surplus to meet the requirement for Development works after meeting their establishment charges.

Gaon Panchayats derived their own income mainly from (1) House tax, (2) Registration of Cattle, (3) Licensing restaurant, stalls, etc., (4) Licence fee of Private Hats. Main income of Anchalik Panchayat was derived from licence fee on Carts, Cycles, Rickshaws, etc.

The 1959 Assam Panchayat Act did not provide any separate source of income to Mahkuma Parishad. The establishment cost of Mahkuma Parishad was met out of fund allotted by the Govt. A share of bazar sale-proceeds was credited to Mahkuma Parishad to defray the expenditure for undertaking sale of bazars by Mahkuma Parishad.

The pattern of financial distribution has been changed under Assam Panchayati Raj Act, 1972.

The Gaon Panchayat was entrusted to a share of Land Revenue and Local rate. It was entitled to establish pounds and collect sale-proceeds of pounds. It could derive income from sale-proceeds of bazar, share of ferry receipt, fisheries receipt, etc. It could realise licence fee from Carts, Rickshaws and Cycles. It could impose fee for registration of cattle, licence fee for tea stall, restaurant and so on.

In the district of Cachar, most of the Gaon Panchayats had to depend mainly on share of Land revenue and local rate. Its establishment consists of Secretary, Office Assistant, two to three Tax Collectors and Mohorers. Naturally, most of the Gaon Panchayats had no fund to undertake development work. It had to remain content in executing schemes entrusted by the Mahkuma Parishad.

In Karimganj Sub-division, some bazars are vested with Panchayats and therefore, some Gaon Panchayats have additional income from Hats

while at Silchar and Hailakandi Subdivisions the number of bazars being very few, two to three Gaon Panchayats can somehow carry out development functions after meeting administrative charges.

Mahkuma Parishad : Govt. contribution at the rate of 45 paise per capita of population being the share of land revenue forms the major base of income of Mahkuma Parishad. Mahkuma Parishad is authorised to collect house tax from households of Panchayat areas.

The Mahkuma Parishad can also impose a surcharge from local rate. Besides, it can realize licence fees on manufacturing units, and can realise licence fees under prevention of Food Adulteration Act. It is entitled to a share of sale proceeds of hats. There is a provision of matching grant for house tax realized and surcharge on local rate collected.

Under the provision of the Assam Panchayat Act, Govt. can transfer various schemes with funds and staff. The funds placed by departments as grant-in-aid constitute the part of Mahkuma Parishad fund and are expended as per rules and orders of the Govt. There are three Mahkuma Parishads in the district of Cachar. Annual income of Karimganj Mahkuma Parishad from Land Revenue is about 2½ lakhs; about one and half lakhs for Hailakandi and about 3½ lakhs for Silchar. Income from Hats will be about a lakh for Karimganj Mahkuma Parishad; about 30 thousand for Silchar and for Hailakandi it will be 10 thousand or so. The Gaon Panchayat is required to prepare and approve its budget by the 20th of May every year and submit to Mahkuma Parishad within 1st June.

Mahkuma Parishad shall prepare and approve its budget within 15th of May of each year and submit to Govt. with a copy to Planning and Review Board within 20th May. Planning and Review Board will send its recommendation and suggestion within 30th May.

The fund of the Mahkuma Parishad is operated by its Secretary, under the control of Chief Executive Councillor. Gaon Panchayat fund is operated by the President of Gaon Panchayat or Secretary.

In respect of Gaon Panchayat Office building, Govt. make a substantial contribution. Similarly; Govt. subsidize administrative charges of Gaon Panchayat and Mahkuma Parishad. As per provision of the Assam Panchayat Raj Act, 1959, fifteen Anchalik Panchayats had been established covering the entire jurisdiction of the district. These Anchalik Panchayats were Co-terminus with Development Blocks established at Cachar. Out of these fifteen Anchalik Panchayats of the district seven were located in Silchar sub-division, five in Karimganj sub-division and three in Hailakandi sub-division. But all these Anchalik Panchayats were abolished in May, 1973 following the enforcement of the Assam Panchayat Raj Act, 1972.

The following statement shows the name of the Anchalik Panchayats, their headquarters, date of formation, No. of Gaon Sobha under each Anchalik Panchayat and number of villages covered by each Panchayat in the district.

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Name of Anchalik Panchayats.	Administrative headquarters	Date of formation	No. of Gaon Sabha under each A.P.	No. of villages covered by each A.P.
1	2	3	4	5
1. Badarpur A.P.	Mahakal	18.11.59	11	110
2. Ramkrishna-nagar A.P.	Ramkrishna-nagar	24.2.60	29	219
3. North Karimganj	Betorashi	24.2.60	17	115
4. South Karimganj	Nilambazar	24.2.60	30	184
5. Patharkandi	Patharkandi	24.2.60	30	220
6. Udarbond	Udarbond	8.12.59	15	107
7. Lakhipur	Lakhipur	24.2.60	21	144
8. Narshingpur	Narshingpur	24.2.60	25	155
9. Katigorah	Kaluin	24.2.60	25	194
10. Rajabazar	Rajabazar	8.12.59	9	33
11. Salchapra	Salchapra	8.12.59	21	128
12. Sonai	Sonai	8.12.59	30	140
13. Hailakandi	Hailakandi	18.11.59	33	124
14. Katlichara	Katlichara	18.11.59	14	82
15. Lala	Manachara	24.2.60	24	77

There are three Mahkuma Parishad in the district. These were originally established following introduction of Assam Panchayat Raj Act 1959. Each Mahkuma Parishad covers the area of the civil sub-division. In fact, each Mahkuma Parishad has its area of operation over the villages of the sub-division. The headquarters of each Mahkuma Parishad are located in corresponding district and sub-divisional headquarters of Cachar.

The following statement shows the local self-government organisational coverage upto 1975-76 in the district of Cachar.

Name of the district	Name of the sub-division.	No. of Mahkuma Parishad	No. of Block	No. of Gaon. Panchayat	No. of villages covered
1	2	3	4	5	6
Cachar	Silchar	1	7	38	725
	Karimganj	1	5	31	1009
	Hailakandi	1	3	15	306

(a) Historical Background :

Information about the system of Education which prevailed in Cachar in early times is shrouded in obscurity. No written records of Kachari rule and tradition current amongst the Kacharis give any reliable information about the education and literature of ancient Cachar. However, it is presumed that the Gurukul system of education, traditional system of education of early days found popular support in Cachar as in other parts of the province. But in the seventeenth century of the Christian era, a number of writers and poets of Cachar composed some Poetical works. Noteworthy amongst those is a poetry book named "Shri Naradiya Rasamrita" written by Bhubaneswar Basaspati Bhattacharya in 1730 A.D. at the request of Rani Chandraprabha, queen of Tamradhvaja, Suradarpa Narayan, Kachari King of the Seventeenth century also composed some Sakta poems. Govinda Chandra, the last Kachari king of Cachar also composed some Vaisnavite poetical works, viz, Govinda Kirtan and Maharasothesava Lilamrita. Other poets and writers who lived in Cachar during the rule of Govinda Chandra are Dewan Kavi Satyaram and poet Haragovinda Das.

From the social structure of Dimasha Kachari this much can be said that the only form of educational institution that seems to have existed in the district was Dekachang or yong man's club. Though no reading and writing were taught in Dekachang, all the practical trainings on agriculture, handicrafts, music, sports and tribal-warfare were imparted there. In spirit, Dekachang resembles *gurugriha* and *gurukul* system of ancient Hindu tradition and serves as a residential educational institute where all the students and teachers live together and learn community living. A boy enters Dekachang at the age between seven to thirteen and lives there till he is ready to marry and establish his own independent home. The members of the Dekachang acted as preceptors, protectors, labourer and entertainer of their village. The basic function and organisational set up of Dekachang was more or less the same amongst the different tribes inhabiting the villages, though they bear different names among different tribes. Among the Kacharis, it is known as *Jirkedame*, while it is known as *Buonzawal* among the Hmars, "Morung" among the Rengma Nagas and *Nodrang* among the Dimasha Kacharis.

Beginning of western education: Education in Cachar, as it was in the whole of Assam, during the first part of the nineteenth century, was in very low ebb due to the confusion caused by local strifes, aggression of the Burmese and Manipuris and rivalries between the Kachari kings and local chiefs. So, when the British took over Cachar formally after death of Govinda Chandra, the last Kachari king in 1832, there was practically no educational institution in Cachar. Though there were some tols, where Brahmin and Kayastha pandits imparted informal education, their conditions were no good. Information on the condition of educational institutions as found by the British in Cachar can be gathered from a letter written in June 1834, by T. Fisher, the Superintendent of Cachar, to the Commissioner of Dacca Division; which runs as follows: "There does not exist any provision either public or private in any part of Cachar for the instruction of the people nor does it appear that any thing of the kind ever did, at least in a permanent way. The Raja sometimes allowed small sums to a few Brahmins and Kayasthas while they were absent from the country pursuing their studies in Bengal, and for a short time he entertained a few Pandits which gave instruction in Bengali and Sanskrit to some of their castes only. The little learning extant in Cachar is strictly confined to the Brahmins, though the Muhammadan section of the population is the most numerous".¹

On the incorporation of Cachar into the administration Unit of Dacca Division of the Bengal Presidency, Mr. T. Fisher, the first Superintendent of Cachar, suggested that the schools be set up in Cachar following the model of Bengal Presidency. J.G. Burns proposed to set up schools at Silchar, Hailakandi and Katigora. The *amolas* started three schools at Silchar, Hailakandi and Katigora. But these schools except the Silchar one did not continue for long.

In 1860-61, Silchar School, the sole surviving school of Cachar had only thirteen pupils in its roll. By 1870-71, number of schools in Cachar increased to 5, of which, one was Government English school with 163 students, 3 Government vernacular schools with 71 students and 1 Government aided vernacular school with 14 students.²

1. D.Dutta : *Cachar District Records*, 1969, Silchar, p17

2. W.W. Hunter : *Statistical Account of Assam, Cachar District*,
Reprint 1975, pp.456-457.

The number of schools increased to 131 by 1874-75 with 2,508 students in the roll. The first english school at Silchar was founded by the Welsh Presbyterian Mission in 1863 and taken over by the Government in 1868. Of the 131 schools reported in 1874-75, one was the Government english high school mentioned above, six Government middle vernacular schools and 108 primary schools. Girls primary schools were fully financed by the Government. Besides, a Normal school also was founded in 1874, wherein 16 primary school teachers were imparted training. In 1900-01, though number of secondary schools was 4, enrolment of students increased to 654. Number of primary schools increased to 248 in 1900. Of the high schools, besides the Government institution at Silchar, there was one Government aided high school at Hailakandi in 1904. The middle schools were situated at Silchar, Barkhala, Katigora and Narsingpur.³

It is a matter of regret that due to political dominance of Sylhet over Surma Valley, till the partition of India, educational development in higher education and technical training in Cachar did not take place considerably as most of the institutions were established at Sylhet. Moreover, being the constant victim of river Barak's flood, the people had to remain in perpetual worry over safety of their persons and property and so did not pay much heed to educational needs. In spite of that, percentage of literacy in Cachar was always high in comparison to the districts of Brahmaputra Valley. After the Independence, Cachar progressed in a steady pace on the path of education and made notable achievement. Number of primary schools in Silchar and Hailakandi subdivisions increased to 786 in 1960 while it was 248 in 1900 for the whole district. Karimganj sub-division, which was a part of Sylhet (now in Bangladesh), alone had 404 primary Schools in 1960. The following table will furnish an idea about sub-division-wise educational development in the district of Cachar since 1960.

Statement showing sub-division- wise number of schools of different categories in Cachar.⁴

Year	Sub-division	Primary and Junior basic	Middle and Senior basic Schools.	High School and Higher Secondary Schools.	Oriental Professional and technical Schools.
1	2	3	4	5	6
1960	Silchar	705	78	27	17
	Karimganj	506	48	21	19
	Hailakandi	289	35	8	8

3. B.C. Allen : *Assam District Gazetteer, Cachar*, 1905, pp 146- 147.

4. Source : *Inspector of Schools, Silchar*.

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1	2	3	4	5	6
1965	Silchar	872	117	61	17
	Karimganj	653	82	33	21
	Hailakandi	421	57	18	7
1970	Silchar	903	142	67	19
	Karimganj	679	94	39	20
	Hailakandi	438	73	21	7
1974	Silchar	1021	169	80	18
	Karimganj	756	115	51	22
	Hailakandi	559	96	31	8

The Government of Assam decided to establish at least one primary school in each of the revenue villages during the Fifth Five-year Plan. Accordingly, a survey was made in 1975-76. As per the report of the survey conducted by the Director of Public Instructions, Assam, in Cachar there were 355 school-less revenue villages. In 1975-76, there were only 2413 inhabited (1971 census) villages in Cachar with 2537 primary schools. This shows educational advancement of Cachar in recent times.

The schools for general education in the district were divided into five distinct grades. They are pre-primary, primary, middle vernacular, middle English and high school. Till the establishment of the Board of Secondary Education, Assam, the final examinations of the high schools were conducted, at first, by Calcutta University and then by Gauhati University. The final school leaving examination at the high school standard was called Entrance Examination, and its medium of instruction was English. At primary and middle school stage, medium of instruction was Bengali.

(b) Literacy and educational standard:

It has already been mentioned that though a number of schools were opened in different parts of the district in the early part of the

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twentieth century, education did not grow much till the Independence. Percentage of boys going to school in 1881 was 11.63 while that of the girls was .51 to the total number of boys and girls of school going age living in the district. The position, however, improved in 1901 when it was 20.27 per cent of boys and 1.15 per cent of girls. Prior to 1901, population was divided in respect of literacy into 3 categories, viz, learning, literate and illiterate. That system was found unsatisfactory and since 1901, only two classifications of literates and illiterates were maintained. In 1901, the persons who could simply sign or read the letters were classified as literate. This resulted in the above mentioned improvement in literacy percentage figure. Condition remained almost constant till 1904.⁵ It must, however, be noted that percentage of literacy and number of literate in Cachar plains since 1901 was always high in comparison to other districts of Assam. It is interesting to note the remarks of J. Mc Swiney, Superintendent of Census Operations, Assam (1911); who says that in education, "high position of Cachar has been maintained since 1891, I am at a loss to discover the cause and can only suggest that the fact of its being a small and temporarily settled district has made the people more go-ahead than their brethren in Sylhet and brings their needs more before the eyes of the authorities."⁶ In 1891, number of literate persons in Cachar per millions was 95, while in 1901 and 1911, it was 91 and 110 respectively. It was first in literacy in Assam throughout these decades later on to yield to Kamrup in 1921. In that year, Cachar stood next in position to Kamrup with 148 male literates per million while the female literacy was lower only to that of Sylhet. While number of literate females in Sylhet was 17 per million, it was 15 per million in Cachar and 14 per million in Kamrup. This figure since 1911, however, gave the statistics of the persons who could write a letter to a friend and read its reply. In 1931, Cachar again regained its position with 112 numbers of literate persons per million, while it was 110 per million in Sylhet and 101 in Kamrup. The following table shows the progress of literacy number in Cachar during 1911-31 as per age-group and sex division in detail.⁷

5. B.C. Allen : *Assam District Gazetteer, Cachar*, 1905, p. 146

6. *Census of India*, 1991, Assam, Part I, Report, page, 86

7. *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. III, Assam Part I, Report.

Number per million who are literates.

Number per million who are notified.											
Years	All	M	F	5-10 years		10-15 years		15-20 years		20	above
	ages										
	total			M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1911	110	105	5	3	—	110	7	207	9	147	7
1921	85	145	15	36	9	115	19	203	26	184	14
1931	112	188	25	73	22	130	35	223	36	226	21

In 1961, number of literate persons in the district of Cachar was 3,94,308 out of 13,78,476 total population. Percentage of male literates in Silchar sub-division being 42 the state figure even in the other two sub-divisions. Number of male literates in Karimganj sub-division was 94,233 and that in Hailakandi sub-division was 50,112, while number of female literates and educates were 35,915 and 16,855 in Karimganj and Hailakandi sub-division respectively. In 1971, however, the percentage rate of literacy decreased very much due to influx of fresh immigrants from Bangladesh into the district, most of whom were illiterate agriculturists and petty-traders. Even then the district was much ahead of the other districts of Assam in literacy. The table below will give a comparative idea about the educational position of Cachar and other districts of Assam as per 1971 Census.⁸

year	1971				1961	
Name of State or district	Percentage of literacy	Male	Female	Female	Male	Percentage of literacy
Assam	28.30	36.70	18.60	16.00	37.30	27.10
Sibsagar	36.62	44.32	27.92	21.90	48.00	34.30
Cachar	30.57	40.42	9.90	15.80	40.12	28.60
Lakhimpur &						
Dibrugarh	29.90	38.50	19.60	16.40	38.90	28.70
Kamrup	28.77	38.19	18.17	13.60	39.20	27.40
Nowgong	28.92	36.97	19.96	16.80	36.40	27.30
Darrang	22.76	30.26	14.30	12.70	31.70	22.90
Goalpara	21.98	30.27	13.03	10.80	30.30	21.10
Karbi Anglong	19.17	26.93	10.29	7.70	25.80	17.40
N.C. Hills	27.25	35.46	17.49			

8. Source : Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Assam Gauhati

Spread of women education : As in other parts of India, in Cachar too, literacy figure amongst the females is very low, though barring Sylhet which has been transferred from India in 1947, it has been always the highest amongst the plains districts of Assam. Mr. C.S. Mullan, Superintendent of Census Operation, Assam, in 1931 informed in his report that increase of literacy amongst females had been extremely small in the Brahmaputra Valley districts during 1910-1930, and he recommended special attention from the Educational authorities on the subject. As per 1931 Census, average female literates in the Brahmaputra plains were 5 per million while it was 25 per million in Cachar. Mr. Mullan very rightly remarked, "The obstacle in the way of progress of female education be in the very structure of Indian society,the greatest is the general spirit of social conservatism which regards the education of women as a dangerous western innovation which is liable to transform a dutiful affectionate girl into a discontented shrew of a women.....others consider that the present system of female education is radically unsound and unfits their daughters for the domestic duties of home life."⁹

In spite of social aversion for female education, number of school-going girls gradually have been on increase along with addition of educational institutions of different categories. With increase in number of woman educates, problem of getting woman teachers became almost nil. Consequence to emancipation of women as the result of propagation of lofty ideas of equality in sex, and also due to better position of educated and literate women in marriage market, number of female literates in the district of Cachar increased to 19.90 per cent against Assam's 18.60% in 1971. In 1961, there was one Government aided girls' multipurpose higher secondary school, one recognised aided girls high school, one recognised but unaided girl's high school and three venture girl's high schools in Cachar while the only woman's college in Cachar was established in Silchar in 1963. In 1976, number of primary and junior basic schools meant exclusively for girls were 102 and that of middle and senior basic schools were 30 in the district though at these stages education is generally imparted jointly in one school. Number of girl's high and higher secondary schools in 1976 increased to 7 while number of colleges increased to 2.

In order to give impetus to female education, the Government of Assam has been following very liberal policy in awarding scholarships, free studentships and other concessions. In order to facilitate appointment of female teachers in educational institutes, residential quarters for female teachers in the rural and backward areas have been constructed. Besides,

9. Census of India, 1931, Vol-III, Assam, Part I, Report, pp. 154-155.

non-recurring grants for construction of girl's hostels in high schools, higher secondary schools and colleges also are being liberally advanced. There are two girls-colleges in Cachar at present, one is Woman's College of Silchar and the other is Rabindra Sadan Girls College at Karimganj.

Education amongst the Scheduled caste and Scheduled Tribes : Trend of educational development amongst the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes was not very much heartening in the early part of British domain in Assam, as it can be gathered from the report of J. McSwiney, the Superintendent of Census Operation, Assam, in 1911. As per his reports, in 1911 amongst the scheduled castes, literacy amongst the Tella who lived exclusively in Sylhet and Cachar was found to be the highest, being 109 per million, followed by the Boruis of Cachar which was 96 persons per million as literate. Among the scheduled plains tribes, Kacharis who returned as Hindu were the most literates having 46 literates per one million while Karbis were the most backward people in literacy with only 3 literates in a million. Mr. McSwiney informs us that Indian christian' who were mostly converts from scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and tea garden labourers, very much advanced than their fellow countrymen.¹⁰ The same fact hold good even to-day. Due to economic and material facilities advanced by the Christian Missionaries to the converts, people aspiran for better living and material prosperity flocked in masses to the Christian Missionaries for conversion and with the aid of them advanced in education.

In Cachar, position of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes improved very much after the Independence of India. The following table will give an account of literacy amongst the scheduled castes of Cachar, in 1961, in detail.¹¹

Statement showing extent of literacy amongst the scheduled castes of Cachar, sex, urban and rural area-wise.

		As per 1961 census							
Name of caste		Total		Illiterate		Literate without educational level.		Educational level Primary or Junior basic.	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
TOTAL	R	96361	88733	60022	65624	25496	16591	10435	6489
	U	4052	3659	2103	2735	1118	640	723	269
Basphor	U	104	95	79	88	16	7	9	
	R	658	731	584	723	68	6	6	2
Bhuimali or Mali	U	669	650	367	524	179	87	114	37
	R	6181	5730	3908	4642	1550	889	694	119
Brittial Bania or Bania	U	43	18	31	12	7	4	5	2
	R	274	295	102	225	97	48	74	22
Dhupi or Dhubi	U	321	305	183	234	94	50	32	21
	R	4707	4129	3026	3228	1132	717	528	182
Jalkeot	U	11	—	10	—	1	—	—	—
	R	61	64	33	60	23	4	5	—
Jhalo or Malo	U	75	63	53	51	17	9	3	3
	R	272	236	214	226	48	8	10	2
Kaibarta	U	384	305	161	202	83	61	132	42
	R	4395	4176	3180	3268	854	673	336	229
Lalbegi	U	4	—	2	5	2	2	—	—
	R	84	49	76	49	8	—	—	—
Mehror or Bhangi	U	122	116	96	112	19	4	7	—
	R	42	51	42	51	—	—	—	—
Muchi or Rishi	U	303	347	196	257	141	76	43	14
	R	17025	14181	12810	11484	3287	2009	919	687
Namasudra	U	530	423	269	294	132	86	112	47
	R	23983	21769	15173	15763	6510	4635	2220	1369
Patni	U	1063	1020	435	719	355	208	225	83
	R	37479	36214	19980	24885	11701	7535	5560	3770
Sutradhar	U	279	260	175	193	56	40	39	26
	R	392	295	237	236	85	41	66	18
Dughla or Dholi	U	64	80	46	44	16	6	2	—
	R	808	819	657	784	133	26	18	9

Abbreviations—U-Urban, R-Rural.

Amongst the scheduled tribes of Cachar Barmans are more prominent, next comes Boro-Kachari, Kacharis including Sonowal and Rabhas. The following table enumerates the number of literates amongst the scheduled tribes of Cachar with standard of literacy and number of illiterates with particular reference to their total number, urban, and rural area wise as per 1961 census.¹²

10. Census of India, 1911. Vol. III, Part I Report, pages 87, 93, 128 and 137.

11. Source : Census of India 1961, Assam, District Census Hand Book, Cachar pp. 359-365.

12. Source : Census of India 1961, Assam, District Census Hand Book Cachar, pp. 363-367.

Statement showing educational standard of literates amongst the Scheduled Tribes of Cachar.

Name of Sched- uled Tribe		Total Illiterates,		Literates without standard		Educational level					
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Barmans.	U	274	75	143	45	87	23	35	5	✓	★
	R	6469	6296	3539	4938	2466	1011	439	343	25	4
Boro-Kachari.	U	34	25	14	8	13	17	5	—	✓	—
	R	72	65	62	65	8	—	2	—	—	—
Kachari including	U	3	—	1	—	2	—	—	—	—	—
Sonowal.	R	80	71	80	71	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rabha.	U	3	—	2	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
	R	314	295	311	291	3	4	—	—	—	—
Total	U	314	100	160	53	103	40	40	5	✓	✓
	R	6935	6727	3992	5365	2477	1015	441	343	25	4

In 1961, out of the total non-working people of 126,446 in the district of Cachar, 15,115 were full-time students among whom 9,519 were male and 5596 were female. Number of educated unemployed with matric and above matriculation standard were only 46. Of these 46 too, only 17 were from urban areas and 29 were from rural areas. Amongst the scheduled tribes in the district, 8145 were non-working people amongst whom 1778 only were full-time students. Number of educated unemployed who were in search of job for the first time on completion of study, were only 25 amongst the scheduled tribes in 1961. In 1971, there was no enumeration on such sectarian basis, so community-wise statistical account could not be made available. But from the Inspector of Schools, Silchar, it could be learnt that in 1970, there were all together 100710 students belonging to backward communities studying in the different educational institutions of different standard in Cachar, and of them, 32,222 belonged to scheduled castes while 8953 belonged to scheduled tribes. In order to give a boost for education amongst the scheduled castes and scheduled tribe people in the district, besides ensuring free education to scheduled Caste and scheduled Tribe people in general upto matriculation

standard, the Government of Assam provided one M.V. School and one M.E. scholarship for scheduled tribes and 9 M.V and 26 M.E. scholarships for scheduled caste High School going students in 1974.

As regards education amongst the tea-garden labourers as per 1921 census, out of 9,22,000 tea-garden labourers only 5858 were literates. In 1908, the Government of India tried to bring the tea-garden population into the general fold of educational system through mutual involvement of the Government as well as of the tea-garden authorities. But the scheme failed as neither the tea garden authorities nor the labourers favoured schooling; because engagement of school-going aged children in labour means, in one hand less cost to garden authorities while on the other hand it means supplementary income to labour families. But after Independence, by Plantation Labour Act, 1951, educational facilities to garden labourers by the garden authority was made mandatory. With introduction of compulsory education scheme at elementary stage, the schools established and started by the garden authorities were to be transferred to the management of the government. In 1973-74, some of the tea garden schools were under the Regional Board of Elementary Education in Cachar while some were yet to be taken over. The position was at standstill due to apathy of the garden management of some tea-gardens who did not sign the necessary agreement for transfer of management to the Government.

General Education :

Primary School : In 1874-75, there were 108 primary schools in the district which rose to 248 in 1901. Number of students taking instruction in all the primary schools taken together rose from 2119 in 1874-75 to 7188 in 1900-01 showing an increase of 339 per cent during the span of 25 years. From 1901 to 1947, like the other districts of Assam, educationally Cachar also grew in very slow paces. But after the Partition, it again started its educational growth and in 1960 number of primary schools and junior basic schools taken together rose to 1500 and in 1961, number of schools for primary education including preprimary schools increased to 1663 with 122,315 students in the roll. This, however, included 2 railway schools. In 1971, the number of primary schools, however, rose to 2023 with 1,51,587 pupils in the enrolment showing about 24% increase. The following table will give an idea about the growth of primary education as per sex-division of the district since 1901 to 1961 over each decade.

Statement showing number of literates per 10,000 of total male and female population in the district of Cachar since 1901 to 1961. ¹³

Year	Male literates	Female literates
1901	1,053	0047
1911	1,230	0087
1921	1,462	0148
1931	1,774	0236
1941	0,2425	0489
1951	0,3869	1225
1961	0,4726	1905

As was in other districts of Assam earlier, primary education in the district was divided into lower and upper standard. Subsequently this division was abolished, and all primary schools were brought into one category and curriculum confined only to giving instruction on reading, writing, and arithmetics. Later on, however, curriculum expanded and craft and vocational subjects also were introduced. As per 1961 census, there were 825 revenue villages without any sort of primary school in the district of Cachar which reduced to 355 in 1975-76. This indicates tremendous advancement of primary education during the 3rd to 5th Five-Year Plan periods in the district. The table below gives an account of the number of primary and junior basic schools in Cachar showing the number of pupils under enrolment and their financing agencies.

Year	Category of school	Number of schools	Number of Pupils		Number of Schools under different financing agencies		other agencies like Raly		
			Male	Female	State Govt.	School Board	Govt. Aided	Private	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1960	Primary	1190	54187	26893	05	1008	28	147	2
	Jr.Basic	0310	20252	10823	54	0256	-	-	-
1965	Primary	1636	71648	39224	05	1501	24	103	3
	Jr.Basic	0310	20391	12527	53	0257	-	-	-
1970	Primary	1716	71554	41262	05	1696	04	008	3
	Jr. Basic	0304	19338	12693	52	0252	-	-	-
1974	Primary	2033	80652	48419	05	2025	-	-	3
	Jr. Basic	0303	18878	12660	53	0250	-	-	3

13. *Census of India*, 1961, Vol. III, Assam, page 166 and *Census of India* 1971, part II-A, Assam pages 196-97.

From the above table it can be seen that since 1960, there is a marked rise in primary education with steady upward trend. It has already been mentioned above that though main aim of education at the primary stage is instruction of 3 'R's., recently in order to promote an idea of dignity of labour and self-dependency, emphasis on other activities like cane and bamboo work, gardening, making of clay-dolls and models also has been put. The course of education in primary schools run for 5 years and the classes consist of A, B, I, II and III.

Basic Schools : Indian National Congress, the then ruling party of India and also of Assam, in view of its Gandhian policy which aimed at decentralised economy in order to achieve national self-sufficiency, decided to introduce Basic-system of education from primary stage. The National Plan of Education was accepted in the Haripura Congress Session in 1938. In pursuance of it, the Congress ministry of Assam decided to introduce Basic Education system in the primary schools of Assam. But it suffered a serious set-back with the out-break of 2nd World War, in consequence of resignation of the Congress ministry. After the independence, with new zeal the ideal was followed and the national government took upon itself the task of implementation of the scheme of Basic education under which along with teaching of reading, writing and to do arithmetics, history, geography, nature-study and social studies are also taught. Children in the basic schools are taught to do their own cooking, washing and cleaning in order to learn self-dependency. As the time schedule was drawn for such conversion to cover cent per cent of the existing primary schools by 1964; by 1960, in Cachar 310 primary schools were found to be covered by Basic Education system. As there was a second thought applied on the policy, the progress was arrested at that stage and some of them even ceased to exist later on. So, in 1974, we find only 303 basic (junior) schools in Cachar with 31,538 pupils. The same is the case with senior basic schools also. In 1960, there were 18 senior basic schools in the district of Cachar and this number increased to 22 in 1970 and since then the position remained static. Number of pupils in senior basic schools of Cachar was 3007 in 1960 and in 1974, there were found to be only 4498 pupils; enhanced number being the result of population increase only. The table below indicates the number of basic schools with number of students in comparison with primary and middle schools of the district from 1960 to 1974. Of these schools, 53 junior basic and 8 senior basic schools are financed directly by the State Government, while the rest are financed by the Govt. through School Boards.

Year	Primary School		Junior Basic		Middle School		Senior Basic	
	Number of Schools	Number of Students	No. of Schools	No. of Students	No. of Schools	No. of Students	No. of Schools	No. of Students
1960	1190	81080	310	31075	143	15371	18	3007
1965	1636	110872	310	32818	235	22177	21	4422
1970	1716	112816	304	32031	287	29284	22	4690
1974	2033	129071	303	315338	358	38299	22	4498

Public apathy for Basic Education has been found to be the result of the better service facilities offered by the Public School Education, which resulted in establishment of a number of English medium nursery schools run under Montessori and Kindergarten methods. This tendency has been more marked in the urban areas.

Assam Primary Education Act of 1974 repealed the Assam Primary Education Act of 1926 and made primary education for all children above 5 years compulsory. In 1948, primary education was made compulsory for all the children in the age group of 6-11 years throughout the State. A Provincial Board for Primary Education for regulation, control and development of primary education in the state with the Director of Public Instruction, Assam, as its ex-officio Chairman was constituted. Similar Boards at every educational district—level in each revenue sub-division also were formed with their respective Deputy Inspectors of Schools as ex-officio Secretaries and management of the schools was taken over from the Local Boards and Town and Municipal Committees and handed over to the Boards. In 1954, Assam Basic Education Act repealed the above Act. State Basic Education Board was constituted under this Act to advise the Government in all matters concerning the primary education in the State. The Minister of Education was made the ex-officio Chairman of the Board while the Director of Public Instruction, Assam, was to act as its ex-officio Vice-Chairman. Under the Act, Regional Boards in educational regions comprising a number of revenue districts, were formed with a non-official Chairman and the respective Inspectors of Schools as their ex-officio Secretaries. Control of primary education was entrusted to these Regional Boards. Subsequently, a State Board for Elementary Education was constituted with Regional Board for Elementary Education for each educational district. Administration of primary education rests with the Deputy Inspectors of Schools who are the ex-officio Secretaries of the Regional Boards in the respective regions, i.e., revenue sub-divisions.

Regional Boards for Elementary Education in Cachar is functioning since November, 1970. There are 3 Regional Elementary Education Boards in Cachar. These are Silchar Regional Elementary Education Board, Karimganj R.E.E. Board and Hailakandi R.E.E. Board. There are 9,8 and 5 Educational Circles respectively under the Silchar R.E.E. Board, Karimganj R.E.E. Board and Hailakandi R.E.E. Board.

An educational session in primary Schools is divided into 3 terms, viz, January to June, July to September and October to December. At the end of every term Terminal Examinations are held to assess the progress. The following table indicates the number of recognised Primary and Basic Schools along with sex-wise enrolment in 1971-72, 1972-73 and 1973-74.¹⁴

Year	No. of institutions				No. of Scholars			
	Junior Basic		Primary		Junior Basic		Primary	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1972-73	294	9	1821	86	17481	12032	72659	44545
1971-72	294	9	1703	87	18676	12526	72576	43622
1973-74	294	9	1947	86	13446	12193	76980	44852

Though initially parents and guardians send their children to schools, subsequently a portion of the pupils drop out in consequence of various family and individual problems. The most important one of these problems are ill-health of the pupils due to mal-nutrition and economic stringency of the parents who prefer to utilise the wards in family economy. Such drop outs reported in 1973-74 in Cachar are 64433 in class A, 33869 in class B, 28828 in class 1, 23381 in class 11 and 18979 in class 111.

The Assam Elementary Education Act, 1962 detailed a new pattern of administration in primary education of the State in the line of the French system. Under the system, the Government is exclusively responsible for supervision of schools and provisions of teachers in the schools. Recruitment of teachers also is done by the government. Besides prescribing the standard of education and regulating the service conditions of the teachers, the government also bears all the costs for trainings and payment of salaries and allowances of the teachers. The

¹⁴ Source : Inspector of Schools, Cachar, Silchar.

local authorities are entrusted only with the non-teacher part of the expenditure for which a grant-in-aid to the Boards are advanced. The function of the State Board is only of advisory nature. The Act covers all the institutions of primary education including the junior basic schools, and endeavours to enforce free and compulsory elementary education throughout the State of Assam. This Act repeals the Assam Basic Education Act of 1954.¹⁵

Secondary Schools : History of Secondary Education in Cachar is the same with the history of elementary education of the state. As remarked by B.C. Allen in the District Gazetteer of Cachar (1905), education is a plant of comparatively recent growth in Cachar. In the year 1856-57, there was not a single school in the district. In 1860-61, there was one unaided school which was attended by 13 pupils.¹⁶ Situation showed a sign of little improvement since then and in 1865-1866, there were seven schools in the district. Rapid development took place with initiation of reforms by Sir George Compbell. In 1874-75, there were 7 secondary schools in Cachar with 373 students in its roll. But by 1900-01, some of these schools discontinued and only 4 secondary schools of middle English standard remained at Silchar, Barkhola, Kattigora and Narsingpur with a total number of 654 pupils in their rolls. Besides these middle schools, there were 2 high schools in Cachar in 1904. The high school at Silchar was a government institution at first started by Presbyterian Christian Mission and subsequently handed over to the government, while the other was an aided high school at Hailakandi. The High School Leaving Examination was called Entrance Examination and it was conducted by the University of Calcutta. English was the medium of instruction in the 4 higher classes of the High School. In 1904, there were 438 pupils in these two high schools of whom only 74 were reading in the higher 4 classes.

After the Independence, there occurred a very marked advancement in the secondary education in the district and in 1959-60, there were 184 middle schools, 18 senior basic schools, 72 high schools and 3 higher secondary schools in the district. This number again increased very rapidly during the next following years. The statement below indicates the pace of development of secondary education in the district of Cachar.

15. The Indian Year Book of Education 1964. Second Year Book Elementary Education by National Educational Research and Training, New Delhi.

16. B. C. Allen, Assam District Gazetteer- Vol I in Cachar, 1906, p-145-46.

Year	Middle Schools			Senior Basic		
	Number of institution	Number of students		No. of institution	No. of students	
		Boys	Girls		Boys	Girls
1960	143	10524	4847	18	2103	904
1965	235	15118	7089	21	2816	1606
1970	287	18733	10551	22	2900	1790
1974	358	24268	14029	22	2652	1846

High Schools			Higher Secondary Schools		
No. of institution	No. of students		No. of institution	No. of students	
	Boys	Girls		Boys	Girls
53	16750	5457	3	1349	86
104	21426	9019	8	4174	215
118	21862	10272	9	3940	218
153	26188	13050	9	4757	274

Secondary Education under the present system is imparted through various categories of institutions like middle English, middle vernacular senior basic, high school, higher secondary and multipurpose School. Study of Hindi, the *Lingua franca* of India, has been made progressively compulsory in the secondary schools while English also has been continued as a compulsory subject in the middle English, high, higher secondary and multipurpose schools. Special State grants-in-aid are given to schools for teaching Hindi. The syllabi of middle vernacular and middle English schools are the same except that English is taught in middle English Schools while there is no English in middle vernacular schools. Education in middle vernacular schools was all through free. In 1903-04, there was only one middle vernacular school with 62 pupils in Cachar. Number of middle English schools in the year was 3 and pupils numbering 314 in these schools' enrolments were all boys. In 1959-60, number of middle schools in the district was 184 which rose to 191 in 1960-61. Out of these schools in 1959-60, there were only 41 middle vernacular schools. Number of senior basic schools which also fall within the category of middle schools was only 18. In 1973-74,

number of middle English schools increased to 358 with 38297 pupils out of which, number of girls was 14029. Number of middle schools meant exclusively for girls was 30 only in that year.

Senior basic schools which were designed to impart practical cum theoretical training with general education to the children of the age group of 11-14 years, were the result of the National Education policy of India, motto of which was self-sufficiency in everyday social economy. Like middle English and middle vernacular schools, classes in the senior basic schools consist of class IV, V, and VI. Number of such schools in the district of Cachar rose to 22 in 1973-74 with 4498 pupils in the roll.

As regards high schools, number rose to 77 in 1960-61 from 2 in 1903-04. Enrolment of Students in High Schools in 1960-61 were 25426. Number of girls' high schools in 1973-74 was 19 with 15692 students in enrolment, while number of boys' high schools including high madrassas, higher secondary and multipurpose schools in 1973-74 were 143 with 30747 boys in the roll. This shows that the number of pupils of both sexes going for higher secondary education in the district increased by about 20 thousand within 23 years.

The growth in higher secondary education accentuated after 1975, and as per the Quarterly Bulletin of Education Vol. I No. 1 published by the Director of Public Instruction, Assam, in 1976, 163 high school—level schools including high madrassas, existed in Cachar. In 1973-74, 143 high schools and high Madrassas including 2 multi-purpose high schools were aided by the Government of Assam, one high school was financed by the Central Government, it being a railway school and two boys' and one girls' higher secondary schools were run by the State Government. In early stages, there was invariably a primary section attached to every high school. But later on with the introduction of compulsory primary education, there remained only seven classes from IV to X in a high school. This set up also has been changed recently with introduction of the new formula of educational stage-division. Now secondary education begins from class V only and so there are only six classes in present high schools starting from class V to end up in class X.

In 1958, in pursuance of the recommendation of the Secondary Education Commission 1953, the scheme of introduction of multi-purpose and higher secondary system of education in secondary education level was taken up in Assam. By 1973-74, six high schools were converted into higher secondary schools in Cachar. They are (1) Silchar Govt Higher Secondary School, (2) Karimganj Govt. Higher Secondary School, (3) Patharkandi Model Higher Secondary School, (4) M.M.M.C. Girls Higher Secondary School, Karimganj, (5) Ramkrishna Vidyapith Higher Secondary School, Ramkrishna Nagar, and (6) Narsing Higher Secondary,

School. Besides, in 10 other high schools vocational subjects like weaving, spinning, carpentry and agriculture were introduced. Further more in Lala Govt. Aided Higher Secondary School, Silchar, Govt. Girls Higher Secondary School and in Dhalai Govt. Aided B.M.P. School, multipurpose scheme was introduced. The statement below indicates the expenditure incurred in in connection with education at different levels in Cachar in 1973-74.

Total direct expenditure to Boys and Girls institutions in Cachar during 1973-74.

	in rupees				
	Higher Se- condary in- cluding Mul- tipurpose	High School including High Madrassa	M.E.	Sr. Basic	M.V.
Boys	14,79,252	62,64,191	29,27,594	5,65,836	11,92,743
Girls	05,24,014	08,15,610	02,03,580	033,636	03,80,690
	Junior Basic	Primary	Pre-primary	Professional and Vocational	others
Boys	25,14,453	1,03,01,476	40,440	339,800	548196
Girls	01,03,492	04,39,496	—	093,348	—

Though a great many number of schools were established in Cachar with the help of teachers transferred from Bengal to Cachar since annexation of East Bengal to Assam; collegiate education had to be pursued in Sylhet till the late forties of the century.

Collegiate Education: The first college of Cachar was started in 1935 at Silchar under the name, Guru Charan College. The establishment of a number of high schools, higher secondary school and multi-purpose high schools, after the Independence gave impetus for starting of a number of colleges in various places of the district; the first college at Hailakandi Karimganj College which was started in 1945 in the undivided India, came to Cachar along with transfer of Karimganj sub-division from Sylhet as the result of partition of India. By 1972, number of college in Cachar multiplied to 14. Of these colleges, 11 colleges are being financed by the Government of Assam under deficit

financing scheme while the remaining three are getting non-adhoc grant from the Government.

Guru Charan College: Established in 1935, this is the oldest college of Cachar. It has 3 sections, viz. arts, science and commerce with honours subjects in all the 3 sections. This has acquired the status of one of the premier institutions for collegiate education in Assam. It is located in Silchar, the Headquarters town in Cachar. In 1950-51, there were 256 boys and 52 girls receiving higher education in the arts section of the college, while 192 boys and girls were being educated in science and 85 boys were pursuing collegiate education in the commerce section of the college. In 1974-75, the number of both girls and boys in arts section became 1317, while it grew to 710 in science and 251 in commerce section. The college is managed by Governing Body and in 1950-51, the Governing Body of the college granted free studentship to about 130 students of this college. This college first started with intermediate classes in arts subjects and subsequently took up classes with honours subjects in 1940. Science section in the college was opened in 1949 with introduction of commerce with honours subjects in degree classes in same year. In 1951, the degree classes were taken up in science subjects also along with introduction of honours in science subjects. In 1976, there were 1791 students under enrolment in all the 3 sections of the college.

Karimganj College: The second important college of the district of Cachar is Karimganj College. Established with intermediate classes in both arts and science subjects in 1945-46, it introduced commerce subjects in 1950 and raised its status to a Degree College in 1948 taking up first the arts subject. Subsequently, in gradual steps, science and commerce in degree classes were also introduced into the college. In 1947, the college started with 81 students and number of students grew to 1716 in 1973-74. The college is well equipped with laboratory and library.

Srikishan Sarda College, Hailakandi : This college was first started in 1950 in the local town hall with 60 students. As it was set up with the donation of a local businessman, it was named after the father of the donar. In 1955, from the town hall, the college was shifted to its own building constructed with the donation of Srikishan Sarda's son. Starting as an arts college in intermediate stages, it opened its science classes in 1958-59. Thereafter by stages, honours courses were introduced in important arts subjects. There is also a night shift in the college. Total enrolment of students in 1974-75 in the arts section of the college was 518 boys and 196 girls while in the science section there were 178 boys and 14 girls. The college is run by a Governing Body which granted 122 free studentship in 1974-75. It is financed by the Govt. of Assam under deficit financing scheme.

Nehru College, Pailapool : Started first as a middle English school on 14th November, 1952 and dedicated to Pandit Nehru on his 62nd birth day as a gift from public, the institution grew into a college in July, 1964 with starting of intermediate classes in arts subjects within the premises of the said school which already achieved the status of an established high school by then. In 1965-66, the college received recognition from the University of Gauhati. In 1971, it received adhoc grant and qualified for deficit grant in 1975. 34 boys and 7 girls enrolled as pupils in the college in 1965-66 and its strength of students in 1974-75 was 251 boys and 64 girls. The Governing Body of the college allowed free studentship to two pupils in 1965-66 in spite of its very low purse. The same tradition has been continuing even now. In 1974-75, however, free studentship holder diminished numerically to one.

Rabindra Sadan Girl's College, Karimganj : There was no college meant exclusively for girls in Cachar till the establishment of the Rabindra Sadan Girls' College at Karimganj in 1962. It was established by the Rabindra Nath Tagore Centenary Celebration Committee, Karimganj. It situates on Surma Trunk Road and has its own building with an attached hostel for 30 students. Only the arts subjects are taught in this college. In 1965-66, total enrolment of students in the college was 233 which increased to 519 in 1974-75. No honours subject has been introduced into this college uptill now. The college has been selected for deficit grant scheme by the Govt. of Assam in 1966.

Woman's college Silchar: The second institution of collegiate education for women in Cachar was established at Silchar in 1963 under the name and style of Woman's College. It had no land or building of its own in the beginning and used to hold its classes in the morning in the Normal School premises. In 1964, its P.U. Classes received affiliation from the University of Gauhati and Degree classes got affiliation in 1971. In 1972, this college was selected for deficit grant by the Govt. of Assam. Like all another colleges of the district this college also is managed by a local Governing Body of its own.

Lala Rural College and Janata College at Kabuganj are two other Colleges which were started in two rural areas, i.e. Lala and Kabuganj of Cachar in 1964. Both the colleges were started with public donations and have no speciality in subjects taught. Lala Rural college first started with 48 students at its initiations while in 1965-66 session there were 88 boys and 14 girls enrolled as students in the Janata College of Kabuganj. Number of students in Janata College was 318 including 85 girls in

1974-75, while in the same year enrolment of students in Lala Rural College was 404 boys and 127 girls. Both these colleges are being financed by the Government of Assam under deficit grant scheme. Only arts subjects with no honours are taught in these two colleges.

Another important college of Cachar is Cachar College of Silchar which was established in 1960. It has only two sections -arts and commerce. Number of students in the college in 1975-76 was 1963, while it started with only 355 students in 1960. It has a very big and well -equipped library. This college is financed by the Government of Assam under deficit grant scheme and has qualified for University Grant Commission's grant. There is a morning section attached to this college, meant for girls students only.

Other colleges of the district are :-

- 1) Ramkrishna Nagar College, Ramkrishna Nagar.
- 2) Nabin Chandra College, Badarpur.
- 3) Radha Madhab College, Silchar.
- 4) M.C.D. College, Sonaimukh and
- 5) Vidyarthi Bhawan College, Karimganj.

Ramkrishna Nagar College was established in 1964 while Nabin Chandra College started in 1969. Both these colleges are teaching arts subjects in both the pre-University (intermediate) and degree classes, and are being financed by the Government of Assam under the deficit grant scheme. The last three colleges are only getting adhoc grants from the Government of Assam. Of these three colleges, Radha Madhab College of Silchar was established in 1970 while the other two started in 1972. The following table gives an idea about students, enrolment in these colleges.

Name of college	Students enrolment at		Pupils in		1974-75
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
1. Ramkrishna Nagar College, Ramkrishna Nagar	85	25	563		64
2. Nabin Chandra College, Badarpur	78	24	385		129
3. Radha Madhab College, Silchar	105	22	231		27
4. Vidyarthi Bhawan College, Karimganj	127	3	145		8

Organisational set up for Educational Management :

The Director of Public Instruction, Assam under the Education Department of the Government of Assam looks after the general education in the State. Recently a separate Directorate for elementary education has been set up which has been made the sole supervising, controlling and managerial authority so far as the elementary education is concerned. Under this Directorate, the Regional Board of Education functions in each district. The administration, supervision, management and control of primary education of the district rest with the Regional Board of Education.

As for middle school education, the senior basic schools and middle vernacular schools are entirely managed by the Government, while some of the aided are being managed by their respective Managing Committees. All the other senior basic and middle vernacular schools are controlled by the Regional Board for Elementary Education.

For basic schools, there is one Joint Director of Education attached to the State Directorate for Public Instruction ; and for looking after the social education aspect of the district, there is one District Social Education Officer in Silchar. He works under the guidance of the State Social Education Officer attached to the Director of Public Instruction, Assam.

For general education in the district, one Inspector of Schools is there at Silchar which is the headquarters of the educational circle of Silchar. There is one Assistant Inspector of Schools and one Assistant Inspectress of Schools with headquarters at Silchar to assist the Inspector of Schools, Silchar District Circle. Direct responsibility of inspection and supervision of Government high and higher secondary schools, normal schools, multi-purpose schools, high madrassas and the Office of the Deputy Inspector of Schools of Silchar lie with the Inspector of the Schools, Silchar. The Inspector of Schools inspects and supervises the aided and unaided high and higher secondary schools including multi-purpose schools and high madrassas, with the help of the Assistant Inspector and Assistant Inspectress of the Schools. Assistant Inspectress of the Schools mainly looks into the female secondary education affairs of the district.

Responsibility of inspection and supervision of middle and all categories of primary educational institutions of the subdivisions rests with the Deputy Inspectors of Schools of the respective sub-divisions. They are assisted by the Additional Deputy Inspector, Sub-Inspectors and Assistant Sub-Inspectors of Schools. The Deputy Inspector of Schools and Additional Deputy Inspector of Schools are directly responsible for inspection and supervision of M.E. Schools. The Sub-Inspector of School are entrusted with supervision and inspection of the middle vernacular, senior basic, junior basic and primary schools falling under their circle. Assistant

Sub-Inspector of Schools are given a sub-circle each within the jurisdiction of the Sub-Inspector of Schools. The responsibility of organisational supervision and inspection of institutions connected with social education, clubs, libraries, etc., rests with the District Social Education Officer posted in the district Headquarters, who is assisted by the Social Education Organisers attached to every Development Block headquarters. For all matters connected with physical education like sports, guides and physical training, the responsibility of supervision, organisation and inspection is vested on the Inspector or Inspectress of Physical Training, stationed at Silchar. The following statement gives an account of the various executive officers belonging to Assam Education Service and Assam School Service with their area and subject jurisdiction along with their number and headquarters, of the district of Cachar.

Designation of Officer.	Cadre	No. of posts	Head-quarters	Jurisdiction	
				Area	Subjects
1. Inspector of Schools.	A.E.S. Class—I	1	Silchar	Cachar district	Inspection and Supervision of High, Higher Secondary and Multipurpose Schools.
2. Assistant Inspector of Schools.	A.E.S. Class-II	1	Silchar	-do-	Assistant to the Inspector of Schools in matters of general education.
3. Asstt. Inspectress of Schools.	-do-	1	Silchar	-do-	Assistant to Inspector of Schools in matters of Female education.
4. Deputy Inspector of Schools.	Assam School Service, Class-I	1	Silchar	Silchar sub-division	Inspection and supervision of Middle Schools.
		1	Hailakandi	Hailakandi sub-division	Primary Schools.
		1	Karimganj	Karimganj sub-division	

Designation of Officer	Cadre	No. of posts	Head-quarters	Jurisdiction	
				Area	Subjects
5. Additional Deputy Inspector of Schools	-do-	1	Silchar	Silchar sub-division	to assist the D. I. of schools.
		1	Karimganj	Karimganj sub-division	to assist the D.I. of Schools
6. Sub-Inspector of Schools.	A.S.S. Class-II	9	Silchar Subdivision	respective circles in Silchar sub-division	to assist the D.I. of Schools and inspection and supervision of primary schools.
		8	Karimganj sub-division	respective circles in Karimganj sub-division	
		5	Hailakandi sub-division	respective circles in Hailakandi sub-division	
		5	Silchar	respective circles in Silchar sub-division.	
7. Assistant sub-Inspector of Schools.	Assam Lower School Service.	3	Karimganj	respective circles in Karimganj sub-division	to assist
		4	Hailakandi	respective circles in Hailakandi sub-division.	the Sub-Inspector of schools in his Supervision and inspection of School

The Inspector and the Inspectress of Physical Training, both of whom are stationed at Silchar as their headquarters, belong to Assam School Service-Class-II while the District Social Education

Officer who has his headquarters at Silchar, belong to Assam School Service Class-I.

Colleges of the district are inspected by the Inspector of Colleges appointed by the University of Gauhati while the Director of Public Instruction mainly looks after the financial aspect of the colleges in giving various types of grants.

(d) Technical and Vocational education :

There are a number of vocational crafts and training centres on technical education in the district of Cachar. The Polytechnic school of Cachar was established in Silchar in 1960, for imparting education in Engineering diploma course in Civil, Mechanical, and Electrical Engineering. At first only Civil Engineering was taught there. Similarly, some other technical schools of lower grade are also established later at Arunachal and Sreekona. The centre at Sreekona is known as Industrial Training Institute. Badarpur Weaving-cum Production Centre also is a school of this type. There is one weaving School at Salchapara and one at Narsingpur Development Block. In the Integrated Extension Training Centre of Arunachal, trainings are conducted in- (a) agriculture including soil management, (b) animal husbandary and veterinary science (c) co-operative and panchayats, (d) rural and cottage industries, (e) public health and sanitation, (f) maternity and child care, (g) home economy and (h) social education on youths programme, etc., through trained instructors.

The Industrial Institute of Silchar, established by the Community Development Department in 1955; was later on taken over by the Department of Technical Education, Government of Assam. The capacity for enrolment in the institute is about 250 in two batches. The subjects taught in the institute are Black-smithy, Carpentry, Draftmanship, Fitter, Mechanics, Welding, Sheet-metal works, etc. There are about 25 staff members in the institute. This institute has been rendering very useful and effective service to the district.

Amongst other small institutes for vocational training in Cachar, mention may be made of Joy Vocational and Aditya Boyan Vidyalay. The former institution, which is a private enterprise, situates in Karimganj town and imparts training in motor mechanics. Aditya Boyan Vidyalay, which is also a private enterprise, situates at Dottagram near Nilambazar.

Besides these, there are two technical cum production centres in Karimganj sub-division-one of which situates at Badarpurghat and the other at Dehalia. Crafts taught in these two centres are carpentry, weaving and blacksmithy.

Assam Khadi and Village Industries Board also has been running four centres for imparting training in *Iyemphie* weaving, *ambar charkha*

spinning and weaving at Lakhipur, Patharkandi, Karimganj, and Udarband. There is also a private tailoring school in Hailakandi.

As per 1961 census, there were 10 Industrial and Technical Arts and Crafts Training centres; 6 Commercial Training Institutes for imparting training on book-keeping, stenography and type-writing; and 1 Polytechnic School known as the Junior Technical School of Meherpur in Cachar. Moreover, there were one Basic Training and one Non-Basic Training School for training the teachers of the district in 1961. This number increased to 4 in 1973-74 and the institute at Silchar was enhanced to the status of a college. There is also a Normal School at Silchar where M.V. School teachers are trained. The Basic Training Centre situates at Hailakandi. Of the 6 Commercial Training Institutes, 2 are at Silchar, 3 at Karimganj and 1 at Badarpur. This number increased to 9 in 1971 with establishment of two such institutes at Ramkrishnanagar and one at Lala. These are all recognised by the Directorate of Technical Education., Assam.

Teacher's training school for woman teachers was started in Silchar Govt. Aided Girls' High School and it has now been amalgamated with the Teachers' Training College of Silchar. The womens' institution sponsored at Silchar Govt. Aided Girls' High School, has turned into the womens' College.

The following table will give some details of some of the technical and professional institutions of the district as in 1975. 17

Name of the Institution with address.	Enrolment	Staff	Type	Financing agency
Silchar Medical College, Silchar	276	50	Medical	Govt. of Assam.
A.K. Chanda Law College, Silchar.	255	7	Law	Receives Adhoc-Grant from the Govt. of Assam.
Teacher's Training College, Silchar.	90	7	Secondary School	-do-
Polytechnic Institute, Meherpur, Silchar	280	41	Teacher's Training Engineering	Run by the Govt. of Assam
I.T.I Sreekona	312	33	Technical	-do-
B.T. Centre, Udarband	80	7	Primary Teachers training.	-do-

17. Source : Inspector of Schools, Cachar, Silchar.

Name of Institution with address	Enrolment	Staff	Type	Financing agency
B.T.C., Kaliganj	95	7	-do-	-do-
B.T.C., Hailakandi	70	7	-do-	-do-
Weaving School, Mahakal	15	2	Weaving	-do-
Training cum-production Centre, Ramkrishnanagar	10	5	Cottage Industry Training centre.	Run by the Govt of Assam.
Gram Sevak Training Centre, Arunachal.	54	12	Farmers cum Panchayat Raj-Training Centre.	-do-
Tailoring School, Hailakandi	4	1	Technical	-do-

The names and particulars of the 9 Commercial Training Institutes are not given above.

In Cachar, there were about 9000 teachers working in different categories of schools ranging from pre-primary to the higher secondary schools in 1974. Out of these teachers only 4921 were trained till 1974. The table below will give details of the training position in Cachar schools as in 1974.

Type	Number of teachers					
	Total		Trained		Untrained	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Nursery	1	13	—	6	1	7
Primary and Junior Basic	3585	1219	2800	911	785	308
Middle and Senior Basic	1760	281	520	132	1240	149
High School	1545	265	346	73	1199	192
Higher Secondary School	274	94	103	30	171	64

Silchar Medical College : It was established in 1968 by the Government of Assam. It is situated at Ghungoor at about 7 kilometres from Silchar town. The first year class in this college was started in

Silchar Civil Hospital premises with fifty students. Its first batch for final M.B.B.S. examination appeared in 1973. The old Silchar Civil Hospital was temporarily converted into Silchar Medical College Hospital after necessary addition and alteration of the building. All the clinical departments were started in the Silchar Civil Hospital building. Till very recently the Silchar Medical College was imparting only undergraduate Medical Education. Its pattern of education is in the line of the recommendation of Medical Council of India. The College is affiliated to the Gauhati University. There has been a section for Nursing and Midwifery training attached to the Silchar Civil Hospital which has since been transferred to Silchar Medical College.

Regional Engineering College, Silchar : The Regional Engineering College, which is meant for all the seven states of North-East India, was established in Cachar in 1976. It is still in its initial stage and is expected to develop very rapidly with completion of its own building in its own site allotted by the Government of Assam.

Schools for Cultivation of Fine Arts : There is one Government of Assam Aided School of Music and Dance in Silchar. In 1961, there were 7 such Music and Dance Schools in the whole of the district. They are mainly situated at Silchar, Karimganj Badarpur and Hailakandi. These Schools are being maintained by tuition fees collected from the pupils.

Oriental Schools and Colleges : There are 15 Sanskrit tols, and besides 10 Madrassas, 3 Title Madrassas in the district where oriental languages like Sanskrit and Arabic are taught in different grades. Out of these, 2 Sanskrit tols, 2 Senior Madrassas and 1 title Madrasa are in Hailakandi sub-division. Sanskrit education is imparted through these tols which are managed and controlled by the Assam Sanskrit Board. For looking after the management and control of the Madrassas which impart education on Islamic subjects, there is a State Madrasa Board. Responsibilities of organisation and inspection of these institutions rest with the Assistant Inspectors of Schools for Sanskrit and Islamic Education respectively. They also act as the ex-officio Secretaries of the respective Boards.

At district level, the Deputy Inspectors of Schools supervise and inspect the M.E. and M.V. Madrassas and the Sanskrit tols in their respective jurisdictions.

During 1973-74, there were about 2053 students taking instructions in these schools and expenditure incurred on their education was Rs. 5,48,196.00. which was all borne by the State in form of grants-in-aids.

There is no educational institute for the handicapped and delinquent children in the district ; though it is high time for establishment of some such institution in the district by some local social organisation.

Adult Literacy and Social Education : The Scheme of Social Education was first taken up in Assam in 1950. This Scheme includes establishment of libraries, reading rooms, excursions for educational-group tours, and production of documentary films and their shows to public organisations. Grants are also advanced to social organisations working in the field of social welfare for purchasing books and running libraries. Under the same scheme, facilities for introducing adult men and women into literacy through adult literacy classes, are also advanced. The Govt. of Assam has also undertaken a scheme for promotion of social education amongst the industrial workers and urban people.

The Director of Public Instruction, Assam, as has already been mentioned, is in over-all charge of the scheme while the State Social Education Officer helps him at the state level. There is one District Social Education Officer in the district headquarter to look after the execution of the Scheme and organisation of the centres within the district. The Deputy Inspectors of Schools also hold parallel jurisdiction over the Scheme in their respective areas. In the Development Blocks, Social Education Organisers and Assistant Social Education Organisers are responsible for execution of the scheme in rural areas. There are Social Literary Teachers who are paid lump-sum honorariums and Secretaries and Librarians in the village-level adult literacy centres. The honorariums are paid to the teachers out of the government grants-in-aid advanced for the purpose to the organisation undertaking the work.

Social Education Centres are organised periodically which run for a period of three months at a stretch in a centre. These classes are generally organised during agriculturally off seasons when the adult agriculturists can attend the classes in the rural areas. The course comprises pre-literary and post-literary phases. In the pre-literary stage, adults are introduced into literacy while in post-literary stage instruction in advance studies are imparted. Libraries, clubs and community centres are organised at the post-literary stage. Literature for neo-literates are provided at that stage. Recreational and cultural activities including dramatic performances, bhonas, music competitions, folk-dances, games and sports are organised by the clubs and the Community centres.^{1/4}

In Cachar, there are at present 3 permanent Adult literacy Schools. They are (1) Mezenta Adult School at Mazenta, (2) Student's Welfare Night School at Silchar and (3) Pabda Adult Night School, Khagail.

In 1964-65, a total number of adult literacy centres functioning in the district was 104 by which 2313 adults were benefited. Maximum beneficiaries were in 1969-70. Number of centres in that year was 222 and

beneficiaries 4274. After that some laxity was observed resulting in gradual decrease of centres which ultimately reached the stage of cent per cent dissolution in 1974-75.

There were however 152 libraries, 16 voluntary organisations and 8 community centres working in 1974-75. All these organisations received government grants.

Cultural activities : There are a number of cultural organisations in the district. Some of these are connected with promotion and culture of songs and dances while others are interested in literary pursuits and cultural deliberations.

A list of some such organisations is furnished below :—

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|--|---|
| 1. Maha Laxmi Marup, Koroikandi, Lakhipur Development Block. | ..Promotion of female literacy and social education. |
| 2. Sabuj Sangha, Barkhola, Salchapra | ..Promotion of adult literacy, cultural activities and sports. |
| 3. Nabarun Club, Gorerbond, Ramkrishna Nagar | ..Promotion of youth welfare and sports. |
| 4. Barjatrapur Adarsha Mahila Samity, Salchapra. | ..Women and children welfare. Promotion of Social and female education. |
| 5. Bharati Sangha, Bekirpar Narsingpur | ..Cultural activities, sports and games etc. |
| 6. Dharmikhal Mahila Samity, Narsingpur | .. Women and children welfare and education. |
| 7. Kalyani Sangha, Nilambazar, South Karimganj. | .. Cultural activities. |
| 8. Lala Sangeet Vidyalaya, Lala | .. Teaching of Music and dance. |
| 9. Tilak Narayan Music Institution, Karimganj town. | .. Teaching and culture of classical music and dances. |
| 10. Moina Tatwanidi Patghor, Maina, Patharkandi. | .. Library and reading room activities. |
| 11. Sanskrit Sangha, Duhalia, Patharkandi. | .. Cultural activities, organises cultural functions etc. |
| 12. Lama Bhadurpur Sakti Sangha, Bhadurpur, Karimganj. | .. Physical culture, sports, gymnastics etc. |
| 13. Udayan Sangha, Bazarghat, Ramkrishnanagar. | .. Adult literacy, library and cultural activities. |
| 14. Lalpani Seva Sangha, Lalpani, Katlicherra. | .. Social welfare, adult literacy, library etc. |

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|---|--|
| 15. Buribail Rural welfare Club, Salchapra. | .. Cultural activities. |
| 16. Halal Sangha, Keothkora, Karimganj | .. Cultural activities. |
| 17. Progressive Akademi, Katigora. | .. Runs library and maintains reading room along with other cultural activities. |
| 18. Rupaibai Community Centre, Hazari-gaon, Lakhipur. | .. Adult education and other cultural activities. |
| 19. Ramnagar National Club, Ram Nagar, Salchapra. | .. Cultural and sports activities. |
| 20. Pallishree Mahila Samity, Tilabazar, Karimganj. | .. Education and social welfare of women. |
| 21. Kalyani Sansad, Silchar. | .. Cultural discourse and other cultural activities. |
| 22. Hazira Young Club, Dasgram, Karimganj. | .. Cultural, sports, games etc. |
| 23. Awalala Yuvak Sangha, Ratabari | .. Cultural and educational activities. |
| 24. Bhatirgram Nava Sangha, Bhatirgram, Lala. | .. Educational, sports and cultural. |
| 25. Gauri Sankar, Patiala, Ramkrishna Nagar. | .. Cultural and educational. |

There are several branches of Assam Pradeshik Mahila Samity working in the district. Besides, there are branches of Ramkrishna Mission, which are also working for promotion of education and cultural activities in the district.

There is also a branch of Assam Sahitya Sabha in Cachar at Silchar. The branch has been organising literacy centres in the rural and urban areas of the district. In order to promote cultural understanding between the different cultural and linguistic groups of Cachar, this branch also has been organising cultural functions and multicoloured variety shows in different parts of the district.

Newspapers and Magazines : Bengali news papers and magazines in Assam are generally published from Cachar. Yugasakti, Yugabani, Cachar Divakar, etc., are some of the weeklies published from Cachar.

CHAPTER - XVI.

Medical and Public Health Services.

(a) Survey of Public Health in early times :-

Information is lacking about public health conditions and medical facilities of early times in the Cachar district, but the Ayurvedic and indigenous systems of medicine were undoubtedly prevalent in the past among the different communities. It is also certain that some of these versed on quackery. Two sorts of native physicians namely *Kabirajs* among the Hindus, and *Hakims* among the Muslims were treating the diseases of the people and animals. Yet these people had little influence among the masses. One feature that distinguished the treatment of the native practitioners was that they almost invariably enjoined the external application of some form of medicinal oil extracted mostly from the juice of herbs in every kind of diseases such as dysentery, diarrhoea, bronchitis, debility, etc. They never used a syringe or an enema. Some sort of operations were however, carried on to remove boils and poisoned blood. Even to cure fracture of bone herbal medicines were used. It may be noted that pharmacutics was first prevalent amongst the village folk who had knowledge about the medicinal efficacy of trees, creepers, grasses, leaves, fruits, roots, flowers and barks of trees. Notwithstanding the tremendous progress of modern medical facilities, the use of indigenous drugs and ointments is still very popular among the people, specially of rural areas. There was another category called *Ojhas* who believed in curing of diseases by chanting *mantras*, use of *maduli* (amulet), *tabiz* (an armlet). *Jhap* is still common in the rural areas. People still believe that *mantras* have some magical powers to cure diseases and also to ward off the evil spirits that occasionally cast evil glances upon the ill-fated people.

In the past, there was no survey of medical facilities available in the Cachar district. Even the early Census Reports from 1891 to 1931 do not reveal adequate and correct information about the prevalence of various diseases such as cholera, small-pox, malarial fever, etc. Vital statistics were reported verbally by the village chowkidars to the police but the returns were far from accurate. The average recorded birth and death rates between 1891 and 1901 worked out on the mean population of the decade, were births 30 and deaths 31 per millions. It is obvious that these figures

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were recorded wrongly, but there were not sufficient data available to admit of the framing of a normal birth and death rate for the district. However, in spite of these defects in preparation of vital statistics, we get some correct data about the prevalence of infirmities such as insanity, deafness, muteness, blindness and leprosy.

The following table shows the number suffered from these 4 infirmities per 10,000 of the population (both male and female) at each of the five censuses commencing from 1891 to 1931 in the Cachar district.¹

Infirmities		Year				
		1931	1921	1911	1901	1891
Insane	(Cachar Plains)	136	86	98	91	123
	(North Cachar)	184	-	90	93	444
Deaf-mute	(Cachar Plains)	145	102	138	137	97
	(North Cachar)	173	-	72	129	201
Blind	(Cachar Plains)	264	208	189	173	177
	(North Cachar)	420	-	112	234	402
Leper	(Cachar Plains)	111	84	133	161	227
	(North Cachar)	30	-	50	132	266

It is noted in the Census Report of 1931, that the figures given in respect of various infirmities are not reliable. Their only merit is that they give some indication of the distribution of infirmities and their quantitative variation at successive censuses. In subsequent censuses, assessments have generally been made about the loss of human lives due to Cholera, small-pox, Plague, fever, bronchial ailments, etc.

The allopathic system of medicine made its way in the province of Assam along with the advent of the British. This branch of medicine has obtained the predominant position at present. The credit of having the first medical institution in Assam goes to the present Dibrugarh district. In Cachar district, the first dispensary was opened at Silchar in 1864. The diseases for which treatment was most commonly applied were worms, contagious disorders, malarial fevers, diseases of the eyes, dysentery, diarrhoea and rheumatic affections. The district had 2 dispensaries in 1881, 4 in 1891 and 6 in 1901 where 11,632, 1. *Census of India*, 1931, Volume 111, Assam, Part 1 Report Calcutta, 1932, p. 111.

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31,838 and 43,939 cases were treated in these years respectively. These dispensaries were well equipped then for the performances of operations and cases operated in 1881, 1891 and 1901 were 370, 620 and 1274 respectively.²

During the early part of the British rule, the curative side of human ailments was taken up in the different branches of treatment in the district. The preventive side did not receive their attention altogether. Therefore, it was natural that the sanitary condition of the urban as well as rural areas of Assam was miserable even in the sixties of the last century. When the Local Boards and the Municipal Boards were formed, the rural and urban sanitation was entrusted upon them which then were financially poor for taking the task. After 1889, the Government took positive steps to improve rural sanitation and placed some fund under Local Boards with proper direction to spend that amounts for supply of drinking water and also for construction of drainage system in the rural areas. Likewise, the Municipal Boards were also given grants for the purpose. The Civil Surgeon of the districts were placed in charge of the Medical department and the Vaccination department. The Civil Surgeon placed at Silchar as a district head had to supervise all the seven dispensaries of the district, the district jails, and to control and inspect the vaccination department. He also had to visit and report on all tea-gardens. These steps had brought some improvement on sanitation and the measure checked the high rate of mortality of the district.

(b) Vital Statistics:

The practice of maintaining records on vital statistics in the district was introduced during the British days. Such vital statistics were prepared on the basis of data of birth and death reported by the village chowkider. The vital statistics prepared thus in the past, were not accurate. Now-a-days, such statistics are collected in the village level by the Gaon Panchayat and submits to the District Medical Officer, Health. In case of urban areas, Chairmen of Municipal Boards and Town Committees are to submit such return to the Health Officer. This officer also collects such statistics from the manager of the tea-gardens, railway authorities etc. and prepare a consolidated monthly report for submission to the Director of Health Services, Dispur. Vital

2. B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol. I, Cachar, Calcutta, 1905 Table-

statistics show the actual growth of population and are very much useful for perparation and implementation of development schemes like ma ternity and family planning porgramme in the district.

Fever and bowel complaints were the forms in which death most often took toll in the Cachar district, as per official return. The district suffered also from the epidemics of cholera from time to time. It was apparently endemic in the district and occasionally broke out with unusual severity. The recorded death-rate from this caused in 1889, 1891, 1893 and 1897 are 6.9, 6.1, 6.9 and 6.3 'per cent respectively, per 1.609344 km³. The people were not in favour of vaccination. The mortality from smallpox was proportionately high. Another prime cause of high mortality was child-birth which was accelerated by the native method of midwifery. Professional midwives were few in the district and the woman in confinement was attended by native mid-wives and by her female relatives who could offer no help in case of complication. As such, majority cases proved fatal in result. Confinement was usually below the normal standard and most unhygienic and therefore, many lives were lost due to various causes like purpureal fever, septicaemia, non-expulsion of placenta etc., and utter disergard of the rules of cleanliness which are of utmost importance in such cases.

Even with the passage of time and despite tremendous progress of medical science, death during child-birth has not been proportionately reduced. In the decade of 1951-61 the lowest death rate was 79 in 1960 and the highest 382 in 1952. The following two tables show the figures of births and deaths and number of deaths from some selected causes.

Number of births and deaths as recorded in the 1961 census in the district during the period 1951-60 is shown in the next page

Table 1

Birth and deaths occurring in the district showing numerical and percentage variation from 1951 to 1961.

Year	Total number of births.	Total number of deaths.	Total increase (+) or decrease (—) of births over death.	Percentage increase of birth over deaths.
1951	21,679	9,970	11,709	50.01
1952	20,598	10,342	10,256	49.79
1953	17,476	9,092	8,384	47.97
1954	18,028	10,064	7,964	44.17
1955	16,859	7,676	9,183	54.47
1958	7,541	2,645	4,896	64.92
1959	7,491	2,511	4,980	66.48
1960	6,740	2,345	4,395	65.21

Table No. 2.

Death from some selected causes during 1951-1974 in the district.

Year	Cholera	Fever	Small pox	Dysen- tery or Diarr- hoea	Resp- iratory diseases	Sui- cide
1	2	3	4	5	5	7
1951	191	4,151	39	516	541	19
1953	13	4,892	6	693	427	30
1955	137	4,070	—	1,291	509	23
1957	13	1,375	—	493	279	15
1959	—	415	—	365	315	16
1960	—	362	1	340	297	16
1967	—	68	3	376	16	—
1968	—	91	—	441	22	—
1969	25	90	6	366	30	—
1970	—	115	—	345	23	—
1971	18	211	—	281	26	11
1972	14	163	—	254	41	9
1973	—	154	—	217	38	10
1974	—	171	91	287	32	9

Child birth	Malaria	Kalazar	T.B.	Snake- bite	Leprosy	Cancer
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
304	1,148	28	4	9	1	1
348	376	41	3	4	3	3
299	542	56	8	1	5	6
120	195	32	—	—	1	9
94	192	17	3	—	—	15
79	167	15	1	—	—	25
—	—	—	—	—	—	4
—	—	—	—	—	—	3
—	—	—	—	—	—	5
—	—	—	—	—	—	4
23	15	—	106	10	13	9
34	11	—	101	9	12	8
24	17	—	89	13	10	7
29	19	—	49	11	8	13

(c) Common diseases :

Common diseases are mainly diarrhoea, dysentery, fever, influenza, measles, chicken-pox, skin-diseases, respiratory complaints, Cholera, Tuberculosis, Cancer, Leprosy, Kala-azar, etc. But the Leprosy, Cancer, and Tubercular diseases are not high and mortality from these diseases is also insignificant.

The district is of peculiar climate and the hill ranges are covered by constant evaporation from the forests. From the wide marshes, the atmosphere is highly charged with moisture throughout the greater part of the year. Consequently, the temperature is lower than in the neighbouring districts to the west. The year may be divided into two seasons—cold and rainy and the weather becomes dry and cold during the cold season and rains sets on in the district from April to October with hail, storms in the rainy season. The weather becomes very unpleasant after the end of July to the middle of October as the district is saturated with moisture, which, on a sunny day, evaporates in the form of steamy vapour. For the natural drainage the villages are mostly clean and the filth is not allowed to accumulate around the dwellings. Yet the artificial drainage system was worst some decades back. This overall climatic condition of the district has influence upon the human bodies. From the district census of 1961, it appears that people suffered greatly from cholera, small pox, fever, dysentery, diarrhoea and specially from respiratory diseases. In 1869, fever was very severe throughout the district and assumed an epidemic form. Cholera appeared in the district in epidemic form in 1866 and 1867. It first appeared in Katigora, wherefrom spreaded to all directions specially along with the courses of the streams. It was assumed that about 45 per cent of those attacked, died. Similar occurrences took place in the district during, 1869, 1870 also. Another epidemic form of disease namely small-pox appeared in the district during 1864, 1865, 1867 and 1869 and the former occurrence was very severe and seemed to be most acute in the hill regions of the district. But along with the tremendous development and expansion of medical facilities and adoption of both curative and preventive measures, the acute tendency of all kinds of diseases have been greatly controlled and the general condition of health of the people is better now-a-days.

(c) Public Hospitals and Dispensaries :

(1) Organisation of the Medical Department :—

Formerly, the Public Health and the Medical Departments were two separate departments which were later on combined together to one under the Civil Surgeon of the district in 1958. He was responsible for both curative and preventive aspects of the setup. Under him also the

Local Board dispensaries came after the abolition of the Local Board in 1959. The Civil Surgeon of the district is now redesignated as the District Health Officer. The Sub-divisions have two Sub-divisional Health Officers who are entrusted with the affairs of the department in their respective sub-divisions. But, however, they work under the control and supervision of the District Health Officer, Silchar.

State Hospitals and Dispensaries : There were few hospitals and dispensaries earlier, but after Independence in order to render adequate medical facilities to the people, many hospitals and dispensaries, family planning centres etc. have been established in the district. The number of such institutions was, Hospitals-4, Dispensaries - 8, Maternity and child welfare centres -16 and Family Planning centres-8 in the district in 1960. But such institutions have been considerably increased and their number were in 1976-77 as follows :—

1. Silchar Medical & College Hospital at Silchar	..	1
2. Civil Hospitals	.. ..	2
3. Police Hospitals.	.. ..	1
4. Jail Hospitals	.. ..	1
5. Railway Hospitals	.. ..	1
6. Other Hospitals.	.. ..	6
7. Primary Health Centres	.. ..	17
8. State Dispensaries.	.. ..	32
9. Nursing Home.	.. ..	3

These medical centres provided altogether 785 beds (as appeared for 1976-77) for indoor patients and treated thousands of diseased persons. The number of indoor and outdoor patients treated in these institutions during 1973, 1974 and 1975 is shown below :—

District	Year	Indoor patients	Outdoor patients.
1	2	3	4
Cachar	1973	10,522	1,82,000
	1974	10,165	1,297,000
	1975	12,319	1,385,000

The above figures do not included the patients of the district treated in the three Medical Colleges and Hospitals of Assam. If these patients are counted, outdoor figure and indoor figure in total in 1975 will be

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14,61,000 are 24,000 respectively.⁴ In 1977-78, there were six hospitals namely (1) Silchar Medical College Hospital at Silchar, (2) the Civil Hospital at Hailakandi, (3) the Civil Hospital at Karimganj, besides one Police Hospital, one Jail Hospital at Silchar and one VI-Assam Battalion Hospital at Silchar, one Railway Hospital, 17 Primary Health Centres, 32 State Dispensaries and 3 Nursing Homes in the Cachar district. The dispensaries under the State Government are placed in-charge of Assistant Surgeon grade I & II who are also empowered to act as Food Inspectors to detect cases of food adulteration. In each Civil Hospital and dispensary a para medical staff is also maintained. All the hospitals and some of the dispensaries are provided with nurses and midwives. There are seventeen Primary Health Centres located at Lala, Algapur, Kalinager, Dholai, Lakhipur, Sonai, Harinagar, Jallapur, Barkhola, Bikrampur, Ramkrishnanagar, Patharkandi, Nilambazar, Kachuadam, Katlichara, Udarband and Dasgram. Each of these Primary Health centres is under one Assistant Health Officer I and each centre covers population of about 40 to 60 thousand. These officers are to attend to both curative and preventive aspects of diseases occurring in the area, carry out survey of diseases and to take necessary measures for sanitary of the areas under each of them. They are to work, however, in collaborations with Public Health Engineers, Social Education Organizers and the respective Block Officers. The Sub-centres under each centre are also to carry some work for curative and preventive aspect of diseases, maternity & child-welfare and Family Planning Services in the areas under their respective jurisdiction. Each primary health unit is usually run by a group of qualified medical persons which include one Medical Officer, one Pharmacist, one Sanitary Inspector, one Public Health Nurse or Lady Health Visitor, Auxiliary Nurses and Midwives.

Silchar Medical College and Hospital at Silchar :

Silchar Medical college was founded in August, 1968, at Ghungoor, about 7 k.M. away from Silchar town, and the department of Ophthalmology was started along with the other clinical departments in early 1971. The old Silchar Civil Hospital was temporarily converted into Silchar Medical College and Hospital after necessary addition and alteration of the buildings and all the clinical departments were started there.

At the beginning, this Department was comprised of 15 beds, a small out-patient complex and a common Operation Theatre with general surgery and only one staff member as the professor of ophthalmology. But gradually,

4. Statistical Abstract, 1978, by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, Gauhati, Pages 129-30.

the other staff members joined, and within a couple of years the number of bed-strength rose to 30 (male 20 and female 10). Subsequently, the Eye Department grew into a full-fledged unit with all out-patient and in-patient facilities and a well-equipped operation theatre. The department has now all the equipments and requirements necessary for a modern Ophthalmic Hospital with adequate teaching facilities. The department is taking necessary steps to establish an eye bank, a glaucoma clinic and a squint clinic.

The staff members in the Eye department consisted of one Professor, one Asstt. Professor, one Registrar, one Refractionist and House-surgeons.

The out patient department of ophthalmology remains open from 8A.M. to 11 A. M. every day except Sunday and the operations are performed there days in a week. The average attendance in O. P. D. is at present 50. During the year 1974, a total of 724 eye operations were performed in this department. In 1973, the Medical College Hospital has been shifted to its present site at Ghungoor and at present, this Medical College has almost become a full-fledged one and the people of Cachar, North-Cachar district, Mizoram and Tripura and to some extent the people of adjoining areas of Assam, Meghalaya, and Manipur are generally getting medical facilities from this college.

The Silchar Medical college is imparting medical education and the pattern of education is in the light of the recommendation of the Medical Council of India. There were only fifty seats for M.B.B.S. course. The first batch of candidates appeared in the final M.B.B.S. examination in December, 1973. This college is affiliated to the Gauhati University.

The college and hospital are provided with modern and upto-date equipments and qualified doctors and nurses. There are 34 doctors, 104 nurses including Matrons, Assistant Matrons, Sister tutors, Nurses, etc., 9 Pharmacists, 17 Professors, 21 Assistant Professors, 14 Registrars, one Principal and other staff in the Silchar Medical College and Hospital. The college has only fifty number of seats for admission into the M.B.B.S. course and provides 580 beds for the indoor patients.

The Civil Hospital at Hailakandi and Karimganj, Police Hospital at Silchar, Jail Hospital at Silchar and Police Battalion Hospital, Silchar have also been provided with doctors, nurses and paramedical staff,

for proper treatment of the patients. These institutions have also been provided with beds as follows :—

1. Civil Hospital at Karimganj	.. ..	75	beds.
2. Civil Hospital at Hailakandi	.. ..	26	"
3. Police Hospital at Silchar.	.. ..	11	"
4. Jail Hospital at Silchar	.. ..	7	"
5. Six Assam Police Battalion Hospital at Silchar.	.. ..	5	"

Railway Hospital : Since 1960, there are one hospital and one dispensary in the district under the North East Frontier Railway. The hospital situated at Badarpur had been running with 25 beds only for the period from 1960 to 1974. But the number of beds was increased to 57 in 1975. The hospital is run by 10 doctors, 11 Nurses, three midwives and 75 other medical personnel. The number of indoor patients treated in this hospital were 743 in 1960, 1,350 in 1965, 1506 in 1970, 1,644 in 1971, 1,858 in 1972, 1,862 in 1973 and 1,936 in 1974. The daily average outdoor patients, in these years were 268.4, 329.4, 316.0, 375.6, 382.8, 368.8 and 427.0 respectively. The dispensary situated at Karimganj has been running with one doctor, three other medical personnel with one bed only.

Maternity and Child Welfare Services : The district has four Maternity and Child-welfare centres, located at Badarpur State-dispensary, Borkhola Public Health Centre, Digerfulertal State-dispensary and Joypur State dispensary. Karimganj and Hailakandi have one each urban unit of such institution. Besides, the district has fifteen numbers of Family Planning clinics including the Udarband main Family Planning centre. There are Dholai, Lakhipur, Bikrampur, Jallalpur, Borkhola, Sonai, Harinagar, Patharkandi, Ramkrishnanagar, Kachquadam, Nilambazar, Algapur, Lala and Kali Nagar Public Health Centres. Practically the maternity and child-welfare facilities are generally available in all the hospitals, dispensaries, and primary health centres. The maternity and child-welfare centres are usually provided with Health Officer, Auxiliary nurses and mid-wives, dhais and other personnel. They also take care of the health and condition of the expectant mothers and new born child and give advice for keeping of good health and sanitation.

All Hospitals and most of the other medical institutions have family planning centres attached to them. The additional District Health Officer (Family Planning) is responsible for implementation of the family planning programme in the district. Besides sterilisation measures including both vasectomy and Tubectomy, the family planning programmes are also resorted to by conventional methods like condoms, jellies, foam tablets, dia-

phragms etc. Public meeting is also organised in the centres from time to time. Seminars and Gram Laxmi camps are also organised in the Community Development Blocks. A table is given under Section (f) to show the progress of the Family Planning Programmes in the district since its inception till 1974-75.

Ayurvedic Services :—In order to render Ayurvedic treatment to the general public Ayurvedic sections attached to Silchar Medical College, Hailakandi Civil Hospital and Karimganj Civil Hospital have been opened and provided with one qualified Kaviraj and one pharmacist each. Another such section has recently been opened at Borkhola and attached to the Public Health Centre there. To make the Ayurvedic treatment popular among the people, Government have opened 12 subsidised Ayurvedic dispensaries at Nilambazar, Japirband, Tarapur, Menacherra, Polarpur, Sripur, Suprakandi, Anipur, Jirighat, Patharkandi, Durlavcherra and Harinagar of the Cachar district. Each of these dispensaries had been provided with one qualified Ayurvedic doctor.

Tubercular treatment : For treatment of Tubercular Patient Government of Assam have maintained a T. B. ward attached to the Silchar Medical College and Hospital providing 75 beds for indoor patients. This ward is run by qualified doctors and other medical staff. Modern equipments are also provided with for examination and treatment of the persons. The civil hospital at Karimganj, has a five bedded T. B. ward for tubercular treatment. Besides these, there are two T. B. clinics namely District T. B. centre at Silchar and Chest clinic centre at Karimganj in the Cachar district.

Leprosy Treatment : The Cachar district has one Survey Education treatment-centre established by Government of India in 1969 according to their pattern. This centre is situated at Silchar. The State Government have established six Leprosy centres at Karimganj, Hailakandi, Dallo, Algapur, Salchapra, and Katlicherra where patients numbering 16, 15, 23, 19, 14 and 30 were being treated during 1975. These institutions are provided with the medical and para-medical personnel, who are, in addition to their hospital works, to survey population of about 20,00 to 25,000 and to find out the leprosy cases within their respective jurisdiction and also to treat those cases. They are also to impart health education to the patients as well as to the public so that the disease cannot be spread from diseased persons to healthy one. The drug known as diamino diphenyl sulphone, very efficacious medicine for Leprosy, is administered to the people. The out-door patients are also treated by this drug which

totally prevents infection of the disease. The patients in the Leprosy centres are also given ambulatory domiciliary treatment and allowed to stay at their respective home and take treatment.

There is one voluntary organisation namely Makunda Christian Medical and Agricultural Joint Seva Mandal at Bazaricherra. This institution has provided 205 beds for indoor Leprosy patients in addition to its outdoor clinic.

Malaria Eradication Services : The National Malaria control programme was launched in the country in 1953 and the control programme in this district started in the later part of 1954 in order to reduce the incidence of malaria by insecticidal spray with D.D.T. To carry out this programme two units were opened, one Silchar Sub-division including North Cachar Hill district with headquarters at Silchar and the other comprising Hailakandi and Karimganj Sub-divisions with head-quarters at Karimganj. Each unit was sub-divided into Sub-units namely Silchar, Lakhipur, Katigora and Maibong under Silchar unit and Karimganj, Patharkandi and Hailakandi under Karimganj unit. Each Sub-unit was placed in charge of one senior Malaria Inspector who was assisted by the Malaria Inspector. The functions of both the officers were to supervise residual spray work and spleen survey. The success of the control programme was so encouraging that in 1958-59, the programme was switched over the district more vigorously. In 1964, the post of Assistant Malaria officer was abolished in favour of the post of the unit officers. The whole province was divided into some zones under Zonal Supervising Officers. 3 or 4 units were covered by each zone and each unit was under one officer. Each unit was divided into some 3 to 5 sub-units and few sections. The Silchar zone with its headquarters at Silchar covered the whole district of Cachar, North Cachar Hill and Mizoram district.

The later has been excluded after the creation of the Mizoram state from this Silchar zone. In 1968, an Entomological cell was set up in this zone in order to study the entomological aspects on Malaria. Since 1st. March 1975, the National Malaria Eradication programme has been reorganised in the province as well as in this district. The zonal office at Silchar and unit office at Karimganj were abolished and merged with the single unit formed for Cachar with headquarters at Silchar. This district has now been provided with one additional District Health Officer, one unit officer, one Assistant unit Officer, one Assistant Entomologist, 12 Microscopists, 5 Senior Malaria Inspectors, 4 Malaria Inspectors, 42 surveillance workers, 167 survey workers and other officers as well as field staff for taking properly the programme in the district.

Recently carried out survey has revealed that a minimus species is quite extinct and *A. annularis*, *A. Phillipi nensis*, etc. have taken the place of secondary vectors. It is also found by research that all the known vectors are susceptible to D. D. T. insecticide but new vector species such as *vagus* species, and *A. hyrcanus* species are found resistant for D.D.T. insecticide. The species mostly found in this zone are *A. annularis*, *A. phyllipinensis*, *A. balabengis*, *A. acenitus*, *A. Maculatus*, *A. jamesi*, *A. Kochi*, *A. vagus*, *A. barbirogtisis*, etc.

Spraying of insecticides and surveillance works have been carried out in the district. Spraying of D.D.T. and B.H.C. in the houses, house compounds, drains etc., have frequently been carried out to control and kill the mosquitoes both in rural and urban areas.

In the table below the antimalarial measures taken in the Cachar district since 1971 to 1975 is shown :

Statement showing the progress of Antimalaria measures in the district of Cachar since 1971-1975.

Year of assessment of D.D.T. operation.	Spleen rate	Annual parasite Inde.	Infentice parasite rate.	Total patients treated.
1971 (2nd Round)	Survey not carried out	.3	Survey not done.	741
1972 (3rd Round)		.2	-do-	511
1973 (2nd Round)		4.2	Nil	7,609
1974 (2nd Round)		1.3	.004	2,506
(up to Oct. 75)		—	—	1,604

Total Malaria.	No. of village sprayed	No. of house sprayed	Spray operation		
			Insecticide used		
			75 %DDT Lbs.	50%DDT Lbs.	50%B.H.C. Lbs.
741	655	1,14,877	3,247	68,127	
511	1,086	1,40,517	32,611	66,958	4,921
7,609	871	87,425	1,88,411	34,068	47,171
2,506	1,415	6,48,191	1,88,496	2,851	1,450
1,604	802	1,00,604	32,619	—	—

Source : Directorate of Health Services Assam.

Medical facilities in rural areas: Health care in the rural areas of the Cachar district is of an integrated pattern which combines both curative and preventive services with greater emphasis upon the preventive aspects. In accordance with the recommendations of the Health Survey and Development Committee, 1945 known as the Bhole Committee, Primary Health centres have been established in the rural areas. The World Health Organization also endorsed the view that there should be integrated health care through the Primary Health Centres in the rural areas. Accordingly 14 Primary Health Centres have been established in the district. Moreover, 15 Community Development Blocks have been functioning in the rural areas of the district for health care. All the State Dispensaries and Primary Health Centres have also been taking adequate measures both in preventive and curative aspects of the diseases.

(e) **Private hospitals and dispensaries :** The district has six private hospitals, (1) Labak Leprosy Hospital at Labak, (2) Burros Memorial Christian Hosiptal, (3) Sundry Mohan Seva Bhavan, (4) Siba Sundari Nari Shikhashram, (5) Supritee Nursing Home and (6) Mukunda Leprosy Colony. These private hospitals treat both indoor and outdoor patients. They are provided with 100, 48, 20, 22, 16 and 230 beds respectively for treatment of indoor patients. There are also a number of tea-garden hospitals and dispensaries in the Cachar district. These institutions are managed by the tea-garden authorities and cater to the needs of their employees. Big tea-gardens have their own dispensaries while smaller ones have joint dispensaries. More complicated diseases are generally treated through necessary arrangements with the local hospitals if their hospitals and dispensaries are not equipped with for such treatment.

Many private pharmacies have now been established both in urban and in semi-urban areas of the district. Most of these pharmacies have their own clinics where qualified doctors are available for consultation as well as for treatment during the hours as arranged by them. These clinics often provide facilities for examination of blood, urine, stool, sputum, etc.

The number of private practitioners and specialised doctors for different ailments has gradually been increasing in the town areas of the district. The specialists in the branches of Dentistry, Ophthalmology, Ear, Nose, Throat, etc., are now available in the Silchar town. These specialists have their own clinics wherein large number of people get facilities for treatment daily.

The Homeopathic system of treatment has also been gaining popularity among the people of Cachar. This system is preferred to specially, for

ailments of children and women. Homeopathic pharmacies and practitioners are easily available now-a-days both in urban and rural areas. There are also several Kavirajas and Hakims in the district. But their actual number is not available at present. Some people prefer to these sort of treatment for their ailments.

(f) **Medical and Public Health research centres and institutions for disseminating knowledge on Public Health:** There is no medical and public health research centres in the district but the Health Education Bureau has started functioning in the State of Assam with effect from October, 1960 with the objective, among others, to help people in achieving health by their own activities and efforts. They have also been encouraged to fully utilise health services provided to them by their Government. It also aimed at collecting baseline data of the prevailing pattern of health, habits, attitudes, beliefs, values, etc, in respective areas of the State.

The Bureau has started work with three sections, namely administrative, medical and field demonstrations under one Assistant Director of Health Services. There are already six Health Education cum-Mobile Dispensary units, five for the plains tribal areas and one for the autonomous hills districts of Assam carrying on with Health Education activities. The Health Education Bureau has been undertaking programme of Health Education for the inservice para-Medical personnel, vaccinators, nurses, health - visitors, etc. Moreover, the Bureau has been conducting seminars, group talk, etc., for the workers engaged in Malaria Eradication and other health programmes from time to time.

The Material Section, started in November, 1960, has successfully participated in an International Health Exhibition organised at New Delhi in February, 1961 on the occasion of World Health Assembly and also in the 6th All Assam Ayurvedic Mahasabha held at Jorhat. It also brought out two Publications on the progress of health on the above occasions. The material section was also responsible for supplying the district and sub-divisional health services and other voluntary organisations, with audio-visual aids on health and sanitation. The aforesaid section has been participating in a number of small exhibitions organized by the health and other departments both official and voluntary.

With the appointment of an Anthropologist in the month of June, 1961, the State Health Education Bureau has extended its activities in field demonstration in some selected areas of the State. Apart from the aforesaid activities, documentary film shows on health and sanitation are exhibited in the rural areas of both hills and plains districts of the province.

The Family Planning Clinics, Hospitals, Primary Health Centres and the Community Development Blocks have been playing a significant role in disseminating knowledge on birth control. A short course for doctors, health visitors, midwives and nurses is imparted in the Regional Family Planning Training Centre. In the fourth Five year plan emphasis has been given on the Family Planning Programmes. A national programme has already been launched to decrease the birth rate from 40 per thousand to 25 per thousand. The operational means of achieving this objective is to create facilities for the married couples to adopt family planning method by any one of the following means :

- (1) Acceptance of a small sized family.
- (2) Personal knowledge about family planning methods.
- (3) Ready availability of supplies and services.

The I.U.C.D. Programme was introduced in the State in 1965. In the fourth Five year Plan emphasis was laid on the expansion of the training facilities and intensification of Family Planning Programme. Sterilisation facilities have been introduced and made available in the Civil Hospitals and the Primary Health Centres. Use of contraceptives is also becoming increasing popular. One mobile publicity unit has been engaged in extending audio-visual aids to the people on birth control measures.

The progress of Family Planning Programme in the district is shown for a period from 1965-66 to 1974-75 below :

year	Vasectomy	Tubectomy	I.U.D.	Condom	Jelly	Dia	F.Tabs.
1965-66	24	13	590	18,322	103	68	17,000
1966-67	22	11	1,687	14,887	116	92	14,000
1967-68	40	35	2,488	20,732	852	195	1,726
1968-69	68	113	2,980	25,658	1,158	183	16,078
1969-70	3,280	60	477	25,582	2,427	571	10,294
1970-71	3,579	239	500	30,055	949	50	8,880
1971-72	4,627	402	412	33,960	915	7	3,870
1972-73	4,302	252	280	57,178	447	5	9,073
1973-74	1,126	24	39	32,045	338	3	1,567
1974-75	3,261	102	169	1,08,336	234	x	1,040

(g) Sanitation :

(1) **Administrative setup** for maintenance of public health and sanitation in the urban and rural areas - :

Prior to February, 1958, Public Health activities were carried on by one District Medical Officer of Health and one Sub-divisional Medical and Health Officer with a number of rural dispensaries. Each of the hospitals and dispensaries was provided with one Medical Officer who was to treat all sorts of diseases, to carry out survey of diseases, to control epidemic and also to take necessary measures for sanitation in rural and urban areas. Moreover, he was entrusted with additional work of detecting the cases of food adulteration with the assistance of some Health Inspectors. The Medical Officers were helped in their day-to-day works by auxiliary health persons such as the rural Health Inspectors, Health Assistants and Vaccinators. This set of officers confined their activities primarily to the rural areas. In February, 1958 the Public Health Services were amalgamated with the Medical services and all the dispensaries managed by the Public Health Department came under the complete control of the Civil Surgeon in the district. It may be mentioned that with the abolition of the Local Boards in 1959, all the dispensaries under these Boards were taken over by the Government.

After amalgamation, the Public Health matters have been entrusted to the Civil Surgeon whose designation, recently has been changed to the Chief Medical and Health Officer. Besides, the Assistant Health Officers, having the charge of dispensaries, Public Health centres or hospitals, a number of other officers posted in all the areas of the district are entrusted with the public health affairs. There is one Rural Health Inspector in each police station, and a few Health Assistants under each of the Health Inspector. The Municipal Boards have their own set of vaccinators and Sanitary Inspectors. All the Health Assistants and vaccinators perform vaccination under supervision of the Medical Officers of their respective areas.

The following table shows the number of persons vaccinated during the period from 1972 to 1977⁵.

Year	Primary Vaccination	Re-Vaccination
	Total	Total
1	2	3
1972	41,796	1,97,708
1973	55,671	2,37,652
1974	45,587	1,91,219
1975	26,513	1,17,053
1976	13,505	28,726
1977	28,684	46,201

5. Report from Director of Health Services, Assam, Gauhati.

The Public Health Engineering Department of the Government of Assam is engaged in implementation of the Scheme of water supply both in urban and rural areas. The Executive Engineer, Public Health Engineering Division at Silchar for the whole district, is the head of the organisation at the district level and has two sub-divisional officers at Silchar and Karimganj under him.

Activities of Health and Sanitary Organisation :— In the rural areas, improvement of sanitary condition and health is a matter of outmost importance and necessary steps have been taken on this task. On the other hand, Government have taken vigorous steps to improve the living condition of the Harijans in the urban areas. The acute poverty and the dearth of housing accommodation of the migratory population have turned some town areas of the district into slums. The local authorities, like the Municipal Boards and Town Committees, have taken steps for their removal. Being very small both in areas and population, towns of the district are at present, not facing this problem.

In rural areas, the Panchayats are entrusted with works of keeping sanitation and public health, water supply, drainage schemes, etc. Accordingly, the Panchayats have taken up construction of rural latrines and pucca drains. These institutions, further, supply smokeless Chullas to the people, provide drinking water by constructing wells, renovating old wells and tank and also by installing hand-pump where necessary.

However, the Government have taken a good number of sanitary measures in the Cachar district. Accordingly a Sanitary Scheme (Conversion of dry latrine into wet) has already been taken up at Karimganj. The whole scheme is financed by the Government of India. The preliminary works of the project and procurement of materials required for the purpose are in progress now.

Much more importance has been given for the protected water supply in the rural and urban areas of the district. Two urban water supply schemes at Karimganj and Silchar towns at estimated costs of Rs. 28.55 and Rs. 82.75 lakhs respectively have been taken up. 90/95 per cent of both the projects have been completed by July, 1978. After completion of these two schemes about sixty thousand population of both the towns will be benefited. Another new Scheme of protected water supply to Hailakandi town at an estimated cost of Rs. 54 lakhs has also been taken up. The work is in progress and will render benefit to the entire Hailakandi town.

The State Government have taken up about twenty-one rural water supply schemes in the Cachar district, 5 already completed water supply scheme have been functioning at Barkhola and Fulertal in Silchar civil

sub-division, Ratabari and Ramkrishnanagar in Karimganj civil sub-division, and Lalamanacherra in Hailakandi civil sub-division of the district. Their estimated cost were Rs. 9,65,000.00, Rs. 5,20,000.00, Rs. 6,55,000.00, Rs. 7,62,000.00 and 18,00,600.00 respectively. Centrally sponsored schemes at Barjatrapur, Katigora, Farirabazar, Algapur and Katlicherra at estimated cost of Rs. 7,63,100.00, Rs. 7,27,000.00, Rs. 9,99,990.00, Rs. 7,16,900.00 and Rs. 9,33,800.00 respectively have been taken up during 1977-78. Another eleven rural water supply schemes are at hand. They are given below :

Name of the Scheme	Estimated Cost. Rs.
1. Udarband water supply Scheme.	8,75,000.00
2. Sonai water supply Scheme.	7,20,000.00
3. Salchapra water supply Scheme.	9,84,200.00
4. Singarbond water supply Scheme.	9,74,000.00
5. Srighauri water supply Scheme.	8,92,400.00
6. Jatingamukh water supply Scheme.	9,71,000.00
7. Bikrampur village water supply Scheme.	9,82,200.00
8. Baskandi water supply Scheme.	1,58,600.00
9. Batarashi water supply Scheme.	9,71,300.00
10. Nilambazar water supply Scheme.	9,99,200.00
11. Panchagram water supply Scheme.	2,89,950.00

Over and above, 147 and 83 tube wells in Karimganj and Hailakandi civil sub-divisions have been installed for water supply in the rural areas of the Cachar district. There are also some new water supply schemes for (both pump and hand tube wells) at present and will be taken up during 1978-79.

MEDICAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

The following table shows the Number of Hospitals, Dispensaries, Public Health Centres, etc. and Doctors, Nurses, Pharmacists and other staff of each of the institutions. (as on 1.4.75).

Sl. No.	Name and location of the institution.	Year of Establishment	A.S
1	2	3	4
1.	Karimganj Civil Hospital.	Karimganj.	1959
2.	Hailakandi	-do- Hailakandi	1959
3.	Lala P.H.C.	Lala bazar	1957
4.	Algapur P.H.C.	Algapur.	1957
5.	Kalinagar P.H.C.	Kalinagar	1960
6.	Dholai P.H.C.	Dholai	1957
7.	Lakhipur P.H.C.	Lakhipur	1954
8.	Sonai P.H.C.	Sonai	1967
9.	Harinagar P.H.C.	Harinagar	1975
10.	Jalalpore P.H.C.	Jalalpore	1960
11.	Borkhala P.H.C.	Borkhala	1967
12.	Bikrampur P.H.C.	Bikrampur	1957
13.	R. K.Nagar P.H.C.	R.K.Nagar	1959
14.	Patharkandi P.H.C.	Patharkandi	1957
15.	Nilambazar P.H.C.	Nilambazar	1967
16.	Kachuadam P.H.C.	Gharamen	1964
17.	Matijuri State Dist.	Matijuri	-
18.	Bilaipur	-do- Bilaipur	1961
19.	Nityanandapur	-do- Nityanandapur	1963
20.	Katlicherra	-do- Katlicherra	1959
21.	Jamira	-do- Jamira	-
22.	Sonabarighat	-do- Sonabarighat	1955
23.	Narsingpur	-do- Narsingpur	1959
24.	Bidyannagar	-do- Bidyannagar	-
25.	Harina	-do- Harina	-
26.	Natun Ramnagar	-do- Natun Ramnagar	1964
27.	Joypur	-do- Joypur	1959
28.	Digherfulertol	-do- Digherfulertol	-
29.	Udharbond	-do- Udharbond	1963
30.	Salchapra	-do- Salchapra	-
31.	Kalain	-do- Kalain	1959
32.	Katigora	-do- Katigora	1959
33.	Ganirgram	-do- Ganirgram	1959
34.	Badarpur	-do- Badarpur	1959
35.	Bhanga	-do- Bhanga	1959
36.	Chorgola	-do- Chorgola	1959
37.	Kaliganj	-do- Kaliganj	1959
38.	Veterbond	-do- Veterbond	1962
39.	Duhalia	-do- Duhalia	1962
40.	Doloo	-do- Doloo	-
41.	Durilavcherra	-do- Durilavcherra	1965
42.	Maizgram	-do- Maizgram	1962
43.	Chiparsangam	-do- Chiparsangam	1963
44.	Latu	-do- Latu	1959
45.	Longar forest	-do- Longar	-
46.	Dasgram	-do- Dasgram	1973
47.	Kalibaribazar	-do- Kalibaribazar	1962

Source : Directorate of Health Services, Assam.

CHAPTER — XVII.

OTHER SOCIAL SERVICES.

A.S.II Pharmacist	Sister	Nurse Midwife	Lady Assistant	Any other staff	Total No. of	Remarks
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
4	6	9	4	3	30	64
2	3	2	2	1	14	28
.	1	.	3	1	7	15
.	1	.	3	1	7	15
.	1	.	3	1	7	14
.	1	.	3	1	7	15
.	1	.	3	.	7	14
.	1	.	3	.	6	13
.	1	.	3	.	4	11
.	1	.	3	.	7	17
.	1	.	3	1	6	14
.	1	.	3	1	7	18
.	1	.	3	3	7	15
.	1	.	3	1	6	14
.	1	.	3	.	7	17
.	1	.	.	.	1	3
.	1	.	.	.	1	3
.	1	.	.	.	1	3
1	1	.	.	.	1	3
1	1	.	.	.	1	4
.	1	.	.	.	1	3
.	1	.	.	.	1	3
.	1	.	.	.	1	3
.	1	.	.	.	1	3
.	1	.	.	.	1	3
.	1	.	.	.	1	3
1	1	.	.	1	1	4
.	1	.	.	1	1	3
.	1	.	.	1	1	4
.	1	.	.	1	1	4
1	1	.	.	1	1	4
1	1	.	.	.	1	3
.	1	.	.	.	1	3
1	1	.	.	.	1	3
1	1	.	.	.	1	3
1	1	.	.	.	1	3

(a) Labour Welfare :

(i) Organisational setup and activities.

The Labour Department of the Government of Assam as well as of the Central Government bear responsibilities of looking into the various problems of labour welfare in the district of Cachar along with such problems in other districts of Assam. So the Labour Departments have been armed with several labour legislations passed by both the Indian Parliament and the State Assembly. Those Acts so far enacted cover jurisdictions of both public and private sector establishments. The employers have been brought under the purview of all these legislations and they are bound to adopt necessary welfare measures for the labourers in their respective establishments under the provisions of these Acts.

Some of these Acts are :

- The Workmen's Compensation Act of 1923 ;
- The Indian Trade Union Act, 1926 ;
- The Tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act, 1934 ;
- The Payment Of Wages Act, 1936 ;
- The Assam Maternity Benefit Act, 1944 ;
- The Industrial Employment Standing Orders Act, 1946 ;
- The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 ;
- The Factories Act, 1948 ;
- The Assam Shops and Establishment Act, 1948 ;
- The Minimum Wages Act, 1948 ;
- The Coal Mines Provident Fund and Bonus Act, 1948 ;
- Employees Fund Act, 1948 ;
- Employee's State Insurance Act, 1948 ;
- The Motor Transport Workers Act, 1951 ;
- The Plantation Labour Act, 1951 ;
- The Working Journalist Condition Of Service and Miscellaneous Provision Act, 1951 ;

The Assam Tea Plantation Provident Fund Scheme Act, 1955, etc. These Industrial Acts and Regulations cover a very wide range of labour welfare measures such as the provision of housing accommodation, medical facilities, education, nutrition (establishment of canteens, etc.), rest and

recreation, day nurseries, sanitation, holiday with pay, maternity and sickness benefits, payment of compensation on accident, security of life by fencing the dangerous machines, sports and game, and provision of other amenities of life.

For the enforcement of the above noted Acts and the rules framed thereunder and to deal with other matters like labour dispute, labour strike, lockout, etc., relating to labour and labour welfare, there are Assistant Labour Commissioner and Labour Officer at Silchar. They work in the district with the help of several Inspectors. Under the Factories Act of 1948, all the factories of the district are inspected by an Inspector of Factories who is under the control of the Chief Inspector of Factories, Assam.

The Plantation Labour Act, 1951, has brought much more improvement in the working conditions of the workers in the plantations in Assam. It is a comprehensive piece of legislation and has brought the employers under obligation and they are required to provide various facilities to their employees. This Act has jurisdiction over all the tea-gardens, coffee, rubber, cinchona plantations with an area of about 10.12 hectares or more and employing 30 or more labourers. The State Government have preserved powers to extend the provisions of this Act to other plantations if and when it becomes necessary. More provisions have been made in the Act for setting up of inspecting staff by the Government and also for imposing penalties for contravention of any provision of the Act. Under this Act, the employers are obliged to provide for drinking water, adequate number of latrines, urinals for men as well as for women, canteens in every plantation where 150 or more workers are engaged, and creches where 50 or more women are employed. They are also to be provided with proper medical and educational facilities and standard type of housing accommodation. Over and above, the Act provides maternity benefit, sickness benefit and the leave with wages. Children below 12 years are prohibited to work in plantations and the night-work from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. is also not allowed to women as well as to adolescents. Welfare Officer is appointed in every plantation wherein 300 or more workers work. The introduction of the Assam Tea Plantations Provident Fund (And Pension Fund) Scheme Act, 1955, to the labour statute book, has ushered in a new era of socio-economic development for the tea plantation workers in the State of Assam. It gives the statutory guarantee of social justice and security to the working section of the plantation in the State.

The scheme of Provident Fund under this Act is applicable to (a) Plantations having 10.1171 hectares or more of land under tea with production of more than 456 tons of tea per 0.404686 hectares; and (b) planta-

tions having 20.2343 hectares or more under tea irrespective of the rate of production. A few small and uneconomic units have been left outside the purview of the scheme in pursuance of the provision of the Assam Tea Plantations Provident Fund Scheme (Amendment) Act, 1958. The State of Assam has 790 tea gardens as stood on 31st March, 1973, and this Scheme covered 708 tea gardens excluding 82 which had not been brought under it. The district of Cachar stood third in respect of the tea gardens in the State and out of its 114 tea gardens 111 gardens were under this scheme. The total number of members under this scheme was 39,209 on 31st March, 1973.

The benefits of Provident Fund are compulsorily extended to all categories of employees, barring personnel of managerial and executive cadres and other employees whose total (cash) emoluments exceed rupees one thousand per month per head. The employees in the tea plantations are classified in three broad categories namely, (1) Staff, (2) Adult labour and (3) adolescent and children, yet the Fund does not recognise any such classifications for its membership in so far as the operation of the Scheme is concerned. The rate of contribution was at the rate of 16 per cent of the wages of the workers in accordance with the provision of the Assam Tea Plantations Provident Fund Scheme (Amended) Act, 1966. The collection was made through the State Bank of India. The incidence of the rate of contributions continued to be 8% of the wages, from both employers and employees.

The Scheme provides for advances, refundable and non-refundable to the members from their respective Provident Fund accumulations on specific grounds. Refundable advances are made available for marriage and death ceremony in a member's family. Non-refundable advances are made available for other different causes such as for construction of dwelling house, payment of life insurance premium, purchase of share of co-operative societies, and subsistence when famine condition prevails due to natural calamities and unemployment due to closure of gardens.

The table at page 452 shows the extent of the scheme in the State as well as in the district of Cachar from 1969-72.

The scheme is conducted by the Board of Trustees with its head office at Gauhati and the expenses incurred on administration is met from a separate fund accumulated on contributions made by the employers at the rate of 2.25% of the gross collection.

From the date of the introduction of the scheme, its functions and scope have been considerably expanded by adoption of other ancillary schemes namely, (1) Life Insurance Scheme, (2) Old Age Pension Scheme and (3) Family Pension Scheme in the pursuit of its objective of achieving full statutory protection and guarantee of worker's rights.

Cachar						
Year ending on 31st March	No. of Tea gar- dens	No. of Tea gar- den cov- ered by scheme	Members			
			Staff	Adole- scent & Children	Adult	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1969	114	111	889	978	89,040	40,997
1970	114	111	881	960	88,209	40,050
1971	114	111	867	940	38,058	39,865
1972	114	111	851	931	37,862	39,644

Assam State					
No. of Tea gardens covered by the scheme.	Members				
	Staff	Adolescent & Children	Adult	Total	Total No. of Gardens
8	9	10	11	12	13
708	11,931	13,363	4,32,826	4,58,120	790
708	11,916	13,183	4,29,813	4,54,112	790
708	11,802	13,059	4,27,179	4,52,040	794
708	11,693	12,585	4,26,141	4,50,419	790

This Insurance scheme was introduced in the year of 1963 with a view to rendering financial protection of the family of a deceased member. While extending this additional benefit, it was also ensured that no additional financial burdens was put upon the member on that account. According to this Scheme, the lives of the Provident Fund members in the age group of 18 to 40 years are insured for Rs. 1000.00, Rs. 500.00 and Rs. 250.00 in respect of clerical staff, male labour and female labour members respectively at their option and all the Insurance policies are assigned to the Board of Trustees who will keep the policies in their custody and shall meet the proper claims whenever necessary on Life Insurance Corporation. This obviates the medical examination or age proof of individual members and direct payment of premium by employees themselves as the amount of premium is paid by the Board of Trustees from the provident fund contribution of member annually and the balance being credited

to his Provident Fund Account. On the amount, however, paid off as premium, no interest is calculated and credited to one's account from which premium is already paid by the Board of Trustees. The expenses on administering the scheme is very much economical and met from the commission earned on the policies from the Life Insurance Corporation of India. Since the introduction of the Scheme, the number of lives insured has been satisfactorily increasing.

The Pension Scheme first introduced with effect from 2.10.67 provides old age pension to the workers after their retirement. The Scheme covers the entire provident fund members. The benefits of this Scheme are in addition to Provident Fund and Insurance benefits without entailing any additional financial burden upon the members as well as the employers. The Pension Fund was created by diverting the surplus interest earnings from the investment of Provident Fund contribution. The special features of the scheme are :

(a) No extra contribution either from employers or employees.

(b) The benefits are addition to provident fund and insurance benefits.

The Scheme encourages the spirit of savings and inspires maintenance of good provident fund credit balance. The benefits under the Scheme are as follows :

(a) $7\frac{1}{2}$ % of the Provident Fund credit balance of a member who has put in 25 or more years of membership in Provident Fund on the date of his retirement or death annually for a period of 7 years.

(b) $5\frac{1}{2}$ % of the Provident Fund credit balance of a member who has put in 10 or more years of membership in the fund on the date of his retirement or death annually for a period of 5 years.

(c) Additional interest of 1% on the credit balance of a member who ceases his membership in the Fund prior to completion of 10 years of membership.

(d) Facility of commutation.

The scope of the Pension Scheme has been much widened since 1-4-72 in the line of the Government of India to provide family pension to the family of a member in the event of his death while in service. The benefit under the Old Age Pension scheme would continue in respect of the members who retired or died prior to 1-4-72 while under the Revised Pension Scheme, pension and gratuity including family pension has been made applicable in respect of the member who dies or retires on or after 1-4-72. Under the new Scheme, family pension is granted @ Rs. 40/- p-m. for life or till remarriage and lump sum of Rs. 1000/- to the family of the deceased member who dies while in service.

The Family Pension Fund is constituted of the annual contribution made by the Government of India and of the amount annually transferred from the General Pension Fund @ 11.6% and 21.3% of the wages of the employees covered under the scheme respectively. Besides, Government of India have agreed to bear the entire administration cost of the scheme.

The enactment of the Assam Tea Plantations Employees Welfare Fund Act, 1959 is another land mark in the history of welfare legislation for the tea employees in the state of Assam. Under the provision of this Act, a fund is to be constituted out of all fines to be realised from the employees in the course of management of the plantation, all unpaid accumulations; all grants from the Central Government as well as the State Government or the Tea Board; any voluntary donations; any amount borrowed under section 8 of the Act and any unclaimed or forfeited amount in the provident fund account of employees. The Fund shall remain with the Board of Trustees framed by the State Government and shall be incurred to meet all the possible expenditures required and reasonably necessary as per opinion of the State Government for providing the welfare of employees in the tea plantations in the state of Assam. Without prejudice to this general provision, the Fund may be utilised by the Board of Trustees to defray expenditures on adult education; community and social education centres including reading room and libraries; community necessities; games and sports; excursion tours and holiday homes; entertainment and other forms of recreation; home industries and subsidiary occupation for women and unemployed persons; corporate activities of a social nature; cost of administering the Act including the salaries and allowances of the Staff appointed for the purpose of the Act and such other objects as would, in the opinion of the State Government, improve the standard of living and also ameliorate the social condition of employees. The Fund shall not be utilised in any way, for financing such measures which the employer is to carry out under the law in force.

In any industrial disputes, the Labour Department of the State Government tries to ameliorate the situation and to promote industrial harmony through conciliation. The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 is applicable to all industrial establishments of the State. When conciliation fails, the disputes are referred to the higher institutions like Industrial Tribunal for adjudication. For such purposes, our State Government has two Industrial Tribunals one for Upper Assam with its headquarters at Dibrugarh and the other for Lower Assam including Goulpara with headquarters at Gauhati.

OTHER SOCIAL SERVICES

(b) Prohibition :

(1) **Opium :** The people of the Surma Valley were not addicted to opium. It appears that in the year of 1902-08, the amount of revenue raised from opium in the Cachar plains was only Rs. 85,000.00 which was an insignificant sum in comparison with the amount of Rs. 5,12,000.00 shown as revenue from opium in Lakhimpur district which was less populated one than the former. The people of Assam did not know the use of this drug till 1794 when it was first, according to Butler, the author of the book "Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam, 1855", introduced into Assam when the British troops assisted the Ahom Raja against the Muttocks.

At first the British adopted a policy of a drift on the question of opium of revenue on this drug in order to undersell the local product. But restrictions were imposed for the first time in 1860, upon the cultivation of the poppy plant and the drug was issued from the treasury at Rs. 14 per seer (1 seer is equal to 0.9331 grams). The price was raised to Rs. 20.00 in 1862, Rs. 22 in 1863, Rs. 23 in 1873, Rs. 37 in 1890 and the last rate was continued till 1905. Licences for the retail sale of opium was issued free of charge when Assam was under the Bengal Government. But in 1874, an annual fee of Rs. 12 only was levied on every shop, which was increased to Rs. 18 from 1875. The system, whereby the right to sell opium in a particular mahal was put up to auction, was followed between 1877 and 1883 onwards. Opium was sold in the individual shops which purchased the right to sell opium in auction. As a result of this, Government restriction and control on the sources of procuring opium decreased. In 1900-01, there was 25 opium shops in Cachar district, 28 in 1901-02, 23 in 1902-03, and 25-28 in 1903-04. Opium consumed in the district was about 20.48 quintals in 1900-01. The quantity of opium consumed in the district was gradually decreasing and in 1903-04, about 19.04 quintals of opium were consumed by the people.

Assam was declared a black spot as far as opium trade was concerned in the Geneva Convention and it was from 1925, that the pass system was first introduced. In 1928, a further cut of 10 per cent in the opium ration was made and at last the 1939 Congress-Coalition Government enforced law for total prohibition of opium in certain areas of Lakhimpur and Sibsagar districts. The opium offences were tried under the provisions of the Opium Act of 1878 but with the enactment of the Assam Opium Prohibition Act of 1947,

total prohibition of opium was effected throughout the state of Assam. The said Act prohibits the production, manufacture, possession, consumption, exportation, importation, transportation, purchase, sale and use of this narcotic except on medical reason.

(II) **Liquor:** Liquor is generally drank by the tribal people and also the labourers, specially the labourers of the tea gardens. People of other sections of the society also partake some liquor but earn social disapprobation. In the 1873-74, there were 141 liquor shops in the Cachar district and the Government earned revenue to the amount of Rs. 42,596.00 from liquor. But this number reduced to 72 only with revenue of Rs. 27,317.00 in 1879-80 ; 50 with revenue of Rs. 76,057.00 in 1889-90 and 35 in 1899-1900, but the revenue earned from these shops was Rs. 1,29,918.00 in 1899-1900. In 1901-02, 1902-03 and 1903-04 the number of shops were 33,35 and 35 and the revenue earned was Rs. 1,15,463.00, 1,03,048.00 and 1,16,375.00 respectively on issued licences. The out-still system, i.e., right to manufacture and sell spirits at a particular locality was put up to auction and no revenue was imposed on the actual quantity of spirit distilled. The success of this system was derived from the keen contest between auctioners who tried to outbid each other. Rise in consumption of liquor was also mainly due to the British bureaucrats most of whom were in the habit of drinking. During the British rule, the people felt elevated by pursuance of outward habits of the foreign rulers and this tradition had passed on to the general public by the petty bureaucrats.

The State Government has enforced in Assam the Assam Liquor Prohibition Act of 1952 for total prohibition in the Cachar district.

(III) **Ganja and Bhang :** Ganja and Bhang are primarily used by a section of people who are said to be devotee of Lord Shiva. The wild Ganja grows here and there abundantly, in the district, but it is not relished by the inveterate in ganja smokers. Ganja is generally mixed with water and kneaded till it becomes soft, then cut into very small strips and smoked. Ganja was fairly popular in the Surma Valley and Cachar yielded a large revenue from this drug than any district of Assam. Another kind of preparation is made with milk, sugar, Ganja, honey and other things and it is locally known as ghota. It is a delicious beverage served on the occasion of Shivaratri night. The Assam Ganja and Bhang Prohibition Act of 1958 prohibits possession and consumption of Ganja and Bhang. These can only be used for religious, medical and scientific purposes.

OTHER SOCIAL SERVICES

(c) **Advancement of Backward Classes :** According to the censuses of 1961 and 1971 the Scheduled Castes and Tribes are present in considerable number in the district. Their number as per 1961 and 1971 censuses are shown below:

Name of District	Name of the community	1971		Total
		Male	Female	
Cachar	Scheduled Cates	1,07,743	1,01,124	2,08,867
	Sheduled Tribes	7,943	7,340	15,283
1961				
		Male	Female	Total
		1,00,413	92,392	1,92,805
		7,249	6,827	14,076

People belonging to Bonsphor, Bhuimali or Mali, Britial Bonia or Bania, Dhipi or Dhubi, Dugal of Dholi, Jalkeot, Jhale, Malo or Jhalo Malo, Kaibarta or Jaliya, Mahara, Methor or Bhang, Muchi or Rishi, Namosudra, Patni and Sutradhar are graded as Scheduled Castes in the District. Namosudra (45,752), Patni (73,693), Muchi or Rishi (31,206) Bhui-Mali or Mali (11,911) constituted slightly less than five-sixths of the Scheduled Caste population of the Cachar district.

Scheduled Tribes of the district who are most predominant in Silchar sub-division are Barmans of Cachar, Boro, Borokachari, Kachari including Sonowal, and Rabha. These people mostly live in the rural areas. According to the Census Report of 1961, under the category of Scheduled Tribes, there were 12,177 persons in Silchar sub-division, 695 persons in Karimganj sub-division and 1,204 persons in Hailakandi sub-division.

Other Backward classes are Ahoms, Chutia, Koches, Jogis (Naths), Kamars, Napits besides the tea-garden labourers and tribes. Generally the people belonging to these communities yet lie behind their brethren of more advanced communities. The British left these people to their own devices. Proselytisation by Christian Missionaries among backward people, however, opened the flood gate of progress for the converts among them. So we find many Christians among the tribals- mostly the hills tribes.

It is only after Independence that necessary steps have been taken to bring all round development to the way of living of the people belonging to backward classes of the country. One of the Directive Principles of the state policy of the Constitution of India solemnly declares that the state shall promote with special care educational, social and economic interests of weaker section of the people particularly, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and exploitation. Under Article 275 of the Constitution of India grant in aid from Consolidated Fund of India is provided for taking up development schemes for the betterment of the backward classes. Some of the steps have been taken up for their welfare since 1947 through reliefs and issue of loans, advances and scholarships. By taking such measures the conditions of the backward classes have been ameliorated to a great extent.

Some of the measures are briefly described below: (i) Reservation of seats in the Legislative Assembly and Panchayat: Out of the fourteen Assembly constituencies of the district, in the 1972 General Elections, Karimganj South

and Dholai were reserved for Scheduled Castes. Similar provisions are also made in case of Anchalik and Gaon Panchayat elections. A number of seats are kept reserved for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in order to secure the representation in those elective bodies.

(ii) Reservation of posts in Government services: In pursuance of the provisions of Articles 16 (4) and 335 of the Constitution of India, the Government of Assam have made policies of reservation of vacancies in the Government offices wherein the qualified persons from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will be appointed suitably. The reservation of vacancies in the Government office have been made on percentage basis as indicated below:

- (1) For Scheduled Castes -Seven per cent.
- (2) For Scheduled Tribes (Plains)- Ten per cent.
- (3) For Scheduled Tribes (Hills)- Twelve per cent.

Before August, 1963, the State Government kept five per cent in reservation for the Scheduled Castes only. All the Government offices have followed the policy of reservation of vacancies and as per the statutory provision in making appointment to services or posts of the State Government subject to other terms and conditions as laid down in the Notification no AAP. 66/63/482 issued on the 24th August, 1963.

(iii) Education: Along with the First Five year Plan, necessary efforts have been made to impart education among the plains tribals and to make them cent per cent educated. So adequate number of Primary and Middle Schools have been established in the areas mostly populated by the Tribal people, and the State Primary Education Board has taken over a large number of Venture Schools of those localities. Sufficient number of Secondary Schools and hostel buildings for boarding facilities to the students have been constructed. Moreover, the tribal students and the students of the backward classes have been granted scholarship and other facilities even upto the higher stages of education. Certain seats in the technical and professional institutions are kept specifically for the students coming from these classes of people.

Miscellaneous: Almost all the Government departments earmark some amount of their budgetary fund for the development of the backward classes including the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. The Co-operative Department allots grant-in-aid towards the share capital and expenses on management of the co-operative societies in their areas. Similarly, the Medical department has provided adequate medical facilities, public health units and dispensaries in the areas, mostly populated by Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. Water supply scheme, agricultural scheme, industrial scheme, etc., have been taken up by the State Government to bring around development of these people in accordance with the declared policies of the Government. Over and above these, the State Government have created one separate department for taking up all possible developmental works to improve their way of living by all means. It is seen that their conditions have considerably been improved through these developmental works taken up by the State Government and they have been considerably brought into the fabric of enlightened community.

Chapter-XVIII

PUBLIC LIFE AND VOLUNTARY SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

(a) Representation of the district in the State and Union Legislatures :

(1) British period: The principle of non-official representation in the Union Council and also in the Provincial Councils was recognised under the Indian Councils Act, 1861. This Act was later on amended by the Indian Councils Act, 1892, which provided for indirect election for the first time to the Indian Council.

In the early part of the British rule in Assam, Assam formed a part of the presidency of Bengal. In 1874, Assam was raised to the status of a Chief Commissioner's Province and again tagged with East Bengal (Bangladesh) to form a separate province with its capital at Dacca in 1905. This system of administration remained for a short period of about seven years till 1912. During this period Assam was represented by three Assamese and one European in the Council at Dacca as envisaged under the Morely-Minto Reforms Act of 1909. The province was separated from East Bengal in 1912 and the Assam Legislative Council was formed in January, 1913, with eleven elected and fourteen nominated members. At that time Assam consisted of two valleys namely the Brahmaputra Valley and Surma Valley .

Assam was raised to the status of Governor's province in 1920, and the new council was formed in 1921 under the Government of India Act, 1919 with fifty-one members, out of which 39 were elected members and 12 nominated members. These 12 nominated members consisted of 3 officials and 9 non-officials. The Legislative Council held its first sitting on the 3rd January, 1921 and his Excellency Mr. Nicholas Dodd Beatson Bell, the then Governor of Assam, took his seat. The province of Assam was represented in the Council of States by one member elected by Assam Muhammadan and General constituencies alternately. Assam was represented in the Central Legislative Assembly by six members of which two were nominated and four elected.

This system of representation continued upto 1937 when for the first time Legislative Assembly was formed in Assam with 108 members under the provisions of Government of India Act, 1935 which introduced provincial autonomy in the Indian provinces. Out of 108 seats, 34 seats were reserved for Muhammadans, 9 seats for Europeans, European Planting and European

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Commerce and Industry, one for women, 14 seats for Indian Christians, Backward Tribals (Plains), Backward Tribals (Hills) and Labour, and the remaining seats were opened as general. For General constituencies the areas now under the district of Cachar was divided into Silchar, Hailakandi Karimganj East and Karimganj West constituencies. For Muhammadans the district had five constituencies namely Karimganj Central, Karimganj South, Karimganj West, Hailakandi and Silchar. There was also one Tribal constituency for the tribal people.

The following persons were the members elected from the respective constituencies in 1937.:

<i>General</i>		
Name		Constituency
1. Mr. Arun Kumar Chanda		Silchar
2. Mr. Hirendra Chandra Chakravarty		Hailakandi
3. Mr. Kamini Kumar Sen		Karimganj(East)
4. Mr. Rabindra Nath Aditya		Karimganj (West)
<i>Muhammadan</i>		
5. Mr. Hazi Abdul Mazid Choudhuri		Karimganj (Central)
6. Mr. Mahammod Ali.		Karimganj(South)
7. Mr. Mobarak Ali		Karimganj(West)
8. Mr. Muzarrob Ali Laskar		Hailakandi
9. Mr. Namwar Ali Barbhuiya		Silchar
<i>Backward Tribal (Plains), Backward areas (Hills) and Labour</i>		
10. Mr. Sanat Kumar Ahir		Silchar (Labour)
<i>Reserve seats</i>		
11. Mr. Balaram Sirkar		Karimganj(East)
12. Mr. Kala Chand Ray		Silchar

The names of the persons elected from European community for the district could not be ascertained. The members of the Provincial Legislative Council was reduced to twenty one. Assam represented in the Council of States by five members including communal representative and by the members in the Federal Assembly.

The Provincial Legislative Assembly which was elected in April, 1937, continued its functions for about nine years till 1946 exceeding normal course of five years on the strength of an amendment to section 62 (2) of the Act, made in view of the exigencies arising out of the Second Great World War. There was, however, interregnum of eight months extending from 25th December, 1941, to

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24th August, 1942, due to suspension of the Constitution in the province under section 93 of the Act and the Governor assumed all powers of the administration himself. But the Constitution was restored on August 25th, 1942, and the Assembly continued its business till its dissolution on October, 1945. Next General Elections were held by 2nd February, 1946, Election to the Central Legislative was also held along with it. The constituencies remained the same as they were in the elections of 1937.

On 16th August, 1946, the Legislative Assembly elected the following representative to the constituent Assembly

(a) Candidates elected by the

General part of the Assembly were :

- (i) Gopinath Bordoloi.
- (ii) Rohini Kumar Choudhury.
- (iii) Basanta Kumar Das.
- (iv) Rev J.J. Nichols Roy.
- (v) Omeo Kumar Das.
- (vi) Dharanidhar Basumatari.
- (vii) Akshay Kumar Das.

(b) Candidates elected by the Muslim part of the Assembly:

- (i) Sayed Sir Md. Shaadulla.
- (ii) Mlv. Abdul Hamid.
- (iii) Mlv. Abdul Matin Choudhury.

After Independence: The first General Elections after Independence of India were held in 1952 in order to elect representatives to the Assam Assembly and also to the house of the people of Union Legislature. The constituencies of the Cachar district were determined in accordance with the Delimitation of Assembly Constituencies (Assam) Order of 1951. Accordingly, the Cachar district was divided into Assembly Constituencies of (1) Ratabari-Patharkandi, (2) Patharkandi- Karimganj, (3) Karimganj- Badarpur, (4) Katigora, (5) Lakhipur- Barkhola, (6) Silchar, (7) Silchar-Sonai, (8) Hailakandi-Silchar, (9) Hailakandi, and (10) Katicherra. Ratabari- Patharkandi and Lakhipur were double-member constituencies, one seat of each constituency being reserved for Scheduled Castes. For the Lok Sabha election, the district formed Cachar-Lushai Hills constituency, a double member constituency with one seat reserved for Scheduled Castes.

In the Second General Election of 1957, the number of Assembly constituencies in the district was reduced to 12. They were (1) Patharkandi, (2) Karimganj- South, (3) Karimganj- North, (4) Badarpur, (5) Hailakandi,

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(6) Katlicherra, (7) Silchar-West, (8) Silchar South, (9) Katigora, (10) Udarband, (11) Lakhapur and (12) Sonai constituencies. There was only one double-member constituency in the district namely Patharkandi constituency and one seat of this constituency was reserved for Scheduled Castes candidate. The entire district was termed as Cachar constituency for Lokshabha elections, and it was a double member constituency having one seat for general and the other for Scheduled Castes.

The Two-member Constituencies (Abolition) Act, 1961, was enacted with a view to abolish two-member Parliamentary and Assembly constituencies. In pursuance of clause (a) of Section 4 of this Act, the question of splitting up of the two-member constituencies as per the Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies Order, 1956, was taken up in the first part of 1961. As a result the double-member Parliamentary constituency of Cachar was split into Cachar and Karimganj (S.C.) single member constituencies. Similarly Patharkandi Assembly constituency was split into Ratabari and Patharkandi constituencies, the latter being reserved seat for the Scheduled Castes. Thus during the Third General Elections of 1962, the Assembly constituencies of Cachar district were (1) Ratabari, (2) Patharkandi (S.C.), (3) Karimganj South, (4) Karimganj North, (5) Katigora, (6) Badarpur, (7) Hailakandi, (8) Katlicherra, (9) Silchar West, (10) Silchar East, (11) Sonai, (12) Lakhapur and (13) Udarband and they formed part of Cachar and Karimganj (S.C.) Parliamentary constituencies.

These important steps were taken in order to increase the number of constituencies in view of the increase in the population of the district following the enactment of the Delimitation Commission Act, 1962 (61 of the 1962 Amendment Act.). In pursuance of Sub-section (1) of Section 10 of this Act, the final order was published under Delimitation Commissions Notification, New Delhi, the 20th April, 1966 for the purpose of the Fourth General Elections, 1967 in Assam. Accordingly, the number of Assembly constituencies in the Cachar district was increased to fourteen viz, (1) Ratabari, (2) Patharkandi, (3) Karimganj North, (4) Karimganj South (S.C.), (5) Badarpur, (6) Hailakandi, (7) Katlicherra, (8) Silchar, (9) Sonai, (10) Dholai (S.C.), (11) Lakhapur, (12) Udarband, (13) Borkhola and (14) Katigora. Two seats namely Karimganj South and Dholai were reserved for Scheduled Castes. For 1967 Elections the whole district of Cachar was divided into two constituencies namely Cachar and Karimganj for Lok Sabha. The Karimganj constituency was reserved for the candidate of Scheduled Castes. This arrangement of the constituencies in regard to the Assembly and the Lok Sabha

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constituencies is still continuing.

(b) Political parties and their hold upon the district at different times as reflected in the Elections:

First General Elections 1952: Legislative Assembly : Fifteen Assembly representatives were elected from the thirteen constituencies of the Cachar district. There were two double member constituencies where from two members belonging to Scheduled Caste communities were returned to the Assembly. Out of fifteen seats in the district, the Indian National Congress won thirteen seats and the Silchar seat was swept away by an Independent candidate. The remaining seat was occupied by the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party. The Indian National Congress, however, contested all the seats in the district. The main contesting parties in this Election were the Indian National Congress, Socialist Party, Communist Party, Kishan-Majdoor-Praja Party and Forward Block (Ruikar Group). Altogether 35 Independent candidates contested all the seats excluding two seats namely Patharkandi-Karimganj, and Karimganj. In the double-member constituencies- Ratabari-Patharkandi, and Lakhapur, the Indian National Congress won both the seats. The Indian National Congress which put up 15 candidates in all the thirteen constituencies got thirteen of its candidates elected and secured 19,456 and 19,794 valid votes in Ratabari -Patharkandi, 8,485 valid votes in Patharkandi-Karimganj, 6,996 valid votes in Badarpur, 22,911 and 23,634 valid votes in the double member constituency of Lakhapur, 7,495 valid votes in Borkhola, 14,142 valid votes in Silchar, 8,554 valid votes in Sonai, 15,266 valid votes in Hailakandi-Silchar, 12,527 valid votes in Hailakandi, 13,241 valid votes in Katlicherra and 12,908 valid votes in Katigora constituencies. The candidates from Kishan Majdoor Praja Party elected from Karimganj constituency secured 8,591 out of 17,194 valid votes polled. The Independent candidate contested the Silchar seat returned elected securing 4,232 valid votes out of 18,377 valid votes polled.

Lok Sabha : In the Cachar Lushai Hills double member Lok Sabha constituency there were three contesting parties namely the Indian National Congress, the Kishan Majdoor Praja Party and Jan Sangha. Both the seats were secured by the Indian National Congress obtaining 1,82,692 and 1,92,847 valid votes out of 6,27,706 valid votes polled. Jan Sangha secured 52,708 and 43,596 while the Kishan Majdoor Praja Party had 85,160 and 71,704 valid votes in their favour in the election.

Second General Elections 1957 :

Legislative Assembly : Thirteen representatives were elected from the twelve constituencies of the district which included one double-member

constituency namely Patharkandi constituency. Eleven out of the thirteen elected members belonged to the Indian National Congress. In Patharkandi double-member constituency, one seat was obtained by Indian National Congress and the other by Communist Party of India. The Karimganj-North seat was secured by the Praja Socialist Party. The main contesting parties in this district were the Indian National Congress, the Progressive Congress, Communist Party of India, the Praja-Socialist Party of India besides eleven Independent candidates. The Indian National Congress which put up 12 candidates in all the seats, got 11 of its candidates elected and secured 22,466 valid votes in Patharkandi, 13,402 valid votes in Karimganj South, 14,854 valid votes in Badarpur, 12,705 valid votes in Hailakandi, 15,562 valid votes in Katlicherra, 16,036 valid votes in Silchar-West, 21,190 valid votes in Silchar-East, 12,394 valid votes in Katigora, 10,170 valid votes in Udarband and 14,779 valid votes in Sonai constituencies. The Indian National Congress candidate from Lakhipur constituency returned uncontested. Two elected candidates of Communist Party and Praja Socialist Party secured valid votes of 22,768 in Patharkandi and 14,960 in Karimganj North constituencies respectively.

Lok Sabha: In the double-member Lok-Shabha constituency of Cachar, there were three candidates; two from the Indian National Congress and one Independent candidate. Both the seats were secured by the Congress including one who was declared returned from the reserved seat uncontested.

Third General Elections 1962: Legislative Assembly : Due to abolition of the double member constituencies the number of Assembly constituencies increased from twelve to thirteen and out of these constituencies Patharkandi constituency was declared reserved for Scheduled Castes. The Indian National Congress captured nine seats and secured valid votes of 13,403 in Ratabari, 17,652 in Patharkandi, 9881 in Karimganj-South, 11,700 in Katlicherra, 23,050 in Silchar -East, 16,554 in Sonai, 14,916 in Lakhipur, 13,062 in Badarpur and 16,336 in Udarband constituencies. The Independent candidates secured Karimganj North, Katigora, Hailakandi, Silchar West seats securing valid votes of 12,922, 15,358, 11,681 and 14,240 respectively. In these elections, the contesting Parties were the Indian National Congress, Praja Socialist Party, Communist Party of India besides 27 Independent candidates.

Lok Sabha: Both the Parliamentary seats from Cachar and Karimganj (reserved for Scheduled Castes) Lok Sabha constituencies were captured by the Indian National Congress. The seat in the former constituency was contested by the Indian National Congress, Praja Socialist Party and two Independent candidates and the latter by the Indian National Congress and

two Independent candidates. The Indian National Congress polled 72,086 out of 1,96,100 valid votes in Cachar constituency and 1,12,584 out of 2,24,582 valid votes in Karimganj constituency.

Fourth General Elections, 1967: Legislative Assembly : Out of fourteen Assembly seats in the Cachar district, the Indian National Congress Party could secure only 10 seats and the remaining 4 seats were captured by 4 Independent candidates. The Congress Party won the seats at Ratabari, Karimganj-South (Scheduled Castes), Badarpur, Hailakandi, Silchar, Sonai, Lakhipur, Udarband, Borkhola and Katigora and secured valid votes of 21,817, 17,559, 18,496, 22,023, 13,407, 26,179, 14,379, 19,980, 15,594 and 20,972 respectively. The Independent candidates obtained the seats at Patharkandi, Karimganj-North, Katlicherra and Dholai (Scheduled Castes) obtaining 15,220, 20,204, 15,562 and 11,150 valid votes respectively. The contesting parties were the Indian National Congress, Communist Party of India (M), Praja Socialist Party, Bharatiya Jan Sangh and Communist Party of India in this election

Lok Sabha: In Cachar constituency Indian National Congress and three Independent candidates fought the election and the Congress Party secured the seat by polling 89,713 valid votes against the three Independent candidates who secured 43,203, 37,928 and 25,308 valid votes respectively. In Karimganj (Scheduled Caste) constituency, there was a triangular fight between the Indian National Congress, Independent candidate and the Bharatiya Jan Sangh. Here also the Congress party won the seat polling 1,71,048 valid votes. The Independent candidate secured 94,125 while the Bharatiya Jan Sangh candidate 26,819 valid votes.

Fifth General Elections. Lok Sabha : The Fifth Election to Lok Sabha was held in March, 1971. The Cachar Parliamentary Constituency seat was won by the Indian National Congress in an octagonal contest by securing 1,00,792 valid votes out of 1,99,438 valid votes polled. Five Independent candidates polled 24,665, 37,794, 13,972, 5,300 and 3,619; Praja Socialist party polled 3,940 and the Indian National Congress (O) polled only 9,350 votes. In Karimganj (Scheduled Castes) constituency, the Indian Congress won the seat securing 1,49,328 votes out of 2,03,558 valid votes polled. In this contest two Independent candidates secured 13,809 and 6,496 votes, while the Indian National Congress (O) 6,343 and the Communist Party (M) secured 27,528 votes only.

Fifth Elections to the State Legislature: As the elections to Parliament

were delinked from elections to the State Legislative Assembly, in view of the dissolution of the Parliament in December, 1970, mid-term poll in Lok Sabha constituencies were held in 1971. As the consequences, election to the Assam Assembly was held in March, 1972. In this election; the Congress Party (R) secured all the fourteen seats in the district and regained its position well.

Sixth Elections to the State Legislature: The Sixth Election to the Assam Legislative Assembly was held in February, 1978. Fifteen representatives were elected to the State Legislative Assembly. Out of the fifteen constituencies, two constituencies namely Ratabari and Dholai were reserved for the Scheduled Castes. The main contesting parties were the Indian National Congress, Indian National Congress (I), Janata party, Communist Party of India (Marxist) and 58 Independent Candidates. Janata secured 4 seats in Ratabari, Sonai, Udarbund and Borkhola securing 14,403, 11,892, 9,993, and 14,753 valid votes. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) won Karimganj North, Badarpur, Hailakandi and Silchar constituencies securing 19,870, 11,912, 10,745 and 20,409 valid votes. The Indian National Congress fought all the fifteen seats but won only two seats of Karimganj South and Katicherra obtaining 19,047 and 21,274 valid votes. Two Independent candidates captured Patharkandi and Lakhipur constituencies securing 12,515 and 11,258 valid votes. The Indian National Congress (I) placed its candidates in all the fifteen seats of the district but could only capture two seats at Algapur and Dholai, securing 10,425 and 12,127 votes. 6 candidates of Janata party, 8 candidates of the Indian National Congress 12 candidates of the Indian National Congress (I), one candidate of the communist party of India, two candidates of Revolutionary Socialist Party, two candidates of the Socialist Unity Centre of India, and 43 Independent candidates forfeited their securities in this election.

Sixth Elections to Lok Sabha: The Sixth Election to Lok Sabha was held in March, 1977. The district was turned into two Parliamentary constituencies namely Karimganj (Reserved for Scheduled Castes) and Silchar. The Karimganj (S.C.) Parliamentary Constituency seat was secured by the Indian National Congress (I) in a four-corner contest by securing 1,27,454 valid votes against valid votes of 2,953, 5,835 and 97,154 secured by an Independent, the Socialist Unity Centre of India, and Bharatiya Lok Dal respectively. The Silchar Parliamentary Constituency seat was also won by the Indian National Congress (I) in a double-corner contest securing 1,38,638 valid votes against the Communist Party of India (Marxist) who was defeated by 28,553 votes only.

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News Papers :

Surma valley had been the part of Dacca Division of Bengal till 1874, naturally the educated people of Cachar looked upon Calcutta and Dacca for the news papers both English and Vernacular. *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, *Sandhya*, *Jugantar*, *Bengal Mirror*, *Modern Review*, *Pravasi*, *Bharatvarsa*, *Sabujpatra* - news papers and magazines had wide circulation in Cachar and Karimganj. The Bengali news magazine *Silchar* appeared from Silchar Press at the close of the last century. However, it was short lived. Weekly *Janasakti* from Silchar and Weekly *Yugosakti* from Karimganj became popular.

Among the magazines published by the educational institutions "*Purvasree*" of G.C. College and "*Haimanti*" of Silchar Government Girl's H.S. School are worth mentioning. Now-a-days most of the newspapers and magazines come to Cachar from Calcutta, Delhi, Bombay, Madras and Gauhati newspapers and magazines are also imported. *Anandabazar*, *Jugantar*, *Ajkal*, *The Statesman*, *The Amrit Bazar Patrika*, *Times of India*, *Indian Express*, *The Assam Tribune*, *The Sentinel*, *Dainik Assam* are popular in Cachar. *Desh Parivartan*, *Sunday*, *India Today*, *Illustrated Weekly of India*, *Famina* are popular news magazines. Among the local news-papers and magazines *Daily Prantajyoti*, *Gati*, *Sonarkachar*, *Janasakti*, *Prantiasamachar* from Silchar; *Dhaleswary* and *Divakar* from Hailakandi, *Jugasakti*, *Navayog* from Karimganj are established ones.

(d) Voluntary Social Service Organisations: Ramkrishna Mission Sevasram Silchar: The Ramkrishna Mission Sevasram was started at Silchar in 1915. The main objectives of the Mission are religious, educational and philanthropic activities in the society. Classes and discourses are held by the Mission to enlighten the public about the teachings of Shri Ramkrishna and text of Hindu Scriptures among the inmates of the Mission as well as outsiders. The mission also occasionally propagates Hinduism in the remote areas of the district. It opened three night schools, viz, Vivekananda Night School at Silchar, Krishnapur Night School at Krishnapur village and the Meherpur Night school at Meherpur. These schools were subsequently closed after the introduction of compulsory primary education by the Government. It has a library of its own to help the general readers of the district. The Sevasram maintains a Students Home, the primary object of which is to give shelter to the really poor tribal students.

The Sevasram takes up public works and is engaged in the relief works during the floods occurring in the district and also performs other social works for the welfare of the people wherever necessary. The Mission has its branches at Karimganj and Hailakandi.

CACHAR DISTRICT GAZETTEER

Siva Sundari Nari-Sikshashram at Silchar: This institution was opened at Silchar in 1931 and affiliated to the Indian Red Cross Society. At first this institution imparted midwifery to a few destitute women. Subsequently, this institution got financial help and co-operation from Municipal Board, Local Board and public. In 1938, the Silver Jubilee Maternity ward with two beds was added to this institution. It receives a recurring grant of Rs. 7,500/- yearly from Government. The Siva Sundari Narisikshashram is at present dealing with (i) Maternity and child welfare, (ii) Baby clinic, (iii) Anti-natal and post-natal clinic, (iv) Family planning and (v) Training of Auxiliary Nurse-Midwives and Dhais. A committee looks after the administration and management of the Siva Sundari Nari-Sikshashram at Silchar.

Welse Presbyterian Mission, Cachar : This institution was started in Cachar early in 1856, to spread out education among people specially the females. At first, there were some lower primary school started in some selected villages. Later on, High schools for girls at Silchar and Karimganj were opened. These two educational institutions were handed over by the Mission to Government in 1936. The church authorities maintained also a Medical Mission at Karimganj, for the period from 1894 to 1926. The Mission opened an orphanage at Karimganj, where crafts training was imparted to the pupils. In 1941, this Mission was merged with the Presbyterian Church in Assam.

The Bharat Sevak Samaj at Silchar : The Bharat Sevak Samaj, a voluntary and non-political organisation came into existence at Silchar in 1954. It is a branch of the Assam State Bharat Sevak Samaj affiliated to the Central Bharat Sevak Samaj, New Delhi. The main activities of this organisation are social works. It constructed so far many buildings, one Student Home, some midwifery quarters and some R.C.C. Ring-wells at different parts of the district. Besides, the Bharat Sevak Samaj, Silchar, carried out many works such as excavation of tanks, construction and improvement of schools in different parts of the district and also carried out construction of roads and embankments. It also opened night schools for adult literacy and has been managing the Bikrampur Social Welfare Extension Project, Cachar, besides other works. The organisation is engaged itself in the schemes of adult women literacy, slum clearance, nursery and tailoring programme, and relief works to the needy people in the Silchar town.

PUBLIC LIFE AND VOLUNTARY SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

Nari Kalyan Samity, Silchar: This social organisation came into being in 1958. It aims at educating the women of the district on the subjects such as domestic science and hygiene, spinning, weaving, knitting, sewing and tailoring under the supervision of Khadi and Village Industries Board. The organisation has its own accommodation equipped with library, reading room, etc. The Organisation has undertaken the work of co-operative storing of essential commodities for displaced and destitute women. The Organisation engages in other social welfare works also.

Sri Sarada Sangha, Silchar: Following the teaching of Sarada Devi, the divine consort of Ramkrishna, Sri Sarada Sangha Calcutta, established a small unit at Silchar, Cachar in 1956. Its aim is the female welfare. It organizes annual camps and seminars in different schools and colleges, helps the meritorious girl students and conducts a course of Adult Education of the Central Social Welfare Board, Delhi. Educated and dedicated women of the town are in its executive committee.

There are several other social service organisations like Sundari Mohan Seva Pratisthan at Ram Nagar, Cachar, to look after the ailing mothers. The institution is a sponsored medical body of Assam Government, Missionaries of Charity of Mother Teresa, an international organisation, has its unit at Silchar to help the poor and destitutes, Kasturba Memorial Trust, Assam Branch, runs a Centre of Women's Welfare at Bhanga near Karimganj. Vana Basi Kalyan Sangha, Silchar helps the hill students in their education. Barak Valley Nath Yogi Sanmilani runs a hostel for the students of Nath community at Tarapur, Silchar and helps the poor students of the community with stipends.

PLACES OF INTEREST

CHAPTER XIX PLACES OF INTEREST

Khaspur : The last capital of the Kachari kings established by Tamradhvaj Narayan about 1690 A.D. is situated on the bank of Madhura river at a distance of about 20.80 kms. east of Silchar across the river Barak in a village called Siberband. The ruins of a brick-built two storied palace, temple of Ranachandi (Kachal-Khati), Vishnu- temple, Snan mandir, and a large number of tanks are seen hither and thither in a place covering an area of approximately 40.4286 hectares. The temple of Ranachandi is still in use. There are Govinda Chandra Raja's Pat, Krishna Chandra Raja's Pat, and Harish chandra Raja's Pat, in the capital which were surrounded by pucca walls and moats. Although the buildings are now in ruins yet the remains of gateway, Devalayas and baths are still in exist. In Harish Chandra Raja's Pat, there is a two storied building called Baara Duari as it has twelve doorways. The ground floor of the building is 2.4384 x 3.6576 metres on all sides of which there is a veranda of about 1.3716 metre broad. The upper storey of the building has door and windows. An inscription found at the site records that the place was built in Saka 1693 at the order of the queen mother Lakshmi Priya Devi. Khaspur is within the kingdom of Harish Chandra Narayan, the king of Hidimbapur. This particular inscription, it is said, was formerly attached to this building. Near its ruins a stone tiger and human figure are found. Another inscription is found in a ruined temple. This inscription contains only seven lines of writings. The inscriptions were engraved in Assamese script. There are ruins of several temples in Khaspur.

Siddeswar Siva Temple: On the left bank of the Barak river about a furlong to the east of Badarpur ghat Railway station, there is an old shrine dedicated to the Hindu God, lord Siva. The temple is situated just on the border of Karimganj and Silchar sub-divisions. Formerly, there was a vast space between the shrine with traces of the river course. But due to heavy erosion of the river in 1916, the river course flows now just near the main temple built upon a rock. There is a stone image of God Siva which is in form of a lingam along with other deities in the form of rock besmeared with red pigment. The shrine of Siva's consort, Parvati or Shakti or Bhairavi stands on a hillock on the south of the Railway line. The temple which is old by two hundred years has been renovated. It is said that the main lingam is of touchstone and was installed there by one Sankhya philosopher namely Kapila. So it is known as Kapila-ashram. Another tradition advocates that the shrine was built by one Pura Raja who was a vassal king either of the Tipperah king or of Lokanath, a governor of the Joytunga Varsha (Jatinga Valley) under the suzerainty of the Tipperah king. A Hindu festival is annually held here in the middle of Chaitra Known as

Bhuban Pahar : On the peak of about 914.4 metres above sea level of the hill range that separated the plains of Cachar from the hilly tract of Manipur stands the ancient shrine which has been described as Bhubaneswar in the stone inscription of the Shiva tillah at Sonai. About 11.20 kms. uphill there is a table ground called as Mukam- Tillah. From two ends of this, two paths lead in two directions. The one towards the north-east leads to a table land between two high rocks from which projections like bluffs make nice cantilever roofs. Below these two roofs are the stone images of Bhubaneswar and his consort Bhubaneswari. The image of Bhubaneswar is about 1.143 metres high, a slim figure wearing loin cloth standing up with the left hand extending up to the left knee- joint and the right palm resting on the chest. He wears a necklace of beads around his neck. About 3.048 metres to the north-east, lies the image of Bhubaneswari, facing south-wards, a massive figure buried underground up to the waist with two hands (the right hand in broken condition). The earlobes are pierced and extended upto the shoulder. Near it and also at a distance of 2.4 kms. from it there are several unidentifiable broken and mutilated images. A four handed Vishnu image is seen near the Mokam-tillah.

Nimatra Shrine : On the peak of a hillock about 4 kms. south-east of the Damcherra Railway station there is an old shrine of Nimatra containing a slab of roughly dressed hard stone of about 32.52 sq. decimetres and. 1524 metres thick fixed up vertically. This is the emblem of the goddess Bana-Durga, an aspect of goddess Durga, which is the guardian deity of the forests and hills. It is said that the shrine was in great veneration during the reign of the Kachari kings.

Karimganj : Karimganj town, the sub-divisional headquarters of the sub-division of that name (foremrly a sub-division of Sylhet district) stands on the left bank of the Kushiya river. The town is favourably situated for trade and commerce purposes. The railway passes only 1.60 kms. away from the town. The town has been growing rapidly. It has a great strategic importance as it stands not far from the Bangladesh border. There are two colleges and eight High Schools including one Government Higher Secondary and Multipurpose School in Karimganj. Moreover, some social organisations such as Ramkrishna Mission, Bharatsevak Samaj, etc., which carry out welfare activities in the sub-division have been established in the town. From Karimganj which is the terminus junction of Badarpur-Karimganj line, two different lines are running westward and southward. The former finally terminates at Maishasen station on the Cachar-Sylhet border and the latter touches Kalkalighat station and enters Tripura state. The State Transport Services ply on the Silchar-Badarpur-

Karimganj and the Karimganj-Agartala routes over and above the private bus services.

Hailakandi : Hailakandi is the headquarters town of the Hailakandi Sub-division in the Cachar district. It is a small town and it is connected by railway and motor transport. The Dhaleswari river on which the town stands is not useful and a dead one. The town has four High Schools and two colleges besides the government offices. The climate of the town is extremely hot except for a short period in winter season.

Silchar : Silchar is the headquarters of the Cachar district. Cachar lapsed to British in 1830 and then Silchar became a cantonment station of the Company. It is situated on the left bank of the Barak river in 24°46' North latitude and 92°46' East Longitude and commands a charming view down the river, which is dotted with sails of native crafts and lined with groves of areca palm, while a little to the north, the purple hills of North Cachar rises sharply from the plains. The place has been growing steadily in size during the last sixty years, especially after partition of India. The Silchar town has four Colleges and as many as twelve High Schools. There are also two Technical Schools, one at Meharpur and other at Srikona which are not far away from the town. Over and above these educational institutions, the town has one Medical College and Hospital and one Regional Engineering College. The town is well communicated by railway as well as the State Transport services and private bus services, besides Kumbhirgram air port. The climate of the town is hot except for a short time in the winter season.

Bhairab-bari : Bhairab-bari is situated at a distance of about 19.20 kms. on the west of Lakhimpur, a town established by the Hirimba king Lakshmi Chandra. There is a shrine of Lord Siva on the top of the hillock situating nearby. It is said that the Kachari king Lakshmi Chandra built the shrine. On the west of this shrine there is another shrine on a small hillock popularly known as Bharam Babar Ashram.

Narayan Dahar : About 8 kms. upstream of Phulertal in the middle of the Barak river, there is an island very much similar to the peacock island in the Brahmaputra near Gauhati. In that island there is an ancient temple which enshrines an image of God Vishnu under a shed. It is said that this temple was established by a Manipuri king.

Shiva Tilla at Sonai : There is a Shiva temple on a low hill called Chandra giri at Chandrapur near Sonai in Cachar district. The temple was made of brick and dedicated to lord Shiva by Joy Singha, the minister of the king of Hidima in 1787 A.D. The temple has a plinth of 3.0575 X 3.048 metres and its height is

3.6576 metres with a conical dome over it. Two Sanskrit inscriptions in Assamese scripts have been found in this Shiva temple, which record that the temple was constructed in honour of Bhubaneswar, the lord of Bhuban hills.

Badarpurghat Fort : Close to the south bank of Barak at Badarpurghat is a ruined loopholed fort. On this ruined fort, there is a worn out inscription. The only words of interest, which have been read out of the inscription are "Badarpur", "Captain" and "English". This fort was erected by some early collector of Sylhet as a protection against raiders from the east.

Katakhal : Situated at a distance of about 4.80 kms. from Salchapra, Katakhal is an important railway junction of the North Eastern Frontier Railway. It is connected with Hailakandi town by a branch line. Sitalpati is produced in this place. It is rich with fishes and supplies fishes to Silchar and Hailakandi.

Katigora : Katigora is situated on the north bank of the Barak river just opposite to Badarpur. It is an important Sub-Deputy Collector Circle under Silchar sub-division. The national Highway of Jowai-Badarpur road runs through this town. It is one of the important trade centres of the district and connected by both road and river communications. Katigora was the headquarters of Katigora Anchalik Panchayat and Development Block.

Katlicherra : It is under Hailakandi sub-division and an important market place for rice, vegetables and oil seeds. It is connected by a motorable road with Hailakandi town.

Lakhimpur : It is a new township under Silchar sub-division and situated at 41.60 kms. from Silchar. Lakhimpur is famous for pineapple.

Lala : Lala is an important place under Hailakandi sub-division and is connected by both rail and road communication. It is the headquarters of Lala Community Development Block. There are a police station, a daily bazar, a Primary Health Unit and a Post and Telegraph office. Over and above there is one Higher Secondary School at Lala. It is also an important centre of business.

Nilambazar : Nilambazar falls under Karimganj sub-division and is connected with Karimganj town by both railway and road. It is the headquarters of south Karimganj Community Development Block. It is also a business place.

Patharkandi : It is one of the most important places of the district, connected with the Karimganj town both by road and railways. Patharkandi is the headquarters of the Patharkandi Community Development Block. There are police station, Office of the Public Works Department, one High English School, one Hospital and one Veterinary Dispensary and Forest Office in the

Patharkandi town.

Ram Krishna Nagar : Ram Krishna Nagar is situated on a beautiful hillock and falls under the Ratabari police station. This Nagar is connected with Karimganj and Hailakandi by a motorable road. The Anipur railway station is its nearest place and it is only at 6.40 kms. distance from Ramkrishnanagar. It is the headquarters of the Ramkrishnanagar Development Block. The town has grown up in a planned way on both sides of Anipur-Mona- Cherra road. There is a bazar, one High School, a Post and Telegraph Office, one Sub-Register's Office, one Industrial Training-cum-Production centre, one Hospital and one Fruit Nursery centre in Ramkrishnanagar.

Imam Mehdi Mokam ; It is the grave of a Muhammedan hero. The grave is considered as a holy shrine by the Muslim people. The grave situates in the Banda-til village on the left bank of the Barak river about 1.25 kilometre below Badarpur, near Talitkar village.

Khaki Pir's Mokam : In the Deorail village about 1.60 kms. to the west of the Badarpur Railway station here stands the grave of Pir Adam Khaki. It is on the main road leading to Karimganj town. Pir Adam Khaki was a companion of Pir Shaha-Jelal with the help of whose divine power, Shikandar Gazi took Sylhet from the Hindu king Gour-Govinda in 1304 A.D. Pir Shaha-Jelal with his 360 disciples came from Yemen in Arabia and propagated Muhammedan faith among the Hindus in Sylhet.

Shah Badar Uddin Mokam: Shah Badar-uddin was a pious man who had a mokam or residence on the bank of the Barak river. It was situated on a small hillock where the old Badarpur fort stood. But no trace of the Mokam is there at present.

Shah Arpin's Mokam : About 2.40 kms. about the Badarpur T.E. in the Sarapur hill range, there is a shrine which contains the grave of a Muhammedan saint named Shah Arpin. This place is regarded as a holy place by Muslim people.

Rajar-Mar-dighi : To the east of the Bihara railway station there is a small temple made of bricks. Near it stands a big tank and this tank is called Rajar-Mar-dighi, i.e. the tank of the queen mother. Inside the temple, there are images of Lord Siva and other deities.

Lakhi Tilah : There is a small hillock about 14.40 kms. to the south-west of the Silchar town on the Srikona road. This hillock contains ruins of a stone-built temple where there are a lot of carved stones and broken images of various deities. It is said that this temple was constructed by the Kachari King Lakshmi

PLACES OF INTEREST

Chandra who was a great builder, in 1772-80 A.D.

Langer-Shah Mokam : At Phulertal to the north-west of Lakhipur, there is a shrine of a Muhammedan Pir whose name was Langer Shah. He was graved at this place and the place has since been preserved with great care and veneration.

The name of the Pir is derived from a big iron chain (Langer) which he wore round his waist. This particular chain is preserved near his grave as a sacred relic.

Kapil Asram : The Kapil Asram is situated in between Panchgram and Badarpurghat railway station. It is considered a holy place by the Hindus and a festival is held here every year in the middle of the month of Chaitra. This holy-festival of bath is known as Barani Snan. People from far and near come and assemble together there and take holy bath. A mela is set up there and continues for about fifteen days. There is a Siva temple just near the railway line. For accommodation facilities there is one Dharam Sala and one Dak Bungalow. This Asram is approachable both by railway and road communications. This temple is also known as Sidheswar Siva Temple.

Badarpur : It is one of the biggest railway junctions of the North East Frontier Railway. It is under Karimganj sub-division. It may be called the nerve in respect of the communications in the district. Badarpur is connected by both railway, road and river communications. There is one Industrial Estate and one Leather Tanning centre in Badarpur.

Srikona : Srikona is situated at a distance of 9.60 kms. from Silchar town on the Silchar-Badarpur road. It has one Industrial and Technical Institution.

Sonai : Sonai is an important trade centre for rice, vegetables, livestock products. Sonai market is the biggest village market under Silchar civil sub-division. It is connected with Silchar town by road only.

Daivadi Temple : At Tulagram in the Mohanpur village at a distance of about one kilometre from Sonai Bazar, there is a brick-built temple 2.74x2.74 in plan and 4.25 metre high where Daivaki, a lady connected with Govinda Chandra, the last Kachari king of Cachar, used to worship. The shrine is out of use now.

Barala or Barali Tilah : The fairly high hillock situating at about four kilometres from Sonai Bazar, is called Barala or Barali Tilah. On the top of the hillock, there is one ancient stone image of Lord Shiva in Lingam form. The word Barala or Barali is believed to be the corrupt form of the Bodo word Brala or Bri-lala (Bri-old male, lila-god, Bri-old female) which means great

male or great female, terms used for Lord Siva and Goddess Durga who are also called Moheswar (great god) and Moheswari (great goddess) respectively.

Underground Fort : At about $2\frac{1}{2}$ kilometres from the Mokam tillah in Bhuban hill, and at about 122 metres down from it, there is a plain ground of semicircular shape, which is known as Chaya-Mandap or shadow-canopied assembly hall. At the left end of this field there is a small tunnel which is about 3 metre long, 458 metre wide and .23 metre high dug under the rocky hill. It is called "Yoni- Dwara", i.e. the vaginal passage, through which only one person can crawl with difficulty on his breast. At the end of this passage, there is a rectangular yard about 24.4 m. long and 9.14 m. wide and 6.1 m. high, an absolutely dark wide tunnel. This is known as mel-mandap, i.e., assembly hall. From this hall a downgrade not easily passable about 121.9 metres long path is found. This path leads to the second assembly hall almost of same size. From the second hall another downgrade path of about 121.9 metre in length leads to the third assembly hall where there are two stone images carved on the right wall of the hall. The identity of the deities which are covered with mosses cannot be ascertained due to darkness. One more very narrow downgrade passage of about 30.48 metres length runs from the third hall and in the centre of the passage, there is a block of stone with teethlike nodules protruding on all sides. One can pass through this passage with great risk to his body. From this hall there is an upgrade narrow path with faces of big boulders protruding on all sides. After a distance of about another 121.9 metres there is found a triangular stone in the centre of the passage leaving a very narrow slit-like passage on two ends. Tradition is that after travelling through this dangerous passage for a distance of about 8 kilometres one can reach a wide rectangular plain yard where there is a Linga image of lord Shiva. It is believed that from this yard, there is one underground tunnel which leads up to Kamakhya hill near Gauhati. The saying goes that there is a corresponding tunnel in the gorge at the eastern foot of the Bhubaneswari peak at Kamakhya.

These tunnels with assembly hall in intermediate places, are generally known as "rod", a simplified form of Randhra, i.e. a hole passage. Ordinary people believed this to be a replica of Yoni, i.e. the generative organ of the mother-earth or the universal mother who is Bhubaneswari, i.e., goddess of the universe. Popular belief is that people who getting into the passage can come out alive, conquer the pangs of rebirth.

The construction of the tunnel-passage and the assembly halls seemed to be works of ancient architects possessing great skill and imagination. The rock of the Bhuban hill is hard sandstone and quartzite boulders. Natural tunnels resulting from geological faults are feasible in lime-stone hills only and not in

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sandstone of granite hills.

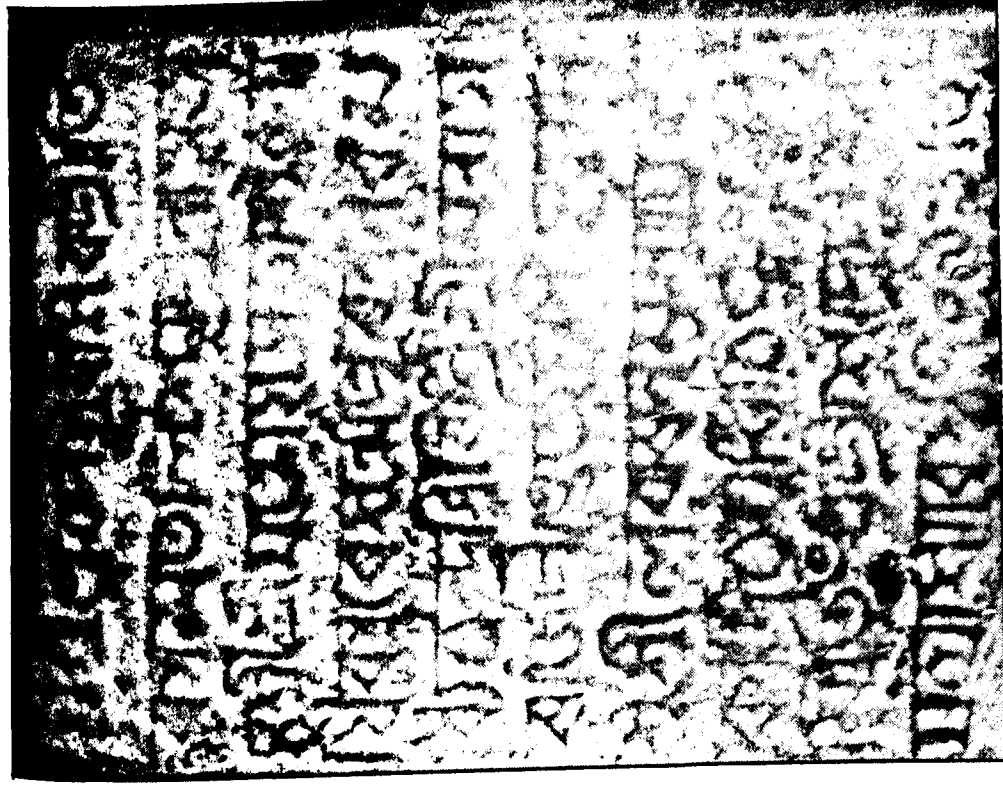
Palanghat : On the bank of the Rukmini or Rukni river, about 6.4 kms. southeast of Narasingpur in the Silchar sub-division, there are two small brick temples covered over with jungle growth in a village named Palanghat. These are believed to be the constructions of the Tripura kings. Old people assemble at the temple site on the occasion of the Baruni festival to take bath in the Rukmini river.

Tell-Chipa : At about a one and half kilometre from the Dhalai Bazar, to the south, there are the remains of several old tanks, high earthen ramparts and sites of old building with some scattered brick. These brick ruins are supposed to have been the headquarters of some officials of the Tripura regime.

Salepur : In Salepur village which is about a one and half kilometre from Narsingpur High School and situated on the eastern bank of the old and abandoned channel of the Rukmini river, there is a small tillah, on the top of which there is a linga image of lord Shiva of black hard stone. It is about .24 metre in diameter and .4 metre high. Antiquity of this deity has not yet been determined. People believed it to have been there from time immemorial. Very recently a pucca temple has been constructed over it.

Vishnupur-Shiva : About 1.60 kilometre to the south-west of Lala bazar, an ancient Shiva-Linga of black stone seated on a well-carved pedestal or Yoni-plitha has been discovered. According to scholars the carving and shape of the pedestal indicate its association with the Pala period (10th Century A.D.). It is about 20 kms. from Hailakandi by road.

Shak Vat Dighi : At about 3 kilometres south of Lalabazar, there is a remnant of a very big tank covering about two acres of land, its main ghat was built with bricks comprising of several flights of steps. It is situated on the western side of Lalabazar -Kattlicherra Road. The tank is now almost dry and is a quagmire. Some of the bricks have inscriptions bearing the name of Raja Harichandra Narayan with 1490 saka era which corresponds to 1568 A.D. inscribed on it.

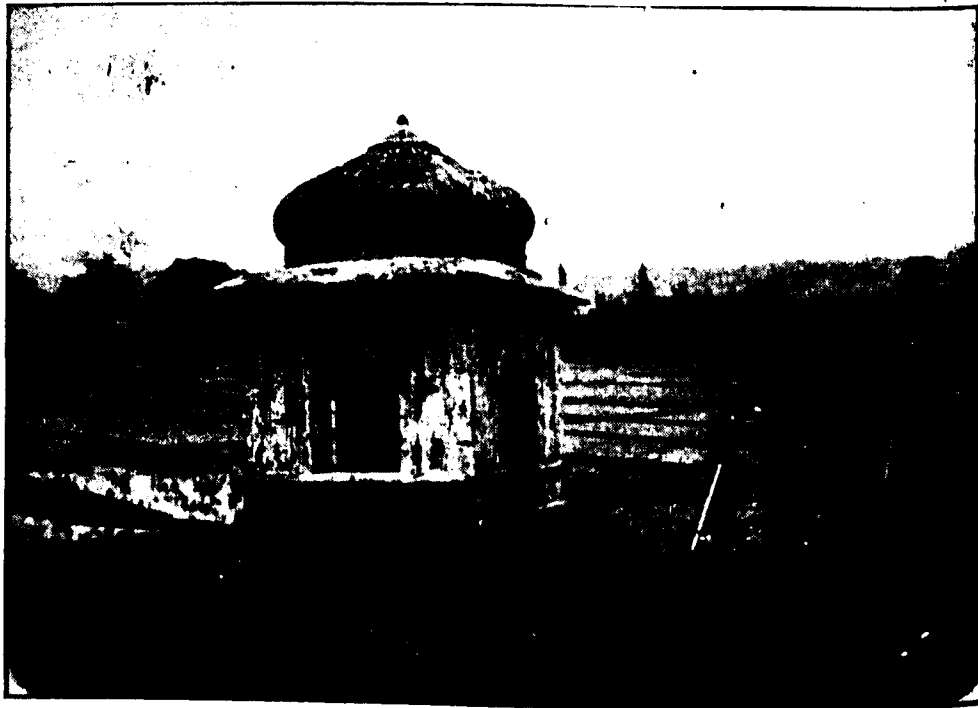


Stone Inscription, Siva Mandir
Sivatilla, Sonai, Courtesy DHAS



Architectural Design, Khaspur

KACHARI MONUMENTS

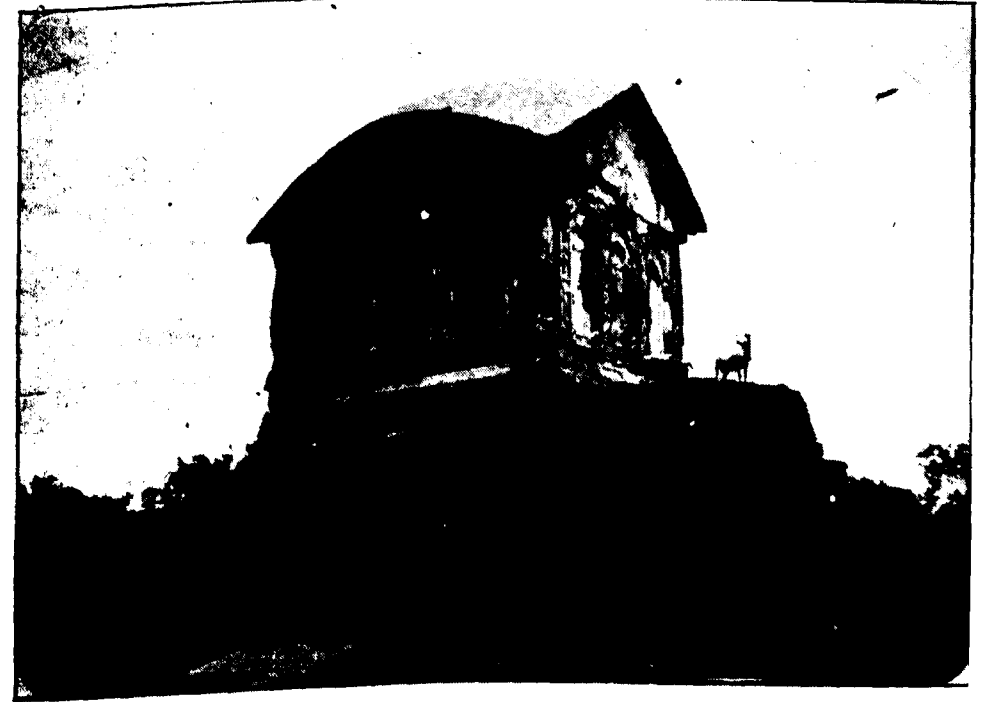


SNANA MANDIR, Khaspur

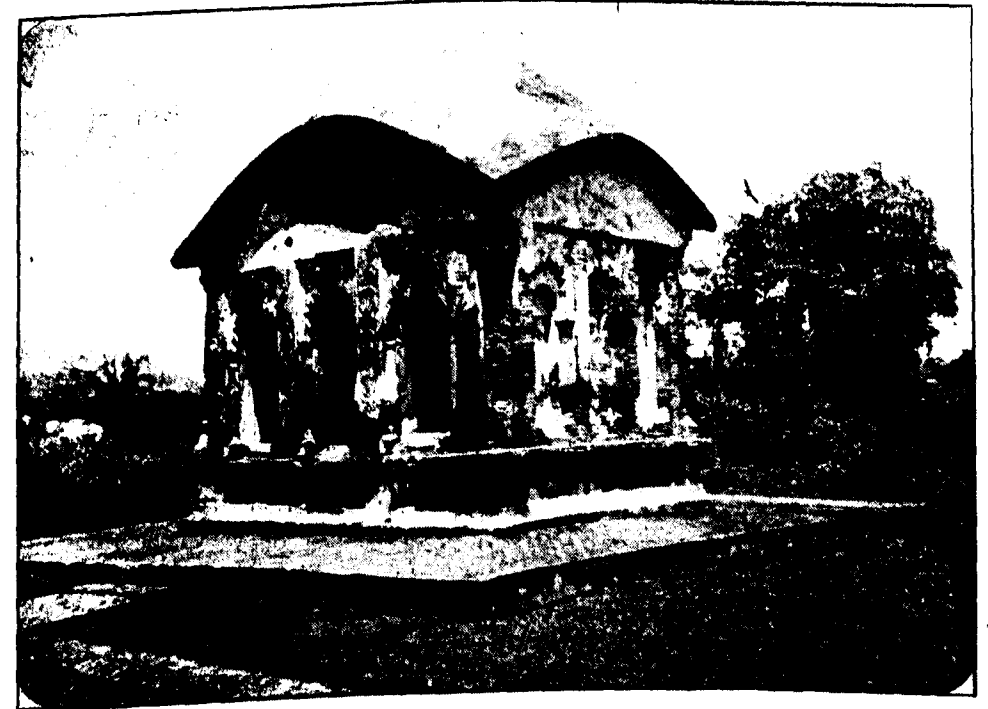


Architectural Design, Khaspur

KACHARI MONUMENTS



RAJAR PAT Khaspur



BARA DUARI Khaspur



Siddheswar Temple--Near Badarpur

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GLOSSARY

Adalat :	court.
Adhiar :	one who cultivates another's land on the stipulation of giving him half the produce.
Adhibhagi :	half sharer of the produce of the land let to another.
Aditya :	sun.
Ahu :	autumn rice, a variety of paddy which is reaped and gathered in June-July.
Ali :	road embankment; also a surname of certain Muslims.
Amber :	name of a spinning wheel- <i>Amber Charkha</i>
Amin :	land surveyor.
Amlas (Amlahs,	<i>Amolas</i>) : a ministerial officer.
Anchalik :	zonal, regional, arreawise.
Anna :	four pice.
Ashram (Asram) :	hermitage.
Asra :	a species of paddy- winter rice.
Asraura :	land growing broadcast winter rice.
Baara :	twelve.
Bakijai :	a list of defaulting ryots filed by the Mauzadar for recovery of arrear revenue.
Baksha :	one of revenue free tenures; revenue free tenures are <i>Baksha</i> and <i>lakhiraj</i> .
Bara Bhandhari :	chief law-man being the head of the civil establishment in Cachar during Kachari rule; also used in the sense of Prime Minister; head store - keeper, chief officer in charge of royal store.
Baraj :	betel nut and vine garden.
Bari :	water, garden land, also means widow,
Baraghar :	twelve families or houses.
Barendi :	garden land.
Bata :	land growing good harvest; also means small tray for offering betel -nut and vine.
Bawa :	land growing oilseed crop.
Bazar :	market.
Beel :	lake; taxed marshy land for fisheries.
Beget :	span; nine inches.
Bhit (Bheti) :	plinth of wall or house; also means place or space for house-building.
Bhoodan :	see gramdan.
Bigha :	measure of land standing for 1/4th of a <i>pura</i> which is equivalent

Bihu :	to 1.5 acres; 5 kathas of land is known <i>Bigha</i> . the day on which the sun enters the sign <i>Libra</i> or <i>Capricornus</i> ; also means three Assamese national festivals.
Bil :	a small lake, a shallow pool of water.
Bitra Dabyees :	one of the three officers in native courts, established by British on their occupation of Cachar.
Bowa :	weaving.
Bura :	to submerge; to cause to sink; also means old man.
Buranji :	history.
Burra Bhandhri :	see <i>Bara Bhandari</i> .
Chandrahar :	a kind of ornament worn by women on the waist.
Chara :	seed beds or land growing miscellaneous crops other than rice; also means higher, an outside sitting room; to offer; to cause to graze, surpassing others; to cover with melted metal.
Charitputhis :	biographies.
Charkha :	spinning wheel.
Chattak :	about two ounces.
Chaudhuris :	revenue collectors of Pargana or Mauza.
Chowkidar :	village watchman.
Chullas :	a chimney; also means jacket.
Chitha :	a chit, a note; memorandum (of payment).
Dalu :	a kind of bamboo.
Dandi :	holder of staff, sentry guard, But here path of wild elephant, one of the methods of catching wild elephants by making stocked on their path known as <i>Dhandhigarh</i> .
Dandhighar :	guard-house.
Dao :	a large knife.
Dastaks :	a body warrant; summons.
Devalaya :	temple.
Dewani :	civil.
Dhari :	a mat made of bamboo.
Dharmadhyaksha :	chief judicial man; equivalent to chief justice during Kachari rule.
Dhol :	a big bamboo container for holding approximately 19 kg of paddy; also means big drum which is played with both ends with hands and sticks.
Dhoti :	a lower wear for a male worn down at the waist.
Digvijaya :	conquest campaign.
Doem :	second class rice growing land.
Do-fasal :	doubled cropped.

Doon₁ :	a basket holding five seers of grain.
Dulu :	An assistant to the Kachari headman.
Dwara :	a little of an officer who was in charge of a Duar, <i>Choky</i> , i.e., checkpoint.
Dwipa :	island.
Ek- fasal :	single cropped.
Fall :	low wooden seat.
Gahori :	pig, boar.
Gahori Mohar :	Burmese during their occupation of Assam issued two coins known as <i>Gahori Mohar</i> .
Galpata :	a kind of necklace.
Gamkharu :	a kind of bracelet previously mainly worn by man but now it is used by women.
Gamosa :	a towel, a nepkin, specially for rubbing body.
Ganak :	an astrologer, a fortune-teller, a foreteller, the astrologers' caste.
Garh :	rampart, fort, also means likeness, proportionateness, to make.
Gazali :	a short seedling.
Gazali Sikar :	a type of elephant catching.
Ghanis :	a traditional oil-mill.
Ghat :	a bathing place on a river or tank, embarkation and disembarkation point on bank of a river.
Gopat :	one of ten classifications of uncultivable land in Cachar, also means path for cows.
Gotra :	family; race; lineage, kin.
Grahapra :	Brahmins who worships planets.
Grahapuja :	worship of planets.
Gramdan :	grant of villages, a movement started by Acharyya Binoba Bhave.
Gram Sabha :	an association in a village.
Gram Sevak :	a male village worker (mainly appointed).
Gram Sevika :	a female village worker (mainly appointed).
Grihya-Sutra :	a ritual work containing directions for domestic rites and ceremonies.
Gur :	liquid molasses.
Gurugriha :	house of the teacher.
Gurukul :	a system of imparting education in the house of the teacher in which students use to stay at the house of the teacher or preceptor
Haf-fai-Sagao :	Kachari envoy.

Hakim :	a magistrate; also means a Muslim physician who treats patients under Yanani system of treatment.
Halabadi Patta :	<i>pattas</i> for <i>Ilam</i> land in Cachar which subsequently was treated as permanently settled.
Haors :	swamps.
Hat :	market
Homa :	a burnt offering of clarified butter, an ablation.
Hompura :	burning of an ablation.
Hukkanal :	bamboo pipe of a hubble bubble, a smoking apparatus.
Ikora :	a kind of reed.
Ilam :	land which are not under any estate or revenue paying tenure - <i>Khas land</i> , subsequently allowed for settlement.
Ilamdar :	holder of <i>Ilam</i>
Itibritta :	history.
Jalkar :	water rate, fishing tax ; the rent collected from fisheries.
Jamabandi :	land records; a revenue register holding the names and other particulars of land owners rent roll.
Jamadar :	head constable; headman of public menial servants; tenure holder.
Jangalbari :	forest land, waste land.
Jarikarak :	process server.
Jhaki or Jageding :	a throw net used to catch fish.
Jhap :	charmed thread.
Jhapi :	a kind of bamboo made umbrella or headgear.
Jhum :	method of shifting cultivation
Jil or Jheel :	marshy land.
Kagzi :	a variety of lemon.
Kalah :	a pitcher.
Kalyan :	welfare.
Kanungo :	a land surveyor.
Katari :	knife.
Katha :	a measurement of land equivalent to one- fourth of <i>bigha</i> .
Katoni :	weaver; spinner;
Kaviraj :	a Hindu physician under Ayurveda system; also means a king among poets.
Kharif :	winter crops.
Khasra :	draft also means rough survey of land.
Khatian :	balance sheet; account book, ledger.
Khatnee :	rent of land which paid to Rani directly by the mirasdar in Cachar during Kachari rule, also means labour; work; toil.
Kheda :	to drive away; also means a method of elephant catching.

Khel :	a unit under Kachari rule.
Khiraj :	full revenue paying land.
Khunaug :	Kachari village headman.
Krishak :	cultivator; farmer.
Krishi :	cultivation; agriculture
Kubla :	a land measurement equivalent to 5 acres or <i>Hal</i> .
Kula :	a flat tray made of cane or bamboo; also means lap.
Kacha or Kachha :	border land of sea or hills.
Kutchra :	non- gravelled road.
Laiharaua :	a kind of Manipuri Dance.
Lakhiraj :	revenue free land.
Lecha :	a measurement of land standing for one- twentieth of a <i>Katha</i> .
Len :	a throw net used to catch fish.
Lichi :	a lichi.
Linga or Lingam :	penis, sex, phallus, gender and also means Icon or genital organ of Hindu God Siva.
Maduli :	locket, amulet
Mahajan :	a shopkeeper, a sect of Buddhism, here a money-lender.
Mahal :	a division; a word.
Mahaldar :	lease holder; leasee.
Mahila :	woman
Majumdar :	a collector of revenue under Kachari rule; an officer with functions resembling those of a king's private secretary.
Mandir :	temple
Mantra :	an incantation; a charm.
Mauza :	a fiscal unit.
Mauzadar :	collector of revenue of <i>mauza</i> .
Mekhela :	an Assamese woman garment used on the waist.
Mela :	an exhibition; a public show; also means to untie.
Mirasdari :	estate.
Mirasdar :	estate holder.
Mritakshara :	one of Hindu law systems.
Mohar :	gold coin, seal, stamp.
Mohrir or Mahoreer :	a writer, a scribe.
Mukam :	residence; a dwelling place, specially of a Muslim saint.
Mukhtar :	collector of revenue of an unit known as <i>khel</i> under the Kachari rule.
Mukhtier :	an agent, an authorised spokesman.
Mukhtiemama :	a list of names of <i>mukhtiers</i> .
Muli :	a kind of bamboo.

Mura :	low bamboo seat.
Muthi :	a handful; the fist; grip, also means a bundle.
Nagar :	town.
Nalkhagra :	reed
Namghar :	prayer hall of Hindu Assamese people.
Nari :	woman.
Nava :	new, nine.
Nazarat :	a ceremonial offerings of presents.
Nazir :	a head of peons or bailiffs in law court, sheriff.
Nizamat :	chief criminal court.
Ojha :	a village incantator; a medicine man.
Olkata :	system of deputing representation from <i>khel</i> to capital in Kachari rule.
Paikan 'or paikhans :	yearly tenants.
Pandit :	a scholar.
Pargana :	a collection of villages; a part of district.
Pat :	royal palace; fine quality Assamese silk; also means jute in Cachar.
Pati :	a kind of fine mat.
Patit :	waste land, out-caste.
Patramantri :	courtiers.
Patta :	land ownership deed; licence; land settlement deed.
Patowari :	land surveyor; local collector of revenue.
Pir :	Muslim saint.
Powa :	one- fourth.
Pucca :	cemented, brick-built.
Pung Garh :	stocked made near salt lake or bed for catching wild elephant.
Purdah :	screen, veil.
Purohit :	Hindu priest.
Rabi :	sun.
Raja :	king.
Rajvamshawali :	genealogy of dynasty.
Rajbangshi :	a section of Koch people.
Rajamala :	history of dynasty; here a history of Tripura kings.
Ranachandi :	one of the names of Hindu Goddess Durga or Sakti.
Rani :	queen.
Rati :	a measurement of precious metals or stone.
Riha :	a long wrapper used by Assamese women as a grille and brassiere.
Ryots :	tenants, peasants.

Ryotwari :	a revenue collection system.
Sadar :	headquarters.
Sagara :	sea.
Sailura :	land growing transplanted winter rice.
Sakti :	one of the names of Hindu Goddess Durga.
Sali :	principal variety of transplanted rice.
Samaj :	village community.
Samity :	an association.
San :	thatch; also means thatch growing land.
Sanad :	royal mandate; summon.
Sangeet :	music.
Sangha :	association, club.
Sansad :	Parliament.
Sarai :	travellers bungalow; an Assamese tray with foot made of metal.
Sarbodaya :	upliftment of all.
Sari :	Indian women dress.
Sastra :	religious scriptures
Satyagrahis :	devotees of truth; a pursuer of truth and justice.
Seer :	measure of weight.
Samphang :	a grandee of the Kacharis.
Senapati :	Commander of an army.
Sevak :	servant.
Shirastadar :	designation of the head of revenue branch in Deputy Commissioner's office
Siem :	3rd or last grade land, also means Khasi king.
Sikar :	third class land in gradation.
Sikshasram :	an educational institute or hermitage.
Sitalpati :	a kind of fine cool mat.
Sloka :	verse; stanza.
Snan :	bath.
Sungas :	bamboo pipe, used as pot for measuring liquid things.
Tabiz :	armlet, specially incantated.
Tahsildar :	collector of revenue of a <i>Tahsil</i> , i.e., a division.
Taluk :	estate.
Tauzi or Touzi :	land revenue register.
Teli :	oilman.
Thaks :	marks.
Thakbust :	a sort of land demarcation survey.
Thana :	police station.
Thuria :	a kind of female ear ornament.

Til :	the sesamum, a mole.
Tilla or Tila :	small hills.
Tol :	a school where mainly Sanskrit is taught.
Tola :	market revenue; cotton; an unit of weight equivalent to 180 grams.
Toungya (system) :	teak species, name of a system for raising teak species.
Tulasani :	balance; old time weighing scale.
Uls :	parganas (areas) represented by <i>khel</i> -representatives of the Kachari capital.
Uzir :	a minister ; a counsellor of State; a title awarded by Mohamedan king.
Vakalatnama :	list of names of pleaders, used to engage a pleader.
Vakil or Vakeel :	a lawyer, pleader, an envoy.
Vidyalyaya :	school.
Yatras :	a kind of drama.
Yoni pitha :	a Hindu sacred place where vagina (in a symbolic form) of Goddess Sati is worshipped.
Yuvak :	young man.
Zamindari :	estate.
Zamindar :	landlord.

ERRATA

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93	Table (Row — 1, Column —4)	Udarband	Udharband
94	Table (Row — 2, Column —3)	2,304	2,308
94	Table (Row — 3, Column —3)	6,64,000	6,94,000
94	Table (Row — 4, Column —2)	put non	put to Non
94	Table (Row — 4, Column —2)	use	uses
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98	Table (Sl. No. 7, Column —2)	Amgaghat	Amraghat
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99	Table (Sl. No. 23, Column —2)	Kalticherra	Katlicherra
100	Table (Sl. No. 26, Column —2)	Nima-	Nimai-
100	Table (Sl. No. 26, Column —2)	puri	juri
100	Table (Sl. No. 29, Column —4)	N.A.	Proposed New Scheme
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101	Table (Sl. No. 38, Column —2)	Berakhal	Berakhai
101	Table (Sl. No. 39,41, Column —2)	Rukai	Rukani
102	Table (Sl. No. 40, Column —2)	Mohampur	Mohanpur
102	Table (Sl. No. 41, Column —2)	Gajalghat	Gagalghat
102	Table (Sl. No. 43, Column —2)	Sarbeel	Sanbeel
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103	34	submerge	submerges
103	37	Kuchna	Kachua
104	Table Heading (Column- 5)	Benifitted	Benefited
104	Table (Sl. No. —2,5, Column—3)	chorgola	Chargola
104	Table (Sl. No. —4, Column—30)	Tillabazar	Tikkabazar
105	Table (Sl. No. —6, Column—2)	Toste	To ste
105	Table (Sl. No. —7, Column—2)	Kushiyara	Kushiyara from
105	Table (Sl. No. —9, Column—2)	Kakshi-	Lakshi-
105	Table (Sl. No. —10, Column—5)	10.00	10,000
105	Table (Sl. No. —10, Column—2)	Dullavpur	Durllabcherra
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106	5	followings	following
106	6,22	Benefitted	Benefited
106	10,19,28	innundation	inundation
106	11	innundated	inundated
107	16	Boroitoli	Baroitoli
107	19	Benefitted	Benefited
107	38	calyey	clayey
108	Table Heading(Column—2)	PH.	PH ₃
108	Table Heading(Column—4)	p2o5%	P ₂ O ₅
108	13	affected	effected
108	Last	Besides	Besides,
109	Table (Column-3,Row-13)	852	825
109	Table (Column-3,Row-14)	1,805	1,304
109	Table (Column-4,Row-14)	1,707	1,372
110	Table (Column-3,Row-3)	N.A.	89
110	Last	Badda	Baddsa
111	2	Choiramara	Choiaramara
111	5	Seed	Seeds
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111	Table (Column-5,Row-3)	28,00,000	2800-3200
112	9	seeling	seedling
112	15	ardous	arduous

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113	5	Mural	Murali
113	31	continous	contiguous
114	9,17	hoars	haors
117	Table Heading (Column—3)	in thousand kg.	in kg.
119	39	robusta	rohusta
123	Table Heading(Column—4)	Traetose	Tractors
123	Table (Column—2, Row-4)	312	313
124	Table (Column—3, Row-4)	2,779	2,739
124	16	dicontinuation	discontinuation
124	20	1,091.056	1,091.456
125	Table (Column—4, Row-3)	12.209	17.209
125	Table (Column—2, Row-1)	200.163	200.153
125	Table (Column—5, Row-1)	10.768	10,768
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126	Table (Column—1, Row-2)	Mainaakhal	Maniarkhal
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131	1	Sona Barighat	Sonabarighat
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131	11	Katigarh	Katigara
131	15	Bazerghat	Bazarghat
132	23	Esotic	Exotic
133	23	Pubba	Pubda
133	38	Ruga	Huga
134	3	Kamduli	Kanduli
134	7	mrigal	mrigala
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135	1	Ghula	Bhula
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135	13	Amfiassis	Ambassis
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135	32	Kuchia	Kunchia
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136	31	palaquiuj	palaquium
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137	Table (Column—2, Row- 1)	1978	1878
137	last	founa	fauna
139	13	expolited	exploited
140	8	1830	1832
140	37	effected	affected
147	6	cenus	census
147	6	organisation	authority
147	13	Lala	Kalain
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151	28	whole to	whole of
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156	20	Labours	Labourers
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157	24	confectionery	confectionary
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162	7	bamboos	bamboos ⁹
163	8	18,64,00	18,64,000
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172	26	80	30
174	17	commensurate	commensurated
175	13	Rs.5.97	Rs.5.97
175	13	Rs.1.27	Rs.1.27
175	14	Rs.6.34	Rs.6.34
175	14	Rs.1.43	Rs.1.43
175	17	Rs.6.29	Rs.6.29
175	17	Rs.1.69	Rs.1.69
175	19	Rs.59	Rs.0.59
175	20	Rs.37	Rs.0.37
175	20	Rs.5.70	Rs.5.70
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202	Table (Sl. No.-5 , Column —2,3)	Telka	Tilka
202	Table (Sl. No.- 23, Column—2)	Pechachara	Pechachera
202	Table (Sl. No.-27 , Column—2,3)	Hitara	Hilara
203	Table (Sl.No. -35, Column—3)	Stanpur	Natanpur
203	Table (Sl.No. - 94, Column —3)	Khagai	Khagail
204	Table (Sl.No. -96, Column—3)	Jatkapu	Jatrapur
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210	Footnote	1905.	1905, p.110.
211	10	merge	merged
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212	Table (Column— 7, Row - 5)	1,514.55	1,515.55
214	6	as on	as in
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216	Table (Column — 1, Row - last)	Khilierhat	Khlieriat
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218	Table (Sl. No. - 2, Column— 2)	Gulertal	Fulertal
218	Table (Sl. No. - 3, Column — 2)	Gunarah	Gumrah
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218	Table (Sl. No. - 5, Column — 2)	poor	pool
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232	Table (Column —9, Row - 3)	2,664	2,674
232	Table (Column — 9, Row - 4)	2,271	2,280
244	Table (Column — 2, Row - 3)	11,15,865	11,15,805
244	Table (Column — 3, Row - 3)	3,98,461	3,98,301
244	Table (Column — 5, Row - 3)	20,295	20,235
244	Table (Column — 5, Row - 6)	26,363	13,363
244	Table (Column — 3, Row - 9)	4,92,946	4,53,946
245	1	worke	workers
246	3	dominent	dominant
246	19	comparision	comparison

Page	Line	For	Please Read
248	31	W.G.L.	G.T.
254	1	Vaghaiwallah	Vaghaiwalla
254	14	masters	mastery
254	17	effecting	affecting
262	Table (Column —11, Row - 11)	711	171
264	7	idices	indices
264	17	them	employees
264	25	furnitures	furniture
264	26	figures	figure
268	Table (Column —2, Row- 3)	4381	4361
269	Table (Sl. No.. -13, Column—2)	Rajbazar	Rajabazar
270	Table Heading (Column -6)	sects	seeds
270	Table (Sl.No.-4, Column —2,)	Ram Krishnapur	Ramkrishnanagar
270	Table (Sl.No.-4, Column —21)	10071	1071
272	Table (Column —4, Row-1)	20a	214
272	Table (Column —4, Row-2)	214	206
272	Table (Column —4, Row-3)	226	202
272	16, 17	Comparision	Comparison
282	25	ralating	relating
288	10	Aeromatical	Aeronautical
289	22	1833	1836
290	25	aboujt	about
290	30	Rajes	Rajas
291	1	rent to	rent free to
293	Footnote(13)	p. 411,16	p.411,416-17.
296	22	neighbourbood	neighbourhood
298	20	opeation	operation
301	18	o	to
302	15	surrey	survey
302	30	Rnd	and
304	18	pu lic	public
304	Footnote	Fight	Eight
306	4	Section	Section
310	7	own	down
313	14	6	5
316	28	strangly	strongly
318	Table (Column —1, Row-1,4)	Saidbung	Saidbund

Page	Line	For	Please Read
318	Table (Column —3, Row-7)	2.00	2.25
318	Table (Column —3, Row-1)	2.24	2.25
320	12	effective	affective
320	23	satt	salt
321	6	cosg	close
322-23	Table Heading (Column—7)	1972-74	1973-74
322-23	Table Heading (Column—8)	1973-76	1975-76
322-23	Table (Column —4, Row- 6)	6,94,900	6,54,900
333	12	Girighat	Jirighat
340	3	1956	1965
342	7,8	instructions	Instructors
344	29	re-deduction	re-education
352	Table Heading (Column-2,3)	case sdecided	cases decided
352	19	3 next	3 in next
356	25	offernces	offences
360	12	Girighat	Jirighat
360	32	Pathakandi	Patharkandi
360	38	Confoms	Conforms
362	2	Baadarapur	Badarpur
362	5	Sona	Sonai
364	5	Sugarcance	Sugarcane
365	23	Bashkaudi	Bashkandi
365	39	officer	staff
366	17,18	regard supply	regard to the supply
366	27	Lorgai	Longai
368	12	Insp ctor	Inspector
368	17	ch ck	check
369	25	broadcasted	broadcast
370	13	Tatabari	Ratabari
371	7	Cacha	Cachar
371	18	according the	according to the
371	26,27	circle one	Circle is one
372	2	Ballavcherra	Dullavcherra
372	4	Jallapore	Jalalpur
372	39	Petrodeum	Petroleum
375	35	vaccination and the	and vaccination.
		district post Local	Local
376	23	Jadup	Jaldup
376	30	Single	Singla

Page	Line	For	Please Read
377	23	West	East
378	39	trrees	trees
379	25	Boaards	Boards
380	Table (Column —11, Row - 2)	1,44,495	1,44,445
380	8	administratior	administration
381	31	firsts	first
383	29	of	or
383	31	pwer	power
384	36	item	schemes
387	37,38	Rangirghat	Ranirghat
387	39	Bicrompur	Bikrampur
387	39	Larring	Larsing
387	39	Hattichea	Hattichera
387	41	Durlobcherra	Durlavcherra
387	41	Channighat	Chandighat
388	1	Sardharashi	Sadharashi
388	6	Balvantrai	Balvant Rai
388	25	Katigorh	Katigarah
388	27	Katigora	Katlicherra
391	Footnote (line -2)	5%	50%
402	19	labourers, very	labourers, were very
402	21	aspiran	aspirant
403	Table (Column —9, Row-1)	10435	10436
403	Table (Column —4, Row-16)	4176	4170
403	Table (Column —3, Row-21)	393	383
403	Table (Column —4, Row-29)	80	50
404	Table (Column —11, Row-1)	-	9
404	Table (Column —12, Row-1)	-	2
404	Table (Column —11, Row-9)	-	11
404	Table (Column —12, Row-9)	-	2
407	26	bound	found
408	6	1974	1947
411	Table (Column —6, Row-1)	86	867
411	Table (Column —6, Row-2)	215	2151
411	Table (Column —6, Row-3)	218	2185

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Page	Line	For	Please Read
411	Table (Column --6, Row-4)	274	2742
424	34	19	18
424	Footnote	19	18
426	List(Sl. No.- 18)	Rupaibai	Rupaibali
433	27	45	65
434	3,6	District Health	Chief Medical and Health
434	3	Sub- divisional Health	Sub-divisional Medical and Health
437	26	There	These
437	26	Dholar	Dholai
437,438	Last, 1	Diaphragms	Diaphragms
439	12	one Silchar	one for Silchar
439	13	orther	other
439	23,37	unit	District Malaria
439	last	taking	executing
440	Table Heading(Column--2)	Spleenrate	Spleen rate
440	Table Heading(Column--5)	Insecticide	Insecticide
446	11	secheme	scheme
450	20	preserved	reserved
452	Table (Column--6, Row-1)	89,040	39,040
452	Table (Column--7, Row-1)	40,997	40,907
452	Table (Col --6, Row-2)	88,209	38,209
452	Table (Col --12, Row-2)	4,54,412	4,54,912

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