CHAPTER-5
FOREST-BASED INDUSTRY

Introduction

The industry based on forest products, mainly timber, is primarily involved in production of wood for construction and paper in the district. Compared to other industrial sectors, it is of minor importance except for a paper mill at Raniganj.

Expansion of mineral extraction, progressive industrialization and demand for cultivable land in recent years have led to a decrease of area under forest in the district and consequently, the district, especially the western zone, has been threatened with the menace of soil erosion. Sal forest covers a part and the district gets part of its supply of raw materials from these sal forests for timber-based industry. Part of the forest-based raw materials come from Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

This industry accounts nearly 3.5% of the district's total number of industrial units, absorbing about 3% workers at present (Table-A). The centres of production of this industry are located in Raniganj, Asansol, Durgapur and Kulti.

Following the classification of Annual Survey of Industries, forest-based industries are classified as follows:-

1. Timber Products
2. Paper and paper-pulp including printing and publishing agencies.
1. Timber Products

Timber producing centres are developed in Asansol, Raniganj and Durgapur police stations (Sketch 21). In 1960 Asansol stood ahead of other police stations as about 70% of district's total number of timber producing units and their manpower were found there (Table-2 in the appendix). Then a downward process began all through the period. In 1965, 36% of the area's total number of units was closed causing unemployment to 25% workers. Such a situation continued in 1975 also. The area was not favoured by the establishment of new units, especially from 1975. Most of the units are small having 20-25 persons per unit capacity. Thus the area has 41% of total number of units absorbing 1/4th of total number of workers at present (Table in the appendix).

A gradual growth in the percentage share of timber products and their manpower is noticed in Raniganj. These units reduced their capacities from 1975 onward. But there were many new units established particularly from 1975 (Sketch 2). Now Raniganj and Asansol police stations stand in the same position (Table-2 in the appendix).

In Durgapur a gradual growth of employment is noticed compared to the base year. Thus, the average employment capacity was increased from 1975 onward and the units of this police station absorb above 50% of the timber-producing workers (Table-2 in the appendix).

2. Paper Mills and Publishing Agencies

These units are located in Kulti, Asansol and Raniganj. This industry absorbs 93% of the district's total number of forest-based industrial workers of which the share of Raniganj is high (Table-2). The Bengal paper Mill of
Industrial situation of timber producing industry & paper mill (1960-82)
Table -2

Percentage share of manpower of Bengal Paper Mill in the total number of forest-based industrial workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bengal Paper Mill at Raniganj</td>
<td>82.68</td>
<td>86.30</td>
<td>89.67</td>
<td>93.75</td>
<td>92.79</td>
<td>92.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Raniganj is a large-sized existing unit (sketch-2). Nearly 47% growth of employment is seen in this unit from the base year. The growth was maximum (50%) during 1960-65. The working capacity was decreased to a considerable extent during 1965-70 and 1980-82. It is the only large size industrial unit of forest-based industry.

Press and Publishing works came to existence in Asnasol from 1975 and in Kulti from 1980. But those have very small capacities and are not significant in industrial study.

Summary of Findings

The development of this industry can be stated below in brief:

1. Forest-based industry is developed in Kulti, Asnasol, Raniganj and Durgapur police stations. This industry is classified into (a) timber producing units, and (b) paper mills. This forest-based industry does not play a significant role in terms of labour concentration. Small size units are found here except one paper mill in Raniganj.
2. The growth of timber producing units was noticed at the earlier part of study period, when some new units came up. But now most of these are reducing their capacities except two in Durgapur.

3. A large size paper mill is located at Raniganj which attracts 94% of district's total forest-based industrial workers. This unit showed maximum growth during 1960-65. The paper and publishing agencies of other police stations are very small.