Chapter 4

The Locale of the study – Meghalaya

Introduction

The word ‘Meghalaya’ is actually a Sanskrit word which can be translated to - ‘The abode of cloud’. Dr. S.K. Chatterjee, Professor of Emeritus of geography, Calcutta University had coined the name during his field work of his doctoral thesis into this part of the world. In one of the chapters of his writings he had popularized the name ‘Meghalaya’ which attracted the Union Home Ministry when the efforts were made for the creation of a new state for the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills. (Joshi, 2004)

Meghalaya has a cool climate throughout the year and it is best seen during the monsoons and in the winter. By the third week of May, the monsoons usually start in the state and it continues right to the end of September and sometime to the middle of October. Sohra and Mawsynram which lie in the southern slopes of the Khasi Hills receive the heaviest rainfall in the world. With rainfall for most parts of the year, Meghalaya is synonymous with wetness and it is a small wonder that Meghalaya takes its name from the clouds.

Meghalaya is situated in the North Eastern part of India. The region is surrounded by the Brahmaputra valley in the North and North West, Surma valley (Bangladesh) in the South and partly in the South west and some part of Cachar in the East. The total geographical area of the state is 22,429 square kilometers which is divided into the 11 administrative districts. Thus the state of Meghalaya has eleven districts which lies between 20.10N and 26.50 latitude and 85.490E and 92.520E longitude.
The eastern and the central part of Meghalaya are called the Khasi and the Jaintia Hills which is an imposing plateau with rolling grassland, rivers and hills. The southern side of this plateau is marked by deep gorges and abrupt slopes, below which a narrow strip runs along the international border with Bangladesh. The northern side of the plateau has hills of almost the same height which extend northwards to slope gradually merging with the plains of Assam. The western part of Meghalaya forms the Garo Hills at a lower elevation. The hills range in height from 450m to 600m and drop steeply to the Brahmaputra valley on the north and to the plains of Bangladesh on the south. (DIPR, 2013)

Meghalaya also has a number of rivers which drain into the hilly state. In the Khasi and Jaintia hills, the rivers flowing in a north direction are Khri, Umtrew, Umiam, Umkhem and Kupli which flows between the border of Jaintia Hills and North Cachar Hills. To the south into Bangladesh flow the Kynshi, Umiam Mawphlang and Umngot. While in the Garo Hills, Manda, Darming and the Jinjiram flow towards the north while Ringge and Ganol flow in the west direction. Simsang which is one of the biggest rivers in Garo Hills flows towards the south direction.

**Population**

Meghalaya’s total population is 2,964,007 (Census 2011) of which males constitute 1,492,668 and female constitute 1,471,339 with an average population density of 132 per square kilometres. The majority of the population lives in the rural areas which comprises 23, 68, 971 rural folk and 5,95,036 urban residents. The population in Meghalaya is mainly tribal. The main tribes of the state are the Khasis, Jaintias and Garos. There are other plain tribes which include Koch, Rabhas, and Bodos, etc.
Table 1. Meghalaya Population of Schedule tribes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Scheduled Tribe</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Proportion to the total</th>
<th>ST population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khasi</td>
<td>1,123,490</td>
<td></td>
<td>56.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garo</td>
<td>689,639</td>
<td></td>
<td>34.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hajong</td>
<td>31,381</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raba</td>
<td>28,153</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koch</td>
<td>21,381</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synteng</td>
<td>18,342</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikir</td>
<td>11,399</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Kuki Tribes</td>
<td>10,085</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Mizo (Lushai) tribes</td>
<td>3,526</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Naga Tribes</td>
<td>3,138</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boro Kacharis</td>
<td>2,932</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmar</td>
<td>1,146</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All Scheduled Tribes</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,992,862</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>100 %</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Census 2001*

From the above table we can conclude that the highest Scheduled Tribe population in the region is of Khasi with 56.4%, followed by Garos with 34.6% and Hajong 1.6%. The least percentage of population is of Bodo Kacharis and Hmar with only 1% of the total population.

**Literacy**

The literacy rate in Meghalaya has increased to 75.48% in 2011 from that of 62.56% in 2001. The literacy rate of males in the state has increased to 77.17% and female literacy rate is 73.78%. In 2001 the literacy rate in Meghalaya was 62.56% for males and 59.61% for females. The female literacy rate is lower than the male literacy rate in all the districts of Meghalaya except in Jaintia Hill which the female literacy rate is 66.71% to the 59.75% male literacy rate. The East Khasi Hills, Ri Bhoi district and West Khasi Hills have ratings above the state average literacy rate while the West
Garo Hills and Jaintia Hills regions have the least percentage of literacy rates. However, the gap between the genders is very minimal especially in East Khasi Hills, Ri Bhoi district and West Khasi Hills.

**Table 2. Literacy rate for state and districts of Meghalaya**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Meghalaya</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>West Garo Hills</td>
<td>68.38</td>
<td>73.31</td>
<td>63.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>East Garo Hills</td>
<td>75.51</td>
<td>79.56</td>
<td>71.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>South Garo Hills</td>
<td>72.39</td>
<td>76.77</td>
<td>67.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>West Khasi Hills</td>
<td>79.30</td>
<td>80.29</td>
<td>78.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ri Bhoi</td>
<td>77.22</td>
<td>78.52</td>
<td>75.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>East Khasi Hills</td>
<td>84.70</td>
<td>85.26</td>
<td>84.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Jaintia Hills</td>
<td>63.26</td>
<td>59.75</td>
<td>66.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Source – Census 2011)*

**Education**

The Christian Missionaries has initiated the modern education system in the state. For the overall development of the state, education has played its role in promoting and improving the life of the people. The right to free education to all children up to the age of 14 years has been implemented over the years among which are the National Literacy Mission, Operation Black Board and Sarbha Siksha Abhiyan etc.

**Table 3. Educational Infrastructure in Meghalaya**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Infrastructure in Meghalaya</th>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>College/Institute/University</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Colleges</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Polytechnics and industrial training institutes (ITIs)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher training institutes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>High and higher secondary schools</td>
<td>774</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Middle and senior basic schools</td>
<td>2,259</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Primary and junior basic schools</td>
<td>6,351</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*source – ibef.org.in*

**Tribe of Meghalaya**

Meghalaya is home to India’s three ancient hill communities namely the Khasis, Jaintias and Garos. They are the primary constituents of the hill ranges of Meghalaya which are named after the tribes that are the predominant inhabitants. However, these tribes are not of the same origin. The Khasi and Jaintias belong to the Mon-Khmers who are believed to have migrated from South East Asia as they are also linked linguistically and socially. The Garos are the Tibeto Burman Bodos who are believed to have their origins in Tibet. These three tribes also have a common trait through the matrilineal society followed and they ascended to their present abode in these hills after a temporary settlement in the Brahmaputra valley. These three tribes were governed by their own traditional systems until these areas found their place in the colonial state in India. (Joshi, 2004)

**Khasi and Jaintia**

‘*We are the descendants of the seven celestial families who decided to live on earth long before mankind came into existence*’ – this is how the Khasi and Jaintia describe themselves. This statement emanates from the legendary story which narrates that long before humans came into existence on the earth, a tall magnificent tree grew on top of a dome shaped hill to the north of Shillong. This tress was used as a ladder for the purpose of descending and ascending from the heaven to earth by the Sixteen Celestial Bodies. These bodies would come to the earth to wander in this beautiful landscape and to cultivate the land as it bore fruits easily. However at sundown they
would return to their home in Heaven. Amongst them there was one who wanted to rule his brethren by breaking free from ‘the Creator’. When the seven celestial bodies descended to earth, the ambitious one took a chance and then with a sharp axe cut down the tree trapping the seven celestial bodies on earth. This place till today is called ‘Lum Sohpetneng’ or the naval of heaven (DIPR, 2012)

The Khasis and the Jaintias are believed to be from the Austro-Asiatic race that landed in this part of the world from South East Asia. Their dialect is supposed to be one of the few surviving languages of the Monkhmer family. The people who live in the central plateau are known as Khasis, those who live in the Jaintia Hills are known as Pnars, those in the War areas in the south are known as the Wars, the northern area is the home of the Bhois and in the border area of the western side of the region is the home of the Lyngngams.

Garos

The Garos call themselves ‘Achik’ who originally inhabited from province of Tibet named Torua. For some reason they left Tibet under the leadership of the legendary Jappa – Jalimpa and Shukpa- Bongepa. For centuries they wandered the Brahmaputra valley in search of a permanent home. In the process they survived the ordeal of wars and persecutions at the hands of the kings ruling the valley. They then branched out into a number of sub tribes and the main group under the legendary leader, Along Noga, occupied Nokrek the highest peak in Garo hills.

Religion

‘U Blei Nongthaw’ is believed to be the supreme God by the Khasis. Their religion is God given and is based on the belief in one supreme God. They are a religious people and believe that life is God’s greatest gift. The Jaintias and Khasis have the
same religion, even as Hinduism is not uncommon in the Jaintias. The Garos believe in ‘Rabuga’, one supreme creator and who is provides sustenance and is the commander of the world. They believe that their agricultural life is connected with the spirits which are appeased by sacrifices. The headman is an integral part of the village and acts as its religious head.

However, with the advent of Christian Missionary in Meghalaya many Khasis, Jaintias and Garos have converted to Christianity. Therefore, a large number of churches can be seen in different parts of the region, besides this there are also temples, mosques, gurudwaras and monasteries in Meghalaya.

Social structure

The social structure of Meghalaya follows the matrilineal society, where the descent follows the line of the mother. When a child is born, he or she takes the surname of the mother. Women in Meghalaya are better placed then any part of India as here, they are respected, honoured, and also positioned higher in the society. The women usually inherit the property of the family; although mostly men exert control on the property of sisters or nieces. Through the female line, men succeed the traditional political offices which are from the brother to the sister’s son, or sister’s daughter’s son. Even the socio-religious ceremonies are perform by the males which are however arranged in the household of the female clan member.

In Meghalaya, marriage within the clan is prohibited. In Khasis and the Garos, the husband lives with his wife in his mother-in-law’s place and who’s earning and support goes towards their maintenance. For the Jaintias, the husband does not go and live with his wife nor do they provide any earning to the family. Their responsibilities lies more as a maternal uncle.
Festivals

In Meghalaya, most of the festivals have religious rites. They bind together the age old traditions that reflect the roots of every individual which are manifest through dances, songs, attire and ornaments. The people get together in a common place where people eat, drink; and indulge in the different activities of the festivals. As the people in Meghalaya are closely associated with farming, the festivals are celebrated in tune with its activities.

Nongkrem Dance

This festival is one of the important festivals of the Khasis which is celebrated in the month of November. It is celebrated as a thanksgiving to the almighty God for the good harvest. The festival is held for five consecutive days at Smit, the cultural centre of the Khasi Hills. The Pomblang ceremony in this festival is performed by the Syiem of Khyrim along with the high priest which is the most integral part of this festival. Besides this, young men and girls with their traditional attire also participate and dance in the open ground and enjoy the festive season.

Shad Suk Mynsiem:

'The Dance of the joyful heart' is the heart and core of this festival. Shad Suk Mynsiem is a thanksgiving dance to mark the onset of the sowing season and bidding farewell to the harvest season. This is celebrated for three days in the month of April where the males and females dress in traditional finery and participate in the dance accompanied the tune of drums and the flute. Only those who are still practicing the traditional religion are allowed to take part in this dance.

Beh Dienkhlam:

This is the most important festival of the Jaintias. It is celebrated after the sowing is done; a prayer is offered to God for the good harvest and no untoward things like
diseases or destruction. Early on the first day, men go around the town and with bamboo poles beat the roof of every house to chase away the plague demons. In the main part of the celebration men only take part in the dancing whereas women engage themselves in the preparation of sacrificial food to offer to the spirits of the ancestors. Besides this, a tussle is also held between two groups of people opposed to each other.

Wangala Festival

This is the biggest festival of the Garos which is celebrated in the month of October. Like the other festivals in Meghalaya, this is also performed during the harvesting season. In the ceremony, the Garo people honour the Sun God ‘Saljong’ for providing the good fertility throughout the year. Wangala Festival is also renowned as the festival of ‘100 Drums’ where sacrifices are performed to please their deity, the Sun God. The festival is held for two to three weeks, as each village sets their own time to celebrate the festival. The first day of the ceremony is called ‘Ragula’ and the second day ‘Kakkat’. The young and old dress in colourful attractive attire and participate in the ceremonies where food and drinks is served. The main attraction of this festival is the dance where both males and females perform together to the beat of the long oval traditional drums.

History of the state

In the nineteenth century, the British entered the then United Khasi and Jaintia Hills to construct a road from Sylhet (Bangladesh) to Assam through Nongkhlaw State. In 1820, David Scott entered into an agreement with the Syiem of Sohra Tirot Sing (Cherrapunjee) by securing permission for the road construction. However, later the Syiem (King) realised the mistake that they had committed. They decided to drive
away the foreigners from the Hills. In the course of their fight with the British, they lost the fight and ultimately surrendered to British sovereignty. The Raja of Sutnga also came in conflict with the British. The British annexed the entire Sutnga Kingdom along with the Jaintia Hills and suppressed the rebellion and its leader ‘U Kiang Nangbah’, who was hanged publicly at Yawmusiang on the 30th December 1862 in the presence of troops and villagers. Similarly, the Syiem of Maharam fought against the British and was also defeated and ultimately accepted the supremacy of the British. In the Garo Hills, due to the fight between the tribals and zamindars, the British appointed David Scott to take control of the situation. Scott, was also able to administer the agreement with the Nokmas and brought them under direct British control. In this way, the whole of Meghalaya was annexed by the British authority. Nevertheless, the State enjoyed a semi-independent status because of the treaty with the British Government. (Rao et al., 1976)

On 16th October 1905 when Bengal was partitioned by Lord Curzon, the then United Khasi and Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya became part of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. Later the partition was reversed, where Meghalaya became part of the province of Assam in 1912. As such Meghalaya signed a treaty with the British Crown because of which the state enjoyed semi-independence. In 1937 for the first time the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills participated in the elections to the Assam Legislative Assembly which never happened during the British regime as it was under the traditional rule of the Syiems, Dolois and Nokmas. (Ibid)

Rev. J.J.M. Nicolas Roy had played a great role in the fight against the British regime. Rev. Nicolas Roy participated in many discussions, debates and attended meetings to bring out a constitutional scheme for the hill people. After independence the Khasi provinces which were under British control was amalgamated with the 'Khasi States'. Beside, the entire region of the Khasi – Jaintia Hills became the
territory of Assam which was brought under the provisions of the sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution. When the Advisory Committee was formed for the minorities, Rev. Nicolas Roy had demanded for the creation of the Khasi–Jaintia Federated State for better legislation. This led to the beginning of a movement for a full-fledged state to be born under the Indian Union. At this time Meghalaya was constituted into two autonomous District Councils namely United Khasi and Janitia Hills and Garo Hills as envisaged in the sixth schedule to the Constitution. In 1954, the districts which participated in the creation of a separate state in a peaceful movement were the Garo Hills, United Jaintia Hills, Khasi Hills, North Cachar Hills, Lushai Hills and the erstwhile Mikir Hills. The undivided Assam Government passed a bill on 3rd June, 1960 to make Assamese as the sole official language for these regions which was protested against by the indigenous people. The policies and the rise of the middleclass leaders in the hills and the unsatisfactory functioning of the Autonomous Districts Councils had compelled the hill leaders to demand a separate hill state for the indigenous tribes living in the hilly areas of the state of Assam. The participation in this movement was not limited to the educated middle class hill leaders but also the traditional elite were actively involved in the demand for a separate hill state. The All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC) came into existence which strengthened the movement for statehood. Later the political party APHLC was also constituted with the leaders of the entire North Eastern region of Assam. The APHLC was functioning with the mission to start a hill movement against the policy of the Assam Government. It brought the whole of the north eastern hill tribal community under the national tributary. The APHLC constituted the Council of Action which included all MPs, MLAs, Chief Executive Members, two representatives from each political party and four representatives from each District branch. However, later the political party, Congress and Mizo union left the
APHLC whereas another political party, Eastern India Tribal Union and the Khasi-Jaintia Federated state conference joined the party. (Ibid)

Captain William A. Sangma was the president of the APHLC and later also became the first Chief Minister of Meghalaya. On November 1969 under his leadership APHCL met Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India on the issue of the Assamese language being forced on tribals to which however Nehru was opposed.

The Union Government seeing the unity of the people on the other hand offered the hill leaders various options like the Pataskar Commission’s recommendation, Scottish Pattern, Nehru Pattern, Mehta Committee’s suggestions and others. Indira Gandhi the then Prime Minister of India visited Shillong on 27 December 1966 and proposed the reorganization plan. Then on 13 January 1967 the government decided to reorganize Assam on a federal basis with two federated units of equal station. The Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act 1969 accorded an autonomous status on the state of Meghalaya. On 2 April 1970 the Act came into effect and thus the autonomous State of Meghalaya was created within the State of Assam. The North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971 was passed which conferred full statehood on the Autonomous State of Meghalaya. Thus Meghalaya attained full-fledged statehood on 21st January 1972 with its own Legislative Assembly.

**Government**

There are three Members of Parliament who represent Meghalaya. Two of these MPs are in the Lok Sabha and the third member represents the state in the Rajya Sabha.

The people of the Shillong and Tura constituencies elect the members of the Lok Sabha directly. The state has a unicameral legislature. The Meghalaya Legislative Assembly consists of 60 members and these are elected by the people through secret
ballot. Based on the support of these members of the House (Legislative Assembly) the nomination for the Leader is performed. Once a person has got the majority support, he is formally sworn-in as the Chief Minister of the State by the Governor. The Chief Minister is the head of the State Government and is assisted by the Council of Ministers. The appointment of this Council of Ministers is usually done on his recommendation. Each minister is allotted different portfolios or duties like Home, Health, Education, Urban, P.W.D. etc. for the better functioning of the state. The ruling Government holds office as long as they enjoy the confidence of the House or till the expiry of their term. Besides this, a minister can be dropped from the Council of Ministers on the recommendation of the Chief Minister.

In Meghalaya, there are three Autonomous District Councils which discharge functions and duties as assigned under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. They are the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council, the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council and the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council. The main functions of the Councils are to protect the customary laws and traditions of the hills people as well preserve the tribal cultural heritage of the state. Besides this, the councils also look into the forest, education, market, rivers, appointment, dismissal and control of the local Chiefs falling within their jurisdiction. The members of the District Council are elected by the people through secret ballot. However, a few of them are usually nominated by the Governor of the state. Each of the District Councils has its members who function as the Executive Committee headed by the Chief Executive Member. The number of its member therefore may vary based on the requirements of the councils. Generally, a committee is formed when there is a maximum majority in the council.

For the overall development in the state and also to bring the administration closer to the people, the state has been divided into eleven administrative Districts namely,
Jaintia Hills District which was created on February 22, 1972 with the headquarters in Jowai, East Garo Hills was created on October 22, 1976 and its headquarters in Williamnagar, the same year West Garo Hills was also created with the headquarters in Tura. On October, 28, 1976 East Khasi Hills was formed with its headquarters in Shillong and West Khasi Hills was also created on the same day with its headquarter its Nongstoin. Ri Bhoi District was created on June 4, 1992 with its headquarters in Nongpoh. South Garo Hills District was created on June 18, 1992 with its headquarters in Baghmara. After the gap of ten years in 2012, four more new districts were added to the state which was carved out of the existing districts. The North Garo Hills District was inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Meghalaya Dr. Mukul Sangma on July 27, 2012 with the headquarters in Resubelpara. The need for the upgrade of Resubelpara Civil Sub Division into a full-fledged district was set in motion a decade and a half back during the year 1995 under the banner of the North Garo Hills District Demand Committee led by its President Willingbirth R Marak. (DIPR, 2012)

The committee attempted to achieve its aims which ultimately gained momentum and the district was formed. After the creation of the newly formed district in Garo Hills, Dr. Mukul Sangma inaugurated the East Jaintia Hills District on July 21, 2012 with the headquarters at Khliehriat. On August 4, 1976, Khliehriat was created as an Administrative Unit which was upgraded to a Civil Sub Division on May 27, 1982. In Khasi Hills also, a new district South West Khasi Hills was formed under the ministry of Dr. Mukul Sangma which was inaugurated on August 3, 2012 with Mawkyrwat as its headquarters. Mawkyrwat Civil Sub Division which falls under the Maharam syliehship was created on June 26, 1982. It may be mentioned that South West Khasi Hills District, Mawkyrwat has an area of 1341 sq km with a population of 98583 (2011 Census) and includes two Assembly Constituency which are 35-
Ranikor Assembly Constituency and 36-Mawkyrwat Assembly Constituency and also two C&RD blocks – Ranikor and Mawkyrwat. (DIPR, 2012)

Table 4. Districts of Meghalaya

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Headquarters</th>
<th>Creation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jaintia Hills</td>
<td>Jowai</td>
<td>February 22, 1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>East Garo Hills</td>
<td>Williamnagar</td>
<td>October 22,1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>West Garo Hills</td>
<td>Tura</td>
<td>October 22,1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>East Khasi Hills</td>
<td>Shillong</td>
<td>October 28,1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>West Khasi Hills</td>
<td>Nontsoin</td>
<td>October 28,1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ri Bhoi District</td>
<td>Nongpoh</td>
<td>June 4, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>South Garo Hills</td>
<td>Baghmarai</td>
<td>June 18, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>North Garo Hills</td>
<td>Resubelpara</td>
<td>July 27, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>East Jaintia Hills</td>
<td>Khliehriat</td>
<td>July 31, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>South West Khasi Hills</td>
<td>Mawkyrwat</td>
<td>3 August, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>South West Garo Hills</td>
<td>Ampati</td>
<td>7 August, 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: The Meghalaya Chronicle, DIPR*

Then on August 7, 2012, South West Garo Hills was inaugurated by the Chief Minister at its headquarters at Ampati. South West Garo Hills has been carved out of West Garo Hills district and the areas under its jurisdiction are Betasing and Zikzak C & RD Blocks which also includes the villages under Garobadha GS circle of Selsella block, Okkapara Songma GS circle and Chengkomgre GS circle under Gambegre block and Dokonggre GS circle under Rongram block.

**The traditional institute**

The Khasis, Jaintias and the Garos have their own traditional laws and customs where the different socio-political decisions are taken by the concerned authority of the systems.
In the village, the Khasi–Jaintia comprise of more than one descent group. The adult males of the residents formed the village administration under an informal headman who is elected by them and the headman is selected from among the members of the administration. When a new village is formed, the members of the community do not detach themselves from the original village but they become another important part of the state.

The Basan and Lyngdoh are the two clans that were formed for the requirements of the political leadership among the tribes. Under them, there are Pators, Sangots, and Matebors who are equally responsible for the administration of the villages. This system of administration has however evolved into the institution of Syiemship. Perhaps the reason for the creation of the Syiemship would be the voluntary association of the villagers in the different social activities which brought in the need for a common ruler. As a ruler of the community the two clans did surrender their powers yet along with the founding clan Bakhraw retained some of the powers of administrative and religious functions and took the initiative in the election of the Syiem. The Syiemship is not heredity in nature but on an election basis and it is not necessarily from one branch of the Syiem family. The head of the executive machinery of the state was the Syiem. Though Syiem could rule over his subjects of the state but while practicing his duty precautions takes so that the system does not become autocratic in nature. The Syiem has the power to try cases and if necessary pass sentences with the constitution of the assembly or Durbar and also functions as a priest. He presides over the council of minister or Durbar Myntri and imposes fines based on the direction of the council. He does the cremation rites of those people who have no relatives of their own and also collects the material wealth of a citizen of the state whose lineage becomes extinct. The Syiem is allotted a portion of Ri Raid or public land. The toll is the main source of income of all the Khasi states and
it is collected from those who open markets in the region. Lyngdohs also function in similar way to the Syiem in certain states. In every village there is Durbar, which is the highest decision making body in the traditional political and administration set-up among the Khasis which is even today running under solemn lines. This is the constitution which has grown out of past usages and practices and there is no written law on the functions and composition of the Durbar. (Joshi, 2004)

In Jaintia hills, the traditional institute has a three tier system of Government. Here, the Syiem are more often called the Raja as these people had converted to Hinduism. Here, the succession was hereditary which is passing from uncle to nephew. The Raja resides in their capital Jaintiapur in the Sylhet plains while the administration of the hills is left to twelve Dollois. The Dollois remained in attendance for six months during the pre – colonial period and in their absence the Pators were deputed. The second tier was the Dollois usually elected by the people within their respective Raid which is similar to the Khasi election of tribal leaders whereas only members of certain clans could be elected to the post. The administration of the village is under the headman or Waheh Chnong which is the third tier.

The Garo headman is known as a Nokma. Basically there are four kinds of Nokmas: the Ganni Nokma, the Gana Nokma, the Kamal Nokma and the Aking Nokma. The Nokma assumed socio-political authority over the Machong which is called a kin group. As a leader and chief, he performs sacrifices and prays for the welfare of the village. The Nokma possesses land, cattle, and heirlooms and are also the custodians of the Akhing or ancestral land in the Mahari or the Garo household. Besides he is responsible for passing judgement when any kind of dispute arises and is also responsible for protecting the property of the village. Nomaks are usually assisted by two councils, the Mela-Solbonga and the Jigma Changga. All male adults from the Mahari within the Machong comprise the former which settled inter-Mahari disputes,
executed administration, distributed lands, fixed dates for festivals and decide on any
other matter relating Machong. (Ibid)

The male members of the Akhing in the Jigma Changga take the decision on matters
relating to war and peace. As the Nokama derived authority from his wife as a
resident of the Machong, the requirement for the society to have a headman arose.
Based on these factors the traditional Nokma could not develop as a definite
institution and could not qualify to be recognised as a Chief. Nevertheless, the
custom formed an elaborate code of law which meets the needs of the community of
the region.

These societies were by and large able to live in isolation and retain their traditional
way of life from the close ties that religion had on their socio-political life which in
turn strengthened their traditional leadership.

**Economic development and infrastructure**

For the development or strengthening the economy of any region there should be
crucial relationship between minerals, transport and industries.

**Transport**

Transport is the backbone of modern economic growth without which all forms of
development is difficult to achieve. Earlier transportation of goods was achieved by
manual labour where people carried goods on their backs loaded in a basket which
was supported on the forehead with the help of a 'thappa'. The woman and children
were often employed for the purpose of carrying the goods to the plains markets
through the rugged hill tracks. When the British entered this part of the country, the
local authorities pressed the Government for a better road connection between the
Guwahati-Sylhet roads which was established by David Scott. This road later
became the principal highway of commerce of the Khasi Hills which was actually meant for military movement. In 1963, there was further expansion of roads where the great trunk road from Shillong to Guwahati and a path to Lakat had also been constructed and even the Jaintia Hills was also open to much connectivity with roads. The great river port of Guwahati and Chattach was also connected with the numerous roads of Shillong from which steamships carried men and merchandise of the North Eastern region to Kolkata. Through this connectivity, the people of Meghalaya found their way into the markets of Bengal.

Presently, Meghalaya has six National Highways, namely NH 40, NH 40-E, NH 44, NH 44-E, NH 51, NH 62 running through the state. The Meghalaya Government had undertaken a project to improve the road connectivity. The immense number of vehicles from outside the state and from the state itself which were passing through Shillong created a lot of hardship for the people of the state and also for those from the rest of the North Eastern states as traffic congestion was increasing day by day. As such it was decided that there was a dire need for a bypass to be made to ease this traffic congestion. For the last twenty years, the bypass project was delayed due to the problems of land acquisition and other hurdles associated with the project. Through the initiatives of the state Government these hurdles were overcome and it is hoped that this long overdue project will be inaugurated very soon in coming years. The four-laneing of NH-40 (Jorabat to Umiam) is set to be finish by early next year. Besides this, the Jowai bypass had already resulted in a reduction of traffic congestions as the trucks were diverted through this road. The road that connect National Highway 40 at Umiam in Ri Bhoi District and ending at National Highway 44 at Mawryngkneng in East Khasi Hills District cost about Rs.500 crore and measures about 47.06 km.
Railway line is not available in the state of Meghalaya, though initiatives were undertaken in this regard but due to opposition from some sections of the population this stayed in abeyance. The other mode of transportation available in the Meghalaya is air connectivity through the Umroi airport which is 35 km away from the Shillong city. The Meghalaya Government is also planning to upgrade the airport to seek international connectivity especially to the Bangkok, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur.

**Agriculture**

The British introduced the foreign crops and fruits into these regions for cultivation on a large scale. David Scott, an agent to the Governor General brought in the crops in order to establish a sanatorium for the Europeans in the Khasi Hills. At first he began experiments with the foreign crops in Nongkhlaw which proved to be successful. Scott was encouragement by this success which led him to initiate farming in Mairang, where he cultivated potatoes, turnips, beet, millet, maize and different kinds of cereals. Potato cultivation became more prominent which also became one of the principal cash crops and spread rapidly throughout the state. The other two foreign cereals, millet and maize became popular among the Khasis and Jaintias. Even fruits like pears, plums and peaches were introduced in the state of Meghalaya.

Agriculture is the dominant sector in the socio-economic development of the state. The people of Meghalaya follow two different types of agricultural practices which are commonly known as shifting or slash while the other one is known as terrace or burn cultivation. Shifting cultivation is practiced on hill slopes where tress, plants and shrubs are cut in the winter to dry. The utilization of land for the purpose of shifting cultivation is usually selected by the village elders. This system of cultivation has an in-built mechanism of sustenance and conservation. This practice adversely affects the eco-restoration and ecological process of forests which leads to
degradation of land causing soil erosion and converts the forests into a wasteland. Terrace or burn cultivation is done on the hill slopes. Bench terraces are constructed on hill slopes running across the hills. This system of cultivation helps to prevent soil erosion and retains maximum rainfall within the slopes and deposits the excess water into the foothills.

Around 22% of the GDP (Gross Domestic Products) in Meghalaya comes from agriculture where about 81% of the population depends on it. The state produces a variety of agricultural crops such as food grains, commercial crops, horticultural crops etc. For the cultivation of these crops, about 62% of the agricultural land is used for food grains, 25% for cash crops 9% for horticultural crops and 4% is used for the raising miscellaneous crops.

Amongst the crops, rice is the most dominant crop which occupies 60% of the state’s total cultivated land. Maize is the second most prevalent crop which is cultivated in the region. Even oilseeds crops add to the revenue generated by the agricultural products in Meghalaya. 96% of the oilseed cultivation area is in the Garo Hills alone and the other crops grown here are cotton, jute and Mesta. Important fruits grown are orange, pineapple, lemon, guava, jack fruits and banana. Potato occupies the second largest acreage in terms of cultivation which is next to Assam. Cabbage, cauliflower and radish are also exported out of the state. Ginger and turmeric is the leading product among the spices in Meghalaya.

The state started the low volume crops namely strawberry, floriculture like rose, lilliums, anthuriums, carnations etc and the cultivation of high value vegetables includes broccoli and capsicum which has been expanded through the technology mission. The state also has non-traditional crops like tea, mushroom, tomato and wheat which are providing the people of Meghalaya a variety of crops from its own land.
Forest

The actual forest cover of the state as per the State of Forest Report (FSI 2001) is 15,584 sq.km which covers around 69.5% of the total geographical area. The total recorded forest area in Meghalaya is 9,496 km² which is 42.34% of the total geographical area, which includes the reserved forest 11.72%, protected forest 0.13%, and unclassed forests 88.15%. Based on the data available from satellite readings of November-December 2009, the forest cover in the state is 17,275 km² which is 77.02% of the state’s geographical area.

The area of reserved forest and protected forest areas are under the control of the state government and the unclassed forests is controlled by the Autonomous District Council, village Durbar, traditional institutions and the private land owners. The rights of the owner over the forest land and resources are further protected in the sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution.

The Autonomous District Councils have their own forest wings with trained forest personnel; they however have inadequate personnel to enforce the law. Quite often the forest department deputes the senior officer to the district council for assistance. In return the forest department collects the royalty on minor minerals from the District Council in a ratio of 40:60. According to the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District (Management and Control of Forest) Act, 1958, the forests of Meghalaya are classified as follows:

(i) **Ri-Kynti (Private Forests):**

The ownership pattern of these forests belongs to an individual or clan or joint clans. They are either raised or inherited by an individual or by the clan.
(ii) Law- ri- sumar:

An individual clan or joint clans either raised or inherited these forests on village or common raij (traditional state) land.

(iii) Law-lyngdoh, Law-kyntang, Law-Niam (Sacred groves):

For the religious purposes these forest lands are either managed by the Lyngdoh (a religious head) or a person who performs the religious ceremonies for the particular locality of the region.

(iv) Law-adong and Law-shnong:

These lands are managed by the Sirdar (Headman) with the help of the village Durbar. They are village protected forests reserved by the villagers themselves for conserving water, soil, plants, etc. for the use of the villages.

(v) Protected forest:

Under the District Council Act, 1958 the forest land is protected by the District Council. This land is usually utilised for the growth of trees which would benefit the local inhabitants of the region.

(vi) Green blocks:

For the beauty and for the water supply into the different places of the region these forests are preserved. They either belong to an individual family or clan or joint clans or grow on raij lands.

(vii) Raid forests:

These forests are under the management of the local administrative heads which are taken care of by the heads of the raid (Traditional institutions comprising of a cluster of villages).
(viii) **Reserve forests:**

Under the District Council Act, 1958 these forests are controlled by the State Forest Department where human settlement and felling of trees or cutting of branches is prohibited.

(ix) **Unclassed forests:**

These forests are used for jhum cultivation by the local inhabitants and are mostly found in the hill slopes. They are mostly owned by individuals or a family, though the local government has some control over the land.

**Forest Management by the State Forest Department:**

The forest covered by the department included those areas which are not vested with the Autonomous District Councils. The forest department have seventeen divisions which are tasked with restoring the forest ecosystem by using various public awareness campaigns and involving people in afforestation programmes.

**Forest Management by the traditional institutions:**

The traditional institute like Syiems, Myntris, Lyngdohs, Sirdars, Wahadars, Nokma, Dollois and village headmen formed the political institution of the state. Through the customary law these institutions exercise their influence over the forest administration and management.

However, the rules and Acts which are framed by the government are not applicable for such forests. Even the District Council Acts are not framed well in order to protect the forest due to lack of adequate personnel to enforce them. Therefore, most of the forest lands have no management and do not come under an effective law of the forest.

Forest products constitute a major chunk of the economy of the state. The principal forest products are timber, bamboo, reed, broomstick, cane, ipecac, medicinal herbs, orchids, honey, wax, cinnamon and thatch grass which are obtained from the forests.
Pitcher plants which are the insect eating plants are found in this part of the country and are said to be found only in Meghalaya. There are about 3,128 species of flowering plants including 1,237 endemic species and several medicinal plants are spread over the state.

The state also has some endangered species like Panax pseudoginseng and Rauvolfia serpentina. The Government and the local bodies have taken measures to protect these species in the protected forest and sacred groves. The large number of villagers depends mainly on the forest product for their livelihood. The mining of the land, urbanization, industrialization and increase of population has contributed to the depletion of the forest land. Shifting cultivation which is practiced in most of the places in the state is one of the reasons for the degradation of the forest area. If this system of cultivation and mining is allowed to a greater extent, it will have an adverse effect on the living conditions of the people of the state besides contributing immensely to land degradation. Nevertheless, the Government had implemented a few laws and policies in Meghalaya i.e., Forest Conversation Act, 1980 which provides a regulatory mechanism that permits only unavoidable use of forest land for various developmental purposes. The Act and Rules and Guidelines made there under embody a framework regulating indiscriminate diversion/use of forests for the developmental need of the people and country so that development is not constrained but accommodates conservation parameters. (Barik et.al.)

**Minerals**

The state of Meghalaya is rich in mineral resources. The major minerals present in the state are coal, limestone, clay, quartz and sillimanite. Besides these, ores of iron, uranium, copper, granites, gold, etc. are also found in the state. The annual revenue income of the state from these minerals is substantial. For instance, the total revenue
of Rs. 12143 lakh was budgeted (revised estimates) from the mineral sector during the year 2007-08. It was estimated at Rs. 13569 lakh for the year 2008-2009.

Meghalaya is bestowed with large deposits of valuable minerals resources such as coal, limestone, clay, quartz and sillimanite, dolomite, feldspar, glass sand and uranium. The revenue generated from these mineral is adding to the economy of the state.

Coal

During 1970 the British started the mining of coal on a regular basis in Meghalaya. Initially the production was very minimal, later in 1999 the production increased. Garo Hill has the highest coal reserves of 390 million tonnes alone, followed by West Khasi Hills with 98 million tonnes, Jaintia Hills with 39 million tonnes and 31 million tonnes of coal in the East Khasi Hills. The greater quantities of coal from Meghalaya are exported to the different parts of India, whereas the local industries using coal are the cement plants, lime kilns, brick-burning facilities and pottery industries. The maximum coal is produced in Jaintia Hills with 2786 MT and it also has the most extensively exploited area known as Bapung.

Limestone

Like coal, even limestone extraction increased after 1990 which made it the second largest exploited mineral of the state. There are about 2462.5 million tones of limestone available in the state. This is mostly found in the Cherrapunjee and Shella-Bholaganj area in Khasi hills, Nongkhlieh and Lumsong in Jaintia hills and Darrangiri-Era and Anig-Siju in Garo hills.

Clay lithomargic is found in the Cherrapunjee and Mahadek areas of the Khasi Hills District, Tongseng in Jaintia Hills District, Nangwalibbra and Rongrenggiri in Garo Hills District. This mineral is used for the furnace lining and boiler oil stills.
Kaolin/China clay is available in very modest quantities in the Khasi, Garo and Jaintia Hills which is utilized in the white ware, porcelain and paper making industry. Granite is utilized for making table tops and for the wall or floor cladding. It is found in multi-coloured hues in places like Nongpoh in Ri-Bhoi District, Myliem and Mawkyrwat in Khasi Hills District and Rongjeng in East Garo Hills District.

Uranium deposits have been found in the Domiasiat and Wahkyn areas of the West Khasi Hills District of the state. There are around 1,71,672 tonnes of uranium deposits in the country and in Meghalaya alone 19,738 tonnes of uranium are found. In spite of having so much uranium deposited in the state, the government is not able to extract the minerals due to opposition of several organizations.

Glass sand is found in the areas of Laitryngew, Umstew and Kreit in East Khasi Hills and Tura in West Garo Hills. Sillimanite is found in West Khasi hills and in some parts of Mawthengkut Block at Sonapahar.

Besides these, there are other minerals which are deposited in different part of the state which vary from, quartz, feldspar, bauxite, rock phosphate, phosphatic nodule, gypsum and base metals/trace metals.

**Wildlife**

Meghalaya is also home to 110 mammal species which are protected by the government. Among the species which are of conservation importance include tiger (*Panthera tigris*), clouded leopard (*Pardofelis nebulosa*), Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*), wild dog (*Cuon alpinus*), Malayan sun bear (*Ursus malayanus*), sloth bear (*Melursus ursinus*), large Indian civet (*Viverra zibetha*), Chinese pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*), Indian pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*), Assamese macaque (*Macaca assamensis*), bear macaque (*Macaca arctoides*), and capped leaf monkey (*Semnopithecus pileatus*). However as per the reports of IUCN, 2000, there are a few species which are threatened which include the tiger, clouded leopard, Asian
elephant, Assamese macaque; bear macaque, capped leaf monkey, wild dog, sloth bear, and the smooth-coated otter.

The state also has two National Parks, viz, Nokrek and Balpakram which are situated in the Garo Hills district. Besides wildlife, two Wildlife Sanctuaries which are Nongkhylllem and Siju are home to a large number of fauna species in the state.

In Garo Hills elephants alone number around 2000 and in Jaintia Hills their numbers are a measly 500. Wild buffaloes, lizards, snakes, large pied hornbill, the great Indian hornbill and tortoises are also found in this part of the region. Sambar and barking deer are the two types of deer which are also found in the state. The red jungle fowl which was once a common sight in the Sal forests has seen a decline due to human encroachment into their habitat. In marshlands, beels, lakes and rivers the black-necked storks are a common sight. The flying squirrel, Malayan giant squirrel, Himalayan squirrel, Indian porcupine, large Indian civets, small Indian civets and common palm civet or Toddy cat can also be found in the different parts of the forest areas.

Industry

Meghalaya like the other states of the North Eastern region is deprived of a good industrial sector. Though the region has ample raw materials for the setting up of industries, the development in this sector has been obstructed due to a number of factors. The main reason for the underdeveloped of this sector is the social and physical issues such as the absence of good connectivity, poor infrastructure, and remoteness of small production units, a low technical and skill base and a lack of non-community land for the expansion of enterprises.

Besides the agricultural products, Meghalaya mostly depends on wood based industries. Mining has also resulted in quite a high economic growth which has increased the state's income. The private entrepreneurs from the state and from other
parts of the country are also engaged in utilizing the resources available in the region. Coal, limestone and other minerals extracted are exported to the neighbouring state and countries. A few of the important industries in Meghalaya comprise of cement, lime mini-steel plants, granite cutting and polishing units. They nonetheless fall into the medium scale industries whereas small scale industries include tailoring, wood furniture making, cane and bamboo works, flour and rice mills, weaving and baking. These small scale industries had overcome the hurdles of financial constrains and shortage of technical and skill people.

Health

Health services were initially introduced by the Christian missionaries. The Welsh Mission established the hospitals in Shillong and Jowai whereas Baptist Mission did so in Tura. The coverage of the health service is below the national average as the road connectivity and the typography is not conducive for easy transportation. The State Government provides different National health programmes for the benefit of the public. In Meghalaya there are 8 Government Hospitals, 28 Community Health Centres, 104 Primary Health Centres, 405 sub-centres and 14 dispensaries. Yet, there are many health institutions in the state which lack adequate infrastructure and equipment. Thus, two thirds of the households utilise the government health facilities. The private hospitals and the NGOs also cater to the health needs of the people of the state. There is no Medical college in the state, though NEIGRIHMS (The North East Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health and Medical Sciences) had included under graduate and post graduate study facilities. The first medical college in the state is also in the process of being developed as the State Government had entered into an agreement with a private player for the formation of this college in the year 2013.
Places of interest

Meghalaya has many beautiful and lovely tourist spots which are rich in natural vegetation, scenic beauty and socio – cultural significance.

Capital:

The capital city of Meghalaya, Shillong is the headquarters of East Khasi Hills. There is a legendary story for the origin of the name of this scenic hill town which says that the town derived its name from a deity named ‘Shyllong’ who’s dwelling is known as ‘Shyllong Peak’.

Shillong also has a road connection with the neighbouring country, Bangladesh and as well other important towns of the state. Besides this, Shillong is also the headquarters of different defence organisation and government departments like Eastern Air Command, Assam Rifle, Assam Regimental Centre, 101 Comm. Zone and the North Eastern Council. The central university NEHU (North Eastern Hill University) is also located in the city as is the official residence of Governor of Meghalaya.

Caves:

There are about 887 caves in Meghalaya which have been mapped and yet there are many which still need to be surveyed. The state also has one of the longest caves in the country called ‘Krem Liat’ a recent discovery made by a team of international speleologists led by the Meghalaya Adventure Association (MAA) who successfully undertook an expedition recently to 21 caves in the state. Speleologists from UK, Ireland, Switzerland, Austria, Romania, Germany, and members of the host organisation besides two Romanian biologists were also associated with the expedition.
Umiam:
Umiam Lake is also known as ‘Barapani’ which lays 17 kms away from the city. It is the gateway to Shillong. The Orchid Lake Resort overlooking the lake provides for a glimpse of the natural scenic beauty. Water sport activities like sailing, water skiing, water scooter has also added the attraction to this place.

Shillong Peak:
It is situated at about 10 kms away from the city which is 1960 metres above sea level. The place has an ideal picnic spot where people from outside and as well from around the state come and enjoy the site. On a clear day, one can see the peaks of the Himalayas as well the plains of Bangladesh from this spot.

Sohra:
This place is renowned for heavy rainfall and is situated 1,300 metres above sea level. The place also has the noted Nohsngithiang Falls (Mawsmai Fall), the Daintlian Falls and the Nohkalikai Falls. Besides these, the place also has historical importance as the British had their first outpost in this part of Meghalaya. There is also a network of limestone caves between Sohra and Mawsmai.

Mawsynram:
Mawsynram is situated 55 kms from Shillong which has broken the record of Cherrapunjee for being the wettest place in the world. The place commands attraction for the picturesque cave with its stalagmite which resembles the Hindu Shiva Linga which is locally known as ‘Krem Mawjyumbuin’. Tourists from around the country come and pay visits to this holy place on a daily basis.

Mawlynnong Village:
This village is known as the cleanest village in India and it is situated 90 kms away from the city. The living root bridge and a boulder which is balanced on top of another boulder are found in this place.
Jakrem:
This is a place 64 kms away from Shillong which is known for its health care resort. This place has a hot spring of sulphur water which is believed to have medicinal properties able to heal skin diseases. Tourists from all over the world come to this spot to bathe in the naturally heated waters.

Nongkhnum:
This is the largest river island in Asia. The island also has five waterfalls, of which the Weinia falls is the most picturesque and breathtaking. Besides this, it also has a natural river beach which is attracts a lot of tourists.

Nartiang:
This is situated in the Jaintia hill and is well known for its monoliths and Durga Temple. During the Nartiang festival a large number of devotees visit this temple from across the region and country.

Shillong Golf Course:
This golf course is one of the biggest natural golf courses in the world. It has 16 holes giving a golfer ample space to practice his stroke. However, the place is also left open for all, which results in a lot of people visiting it for a relaxing time.

Siju:
This place is situated 132 kms away from Tura and is popularly known as Dabakkol on the banks of the Simsang River in South Garo Hills. It is one of the longest caves in the Indian Sub-continent and also has some of the finest river passages to be found anywhere in the world.

Nokrek:
This is the highest peak in Garo Hills which is 1412 metres high. The Nokrek Park has various type of wildlife which includes elephants, rare varieties of birds and
orchids. In 1985, the National Gene Citrus Sanctuary and Biosphere Reserve was also started here by taking some 47 sq kms from the Peak

**Balpakram National Park:**

On 27th December 1998 Balpakram was declared a National Park and is also known as *'The Land of perpetual winds'.* The area is situated 167 kms from Tura town. In this place there is a deep gorge which is compared to the grand canyon of USA. The Balpakram reserve forest offers a variety of wildlife. Besides this, a variety of medicinal herbs grow abundantly in this region.

**Don Bosco Museum:**

This is the Asia’s largest museum of indigenous cultures. The museum is housed in a seven storey building which is well laid out. The museum has artefacts, painting, and fibreglass figures that showcase the cultural and traditional wealth of the entire North East region.

**The State Museum of Meghalaya:**

This museum exhibits of painting, artefacts and a habitat section to describe the living places of the indigenous tribes of Meghalaya along with the instruments used for hunting, fishing, weapons, agricultural, domestic products etc.

**Tribal Research Institute:**

This institute displays the local made garments like shawls, wooden and bone images, totems, masks, weaponsand utilitarian implements, baskets and jewellery.

**Botanical Garden & Museum:**

The museum has several species of plants which includes some rare orchids.

**Arunachal Pradesh Museum:**

The museum mostly consists of wonderful items and products of Arunachal Pradesh and is situated just 3.5 kms away Shillong city.
Butterfly Museum:

This museum basically displays the different varieties of butterflies which are of different exotic colours and patterns.

There are a few other museums in Meghalaya which are situated in different parts of the state, preserving and maintaining the heritage of Meghalaya. They are:

- Air Force Museum at Upper Shillong
- Forest Museum in Lady Hydari Park
- Rhino Heritage Museum at Shillong
- Zoological Museum in Risa Colony
- Anthropological museum at Mawblei