Chapter-III

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF RIBHOI DISTRICT
Our case study is on the four villages selected from the Ri-Bhoi district. It is, therefore, proposed to discuss in this chapter, the important aspects of the socio-economic profile of the new Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya pertaining to its physical features, natural resources, population, animal husbandry including fisheries, power, health, education and other services.

PHYSICAL FEATURES

The new Ri-Bhoi district was formed by upgrading the Ri-Bhoi sub-division of East Khasi Hills district on 4th June, 1992. The district lies between 91°55'16 Latitude and 25°40' to 26°20' North Longitude. It is bounded on the north by the Kamrup district of Assam, on the south by East Khasi Hills district, on the west by the West Khasi Hills district and on the east by Karbi Anglong and Nagaon districts of Assam.

Ri-Bhoi forms part of the sub-montane region of the Meghalaya plateau. The undulating hills with their peaks varying in height between 170 metres and 820 metres, gradually slope towards the Brahmaputra Valley. There are two peneplaned surfaces - one stretches from Nongpoh to Byrnihat and the other from Jorabat to Khanapara with the altitude of 490 metres with flat top.

The Ri-Bhoi district comprises an area of 2,378 sq. kms. with a population of 1,27,312 (1991 Census). The
district has 296 villages. Its headquarters is at Nongpoh which is 53 kms. north of the State Capital, Shillong. It includes the Diengiei Peak, the famous Umiam Lake, which is fast becoming a tourist attraction and Umroi Airport in Meghalaya.

The district is fed by two main rivers, namely, the Umtrew and the Umiam rivers with their tributaries and has the potential to become the granary of the State. The district is also endowed with rich flora and fauna. The forest and hilly terrain in the region have provided the habitat for different varieties of silkworms.

The economy of Ri-Bhoi district is not much different from the economy of East Khasi Hills district. The Shillong plateau of the East Khasi Hills forms the watershed of all the principal rivers of the district. The rivers drain their water either to the Brahmaputra or the Surma rivers in Bangladesh.

The Umkhen river rising from the North of Shillong Peak flows northward and forms the boundary between the Ri-Bhoi district and the Karbi Anglong district of Assam. The Umiam-Khwan river rises from the mountain range west of Shillong Peak. It flows through Ri-Bhoi district through the deep gorge until it reaches and joins the Umsiang river. The river Umiam-Khwan was dammed at a place about 20 kms. north of Shillong. The Umiam Hydel Project is located at this place in
the Ri-Bhoi district. The erstwhile Guwahati-Shillong Road had been submerged by the dam and a new road has been constructed over the main dam of the project. The Umiam Reservoir forms a natural lake for the waters flowing over the ranges of hills surrounding it also. In the backdrop of the hills around it and the rows of pine trees growing on these hills, the artificial lake now acquires an unrivalled natural beauty. The excess waters released from the lake are drained away through a tunnel into the down stream and fall into the Umtrew river. The Umtrew river rises from the western face of the Sohpetbneng peak near Raitong peak in the Bhoi area and flows in the western direction through our sample villages of Sohphoh and Ingsaw till it meets the waters from the Umiam river released from the Umiam Hydel Project.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The Ri-Bhoi district is endowed with three important natural resources namely, (1) Mineral resources; (2) Forest resources and (3) Hydel power potential.

1) Mineral Resources

The district is lacking in mineral resource except the existence of Granite with considerable reserves. The deposits are found in Iewsier village which is 7.5 kilometre south-west of Nongpoh, the district's Headquarters. According to
the report of the Geological Survey of India (G.S.I.) and the Directorate of Mineral Resources (D.M.R.) Government of Meghalaya, the total reserve for this occurrence of Granite is 40 million cubic metres.

Granite also occurs in two more villages, namely Umsaw and Nongbri with a deposit of 20 million cubic metres according to the estimates of D.M.R.¹

In the area covered by mapping and drilling of Granite deposits, four distinct varieties of granite were recorded at different depth levels of the deposit. A reserve of 20 million cubic metres of granite of the four varieties was estimated in the area covered by detailed Mapping. The varieties are grey and pink both of light and dark shades.

The physico-mechanical test of a few samples which were done at Regional Research Laboratory, Jorhat, indicated that the compressive, the tensile and the sheering strength of this granite are slightly less than those of standard granites of South India. However, considering the physico-mechanical properties and aesthetic look of the polished blocks, this granite is recommended for production of dimensional blocks as well as for processed products like polished slabs, tiles, table-tops, wall-claddings and other

materials. According to D.M.R. unpublished report, it is found that around the area where granite occurred, Metallic Ores like Zinc, Copper, Lead and Gold are also detected and investigations are going on. Ri-Bhoi is the only district in the State where Granite is located in huge quantities.

2) Forest Resources

Ri-Bhoi district is rich in natural vegetation ranging from tropical to temperate dense jungles which abound in wildlife. There are timber trees like the Salwood and Pine Trees. Bamboos are found in abundance in the district. The principal bamboo species are the Dalu and Muli. Besides the trees and bamboos, other important species found are the Gurga, Haldu, Canes and Aguru.

Ri-Bhoi district has very fine varieties of Sal trees. Besides a number of plant species which provide edible roots, corns, bulbs, leafy vegetables, flowers, fruits and seeds are also found.

Reeds and broom grass are some of other minor products of the district. Cane is used for making furniture and baskets.

Medicinal and aromatic herbs, creepers and plants like Solanum khasianum, Lemon grass, etc. are also grown in the district. Ipeceae and Cenchara are other medicinal plants found mainly in the Ri-Bhoi district. A sample list of the
medicinal plants grown locally are: a) Solanum khasianum, b) Rouwalfia serpentina, c) Rouwalfia conasceae, d) Ipeceae, e) Yam, f) Dolcini, g) Rajpeta, h) Eucalyptus cetrioderma (essential oil bearing plant).

The animals found close to human habitations are the elephants, monkeys, deer, tiger, wild pigs, bears, squirrels, bamboo rats and other species. Birds found in the jungles are spot bulls, pigeons, horn bills, mynas and parrots, etc.

Ri-Bholi is also rich in various types of beautiful orchids and butterflies.

3) **Hydel Power Resources**

The district has great potentiality for the development of hydro-electric power that can be generated from its five major rivers flowing along rugged topography. These rivers are Umtrew, Umiam-Khwan, Umsiang, Umkhen and Umling. Two important hydel projects have already been constructed to generate power from Umtrew and Umiam-Khwan rivers with a generating capacity of 11.20 MW. and 36.00 MW, respectively. The installed capacity of Umiam Hydel Project has increased with the expansion at various stages as given in the following table.
Table-3.1

Installed Capacity of the Two Hydel Power Projects (in Megawatt)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>1986-87</th>
<th>1994-95</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Umiam Hydel Project</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage (i)</td>
<td>36.00</td>
<td>36.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage (ii)</td>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>18.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage (iii)</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage (iv)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Umtrew Hydel Project</td>
<td>11.20</td>
<td>11.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>125.20</td>
<td>185.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Meghalaya State Electricity Board, Shillong

It will be seen from the above table that the installed capacity of the Umiam Hydel Project has been expanded from 36 MW at the initial stage to 174 MW in 1994-95. But the installed capacity of Umtrew Project remains at 11.20 MW.

POPULATION

According to 1991 Census, Ri-Bhoi district has a total population of 1,27,312 all comprising rural population with 65,576 males and 61,736 females. The break-up of the total population of the district along with the literacy rate in 1987 and 1991 is given in the following table:
Table-3.2

Break-Up of Population of Literacy Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>99,933</td>
<td>28.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>52,015</td>
<td>17.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>47,918</td>
<td>11.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The above table shows that the total population of the Ri-Bhoi district had increased from 99,933 in 1981 to 1,27,312 in 1991 accounting for a decadal variation of 27.40 per cent which is below the state average of 32.86 per cent. While the male population had increased by 13,525 during the decade accounting for 26 per cent, the females had increased by 13,818 which works out to 28.84 per cent.

So far as the literacy rate is concerned, the literate population among male did not increase as much as that among females. While the male literacy rate has increased by only 0.26 per cent during the decade from 1981 to 1991, the female literacy rate increased by 2.28 per cent.

Population Density

The density of population in the district is 52.01 persons per sq. km. in 1991 which is far less than the state figure of 79.13.
The relative position of Ri-Bhoi district among the seven districts of Meghalaya may be seen in the following table in respect of density:

Table-3.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Area (Sq.km.)</th>
<th>Population (1991)</th>
<th>Density (Per cent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jaintia Hills</td>
<td>3,819</td>
<td>2,20,473</td>
<td>57.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Khasi Hills</td>
<td>2,748</td>
<td>5,37,906</td>
<td>195.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ri-Bhoi</td>
<td>2,448</td>
<td>1,27,312</td>
<td>52.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Khasi Hills</td>
<td>5,427</td>
<td>2,20,157</td>
<td>40.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Garo Hills</td>
<td>2,603</td>
<td>1,88,830</td>
<td>72.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Garo Hills</td>
<td>3,714</td>
<td>4,03,027</td>
<td>108.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Garo Hills</td>
<td>1,850</td>
<td>77,073</td>
<td>41.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEGHALAYA</td>
<td>22,429</td>
<td>17,74,778</td>
<td>79.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India, 1991

It may be seen from the above table that South Garo Hills district has the smallest area of 1,850 sq. km. in the State followed by Ri-Bhoi district with 2,448 sq. km. Although the West Khasi Hills district has the lowest density in the State in spite of its larger number of population, yet being the biggest district in area, its density is the lowest.
INFRASTRUCTURE

Transport and Communication

In the absence of railways and waterways, roads are the only means of communication. A National Highway No.40 passes through Ri-Bhoi district and connects Guwahati, the capital of Assam, with Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya and proceeds right up to Tamabil in the Bangladesh in the southern part of the State. Thus the district is well-connected by an inter-state highway connecting Shillong with Guwahati and enjoys a very advantageous economic location. The highway has been well maintained and joins the National Highway No.44 in Shillong which leads to the Barak Valley and Mizoram and Tripura States.

A number of feeder roads have been constructed to connect a number of villages in the new district on both sides of the National Highway-40. Unfortunately, most of these roads connecting the villages in different parts of the district are unmetalled and not well maintained. Since the district is experiencing heavy rainfall every year, its roads must have been maintained as all-weathered road to facilitate good transport for the economic development of the district.

Moreover, the road characteristic in the hill areas like the Ri-Bhoi district should take into consideration the surface condition of the roads, their width, gradients and
sharpness of curves, speed and permissible load of motor vehicles. Unmetalled and gravelled roads are less advantageous in providing stable infrastructural facilities in the rural areas.

At present Ri-Bhoi district has a total length of blacktopped roads of about 221 kilometres and gravelled roads of about 233 kms. The district headquarters is being connected by roads to all the different villages in the district. There is an increase in the number of vehicles as well. There are 277 three-wheelers, 21 buses and 18 taxis that provide transport services within the district. With good transport system, small scale industries like automobile repairing, tyre retreading and auto body building have sprung up in the district. It is expected that transport development would further take place and that will generate employment, income, saving and investment as preconditions for the economic development and growth of the district. The only airport in the State is situated at Umroi which is in the Ri-Bhoi district.

Power

We have already seen that the district has two major hydel projects constructed on two of its major rivers with the total installed capacity of more than 185 MW. Hence, power supply is expected to be adequate enough for all
economic activities that require the use of power. The third hydel power project on the Umling river with an installed capacity of 1.50 MW is expected to be commissioned soon.²

**Education**

The State policy is to universalise general education and to make all people literate. Education is an important social input for economic development. The district has 39,045 literate persons accounting for 30.60 per cent which is far below the state figure of 49.10 per cent and the national figure of 52.22 per cent.

Education in the Ri-Bhoi district is progressing rapidly year after year. High school education is being looked after by the Inspector of Schools, East Khasi Hills District, Shillong. At present there are 29 high schools in the whole district, with two Government schools, 10 adhoc High Schools, 3 unaided High Schools, 3 Senior Basic Schools and one Government M.E. School.³

Primary education receives special attention of the Government. Since 1992, many posts of teachers were sanctioned for primary schools of the district out of which, a major portion were for the new set-up primary schools in

². Government of Meghalaya, "Two Years of Ri-Bhoi District", The Office of Information Officer (JR) Ri-Bhoi District.
the interior villages. Furniture grants of Rs.5,000/- each, free text-books in science and a uniform grant (Rs.1000/- each) were given to all primary schools with development grants to encourage education in the district.

In the Upper Primary Schools the enrolment is 4,307 and 1,83,773 pupil at primary level. The number of teachers in M.E. schools was 258 and 499 in primary schools. In 1992-93, 60 teachers were sent for special training for the improvement of science teaching. With such trained teachers and earnest students it is expected that there will be an increase in the number of educated people which will result in the rapid development of the State and of economy in general.

The district has got one Central Government residential school, viz., Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya at Niangbari in Ri-Bhoi district.

**Administrative Set-Up**

The position of the Ri-Bhoi district in relation to other districts of the State with respect to its administrative machinery is given in the following table:
The above table has shown that unlike any other districts, Ri-Bhoi district has got no administrative sub-division.

It has 2 Police Stations, 5 Police Outposts and 2 Community and Rural Development Blocks. But South Garo Hills district which is much smaller in area than Ri-Bhoi district, has got 3 Community and Rural Development Blocks.

The district has not faced any law and order problem. The peaceful situation in the district is congenial for its economic development if only prospective entrepreneurs are willing to invest in the district.

Source: Community and Rural Development Department, Meghalaya
Community and Rural Development Blocks

The 2 Community Development Blocks are Umsning and Umling Blocks. According to 1991 Census, the Umsning Community and Rural Development Block covers a total area of 1,22,500 hectares with 76,529 population and 13,989 households. Its headquarters is at Lumnongrim and covers 296 villages. All the four sample villages selected for our study fall under the Umsning Community and Rural Development Block. The Block is divided into 15 circles. Different villages are included in different circles. Our sample villages, Umsning and Nongthymmai, fall under circle number 9 while Ingsaw and Sohphoh fall under circle number 15, namely, Umsning circle and Tyrso circle, respectively. The Umsning circle covers a total area of 6,471 hectares with 7,404 population and 1,472 households. Umsning village alone covers an area of 400 hectares with 1,238 population and 280 households while Nongthymmai village has an area of 240 hectares with 607 population and 88 households. Ingsaw village has an area of 625 hectares with 389 population with 71 households. Sohphoh has an area of 740 hectares with 326 population and 56 households.

4. Government of Meghalaya, "One Year of the Ri-Bhoi District", The Office of Information Officer (JR), Ri-Bhoi District.

5. Government of Meghalaya, Block Development Office, Umsning Community and Rural Development Block, Umsning.
The Umsning Community and Rural Development has taken up many popular schemes which can be summarised as follows:

1) **J.R.Y. Scheme** - The Jawahar Rozgar Yojana is funded by the Central Government and partly by the State Government at 80 and 20 per cent respectively. The funds are channelised through the C.D. Block with the objective of creating employment for the rural people.

2) **Small Farmers and Medium Farmers** - Under this scheme small and medium farmers are given assistance for construction of small water dams and canals for improving the agricultural production and construction to terrace bounding and land development.

3) **Social Forestry** - Under this programme afforestation are being taken up wherever possible, around the school building and public halls, community centres, etc.

4) **IRDP** - The main objective of this scheme is to provide assistance to the villagers for construction of decent dwelling houses. There are also other schemes like the IRDP which is known as Credit Linkage Programme linked with the financial institution to provide assistance to the poor rural people to improve their standard of living, by creating employment which generates average income for overall improvement.

5) **Indra Awas Yojana** - Another scheme is the Indira Awas Yojana where dwelling houses have been provided to poor
families, pit latrines in schools, footbridge, irrigation canals, etc.

6) **Dairy Farming and Fisheries Ponds** in which 33 ponds have been constructed at Sohkhwai village in the Bhoi area, have also been under the Community Development Block. Broomstick cultivation has also been extensively encouraged under IRDP. Two power tillers have been put into service to assist farmers of the Block. Four minor irrigation dams are also under construction including water supply connection for two big villages.

The C.R.D. Blocks are highly beneficial to the people of this district which will help them to earn higher income, assist in agricultural development and living standard of the people which in turn will lead to the overall development of the State.

**Banking and Insurance**

There are 17 bank branches in the whole district which work out to about 9094 persons per bank office. But the Credit Deposit ratio of 16.19 per cent is among the lowest in the State although it is above the state figure of 15.84 per cent.

**Health**

Among the important social infrastructural facilities are health and education. The Ri-Bhoi district at its
headquarters at Nongpoh, had a primary Health Centre which has been converted into a Community Health Centre in 1993 with improved facilities for patients and doctors and paramedical staff. The Centre is likely to be upgraded into a Civil Hospital which the district deserves to get.

Presently, the district has 10 primary health centres and 24 sub-centres with a total of 23 medical officers. The doctor-population works out to 1:5535. However, in every primary health centre, there is at least one medical officer. A leprosy centre of the State is located at Umden in the district. It has also one sub-centre where two health workers are appointed to deal with cases of emergency, immunization, delivery and other minor aspects of treatment. Thus the district is poised for development, particularly in health care, much faster than the rest of the State. The health services available in the district are expected to create conditions whereby the people are enabled to increase their standard of living, which will ultimately lead to the all-round development of the district.

Sectoral Analysis

Since our work is on agricultural credit in Ri-Bhoi district, we shall look separately into its agricultural

economy in the following chapter. We will now discuss the modest position of industrial development in this new district of Meghalaya.

Industries

Ri-Bhoi is a young district in so far as industrialization is concerned. The pace of industrialization cannot be measured by the normal yardstick used in respect of the other States of the country. The Government, however, is doing its best to promote industrial ventures in the district wherever feasible. In fact, it is only in this district that the State industrial areas have been thriving with industrial activities unlike in other industrial areas in other districts. The two industrial areas set up in the district are in Byrnihat and Barapani. There is no large scale industry. Except for one medium scale industrial factory, all other industrial activities found in the district fall under the small scale category.

There is a total of 63 cottage and small-scale industries in the district registered upto March 1993. From 1994-95 to 1998-99, a number of the small scale industries is given in Table-3.5.
Table-3.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>No. of Units</th>
<th>Investment (in lakhs)</th>
<th>Persons Employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994-95</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40.94</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-96</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30.25</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-97</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>74.02</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>116.60</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>116.83</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>378.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Directorate of Industries, Government of Meghalaya, 1994-95 to 1997-98.

The table reveals that during the 5 year period from 1994-95 to 1998-99, 93 units were registered with an investment amounting to Rs.378.64 lakhs and the total number of workers employed was 745. The only medium scale industrial factory is the Meghalaya Plywood Private Ltd. floated by the private entrepreneurs. The factory located at Byrnihat on the Meghalaya-Assam border and close to the National Highway-40, utilises the timber resources of the nearby forests. It is unique in India being the first factory which is equipped with special machinery required to manufacture plywood panel as large as 3 metres x 1.50 metres.
The climate of the district is very congenial for the setting up of forest-based industries. A number of package schemes of incentives and liberal financial assistance is being offered by both the State and the Central Governments. The central financial institutions are also providing many incentives to the industrialists and businessmen. There are thus very good prospects for the establishment of several raw material-oriented industries for which adequate raw materials within the district are available. With the excellent availability of raw materials, a number of small, medium and even large industries can be established.

As already stated, Ri-Bhoi district has two industrial areas located at Byrnihat and Barapani. An Export Promotion Industrial Park has also been set up at Byrnihat.

Industrial areas in the district are owned by State Government for encouraging the setting up of small scale industrial units and have sufficient space and accessibility to industrial facilities. Buildings are built by the Government and hired out at a concessional rate.


The Export Promotion Industrial Park (EPIP) at Byrnihat was established in 1994 with an area of 112 acres. It is also owned by the State Government. The EPIP is meant for accommodating (1) M/s. Indus Cement Plant Ltd., (2) M/s. Jumbo Farm Ltd., (3) M/s. Lyngdoh Hawai Chapal Ltd., (4) M/s. Megha Polycraft, (5) M/s. Banjob Carbon Ltd., (6) M/s. Meghalaya Steel and Concrete Products Ltd., (7) M/s. Grey Stone Ispat (P) Ltd. As a result of the establishment of the industrial area and the Industrial Task force, the surrounding areas are flourishing with many industrial units. The most prominent of which are the following: (1) M/s. K.K. Beverages

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The total number of small scale industries in the district at present is 170 which have been registered during the last 25 years since Meghalaya was created in 1972. These industries provide employment to a total of more than 2550 workers. A list of 59 prominent units is given in the Appendix-I.

Ri-Bhoi district has the largest number of industrial units in the State. This is attributed to the fact that the district has a favourable climate for setting up industries and it has a good locational advantage being close to the

Guwahati railway station which is barely 20 kms. from the northern borders of the district.

The Ri-Bhoi district is endowed with most facilities for setting up of industrial units if only the prospective entrepreneurs get the favourable opportunities. But the absence of the local entrepreneurs is a great hindrance to the industrial development of the district and even the State as a whole.

In spite of the various incentives provided by both the State and the Central Governments for setting up of industrial projects, not much response has been shown. There appears to be a near absence of local entrepreneurs while entrepreneurs from other parts of the country are reluctant to come forward.

The main reason is the peculiar land system in the district and in the State as a whole which becomes a great hindrance for industrial development. A number of regional, state and district level organisation like the district Industrial Centre (DIC), Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE), North-Eastern Industrial Technical Consultancy (NEITCO), and the Meghalaya Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC), etc. have played an important role in providing training, motivation and development of entrepreneurship in the district. But these entrepreneurs have started setting up only small scale and tiny industries.
The Government should come up to encourage industrial development by providing infrastructural facilities and leadership for industrial growth. The private sector should be encouraged to play a complementary role, but a major role within the broad framework of a mixed economy for the development of industrial sector, should be that of the State which can effectively pull the district economy up by its bootstraps.

Sericulture and Weaving

In the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, handloom weaving is now prevalent only in the Ri-Bhoi district. Traditional dress materials like Ryndiastem, Thohsaw, Thohstem, Khyrwang, Thoh Saru, Jain-it, Jainslieng, Phakshaid, Jyrpor, ka Phali, etc. are produced by the local weavers but the production of these items has to some extent, decreased. The people in the Ri-Bhoi district are also known for their skills in the technique of using indigenous vegetable dyes which give a very fast colour of the cloth produced by them.

A number of programmes have been taken up by the State aiming at stepping up the production of selected items of handloom fabrics which can easily find market both within and outside the state. The programmes are Weaving Training Centres at Nongpoh, Pilot handloom Weaving Centre at Sanidan; Handloom Demonstration-cum-Production Centres at Iapngar and
Umsohlait; Weaving Demonstration Centres at Umkyrpang, Pillangkata and Saiden; Mobile Handloom Demonstration unit at Pahambi; Weaver's Extension Services unit at Marngar; Modernised Handloom Production Centres at Nongpoh, Byrnihat, Marngar and Raid Maiang. Another Training Centre for tribal textile weaving and vegetable dying has been established at Sonidan.

The marketing of these handloom fabrics produced by the local weavers is being arranged by the State through the Meghalaya Handloom and Handicrafts Development Corporation (MHHDC), North-Eastern Handloom and Handicraft Development Corporation (NEHHDC) and other agencies besides the local sales outlets.

Although a large percentage of the people in the district are dependent upon agriculture, other subsidiary occupations play an important part in supplementing their income. Among the gainful subsidiary occupations, silk and handloom industries are two important ones which have been a regular source of income. The climate is favourable and ideal for the rearing of different kinds of silk worms and host plants. The worms generally reared are Eri, Mulberry, Muga and Tassar silk worms. The Ri-Bhoi district has all the four known types of silkworms. Rearing of silkworm, has become the regular household activities in certain pockets like Mawsyntai, Mangai, Umden, Patharkhmah, Warmawsaw, etc.
As on December 1999, it was found that the villagers of Umpathaw, Sohkhwai, Umpohwin and Umtngam are actively involved in this activity.\(^8\)

The success of sericulture depends on mulberry farms. The mulberry production centres can be found at Mawsyntai, Umkaduh, Marngar, Raid Nongbri, Nongkwah, Umfarasi, Mawthum, Niangbari, Garikhana, Umden, Umroi and Sohliya. At these centres, Eri spinners with new spinning devices have been introduced by the State.

The State has taken up a number of programmes for the development of sericulture activities. The stress is on the systematic plantation of silkworm food plants through organisation of demonstration units and blocks on improved varieties for a higher production in which marketing of cocoon is concerned. The sericultural farmers do not face any problem at this junction since they can easily find market within and outside the State at a good price. The mulberry cocoons are also purchased by the State at fixed rate for utilization in the departmental Ruling and Twisting Units at Shillong for production of silkworms. Besides this, a number of schemes/programmes for extending benefits to the sericultural farmers have been set up like the organisation

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8. Ibid., December 1999, Shillong.
of Block Plantations, Village Extension Centres, Chowki Rearing Centres, Eri Spinning Centres, etc.\textsuperscript{9}

In addition to the above, there is also one Eri Seed Grainage at Nongpoh which is a prestigious seed farm producing and supplying disease-free Eri silkworm eggs to rearers in the State and outside the State as well. The Central Silk Board has also set up a Muga unit at Nongpoh utilizing the Muga plantation of the State for maintenance of parent stock Muga seed.

The State has also initiated action for setting up of one Eri Spinning Centre at Umden and one Eri Block Plantation at Umpathaw during 1992-93 besides the continuance and improvement of the existing activities. For all these, a district Level Officer has been established at Nongpoh with a view to ensuring smooth and effective implementation of programmes. Sericulture is an agro-based industry and labour intensive providing occupation to a sizeable section of rural mass without dislodging them from their homesteads. It is also highly suitable to this newly created district with relatively low investment in addition to the temperature and aptitude of the people who are well suited for its growth.

\textsuperscript{9} Sericulture and Weaving in Ri-Bhoi District of Meghalaya, Directorate of Sericulture and Weaving, Meghalaya, Shillong, 1992.
The practice of silk worm rearing, spinning and weaving are the cultured ethos of the people of this district.

The specific schemes/programmes for extending assistance to the sericultural farmer in Ri-Bhoi district are summarised as follows:

(1) **Muga Silk Industry:** Muga seed development project of the Central Silk Board, Nongpoh, was established during 1986-87, with about 5 acres of farm area handed over by the State to the Central Silk Board for starting the technical activities of the unit.

The most important activity of this unit is the production of diseases from Muga laying (seed) and supply to \( P_3 \) unit of the same organisation and government agencies for further multiplication. The production since the inception of the district can be seen below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Production</th>
<th>...............</th>
<th>9,947 laying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of seed cocoons</td>
<td>............</td>
<td>54,132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Nurseries raised</td>
<td>......</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The unit production is co-related with the demands of seed by various organisations. The unit has supplied almost 2,000 seedlings (Muga food plan) free of cost to the

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10. **P_3** - For maintenance of multiplication of Muga basic seed to supply to \( P_2 \) farm.
villagers to establish their own farms to practise the culture. The extension activities are progressing.

(2) *Oak Tasar Silk Industry* was established at Bhoilymbong and Iapngar for the introduction of new hybrid species.

(3) *Eri Silk Industry* has been practised traditionally since ancient time. It is used for the production of warm clothing for the rural people.

(4) *Organisation of Eri Block Plantations*: The people of the district do not have a regular and systematic plantation of Eri plants. Therefore schemes of systematic plantation of Eri plant organised in a common plot of land about 2.5 hectares respectively where ten families are identified in each Block Plantation. Necessary inputs like planting materials, fencing, manure water supply, etc. are provided by the Department and employed about 8000 number of caster plants have been planted by the beneficiaries.

(5) *Eri-Seed Grainage*: Grainage is a place where production of certified eggs or seeds of superior quality are produced by a scientific methods and its vitality important for development of Sericulture Industry.

The main activity of this Eri-Seed Grainage is to produce disease-free seeds in scientific way to fulfill the requirement of the private Eri cocoon growers of the Bhoi district which *exports these cocoons*.* The States that import are
Mizoram, Bihar, Orissa and Assam. Marketing of Eri seed is extended to Nagaland in 1993-94.

(6) **Eri Spinning Centre:** To improve the spinning of Eri cut cocoons, Eri Spinning Centre has been set up in different parts of the district. Training and demonstration facilities to local spinners are used to improve spinning devices. Since the inception of the district, 20 local spinners have been trained and about 20 kg. of Eri spur produced by them.

(7) **Mulberry Silk Industry:** Growing of Mulberry is the first and foremost pre-requisite for success in sericulture. Satin is a mulberry variety in which silkworm rearers of this area feed on. The State provides them with necessary facilities such as rearing appliances, disinfectant, manure fencing, sapping laying, etc. Ri-Bhoi is the only district in the State at present where all the four commercial silk varieties are culture, i.e., Eri, Muga, Tasar and Mulberry. The district will in no time be the largest exporter of Muga in the world.

In 1999-2000, the North-Eastern Council (NEC) has come up with the integrated development of Muga seed project. Meghalaya is the second largest producer of Muga Reeling Cocoon, in the North Eastern region. It must be mentioned that Muga culture in the State originated in the Ri-Bhoi district and is still confined to that district.
For sustaining the economic development of Muga production units and stabilizing the regular production of silkworm seed in the State, the NEC in the Ninth Five-Year Plan has sanctioned Rs.224 lakhs for (i) the development of Som/Soalu Nursery, (ii) strengthening the existing P$_2$ Muga Seed Farms in Resubelpara, East Garo Hills and West Khasi Hills in Mollugkeng and Umsohpieng, (iii) establishment of Muga P$_3$ at Sohliya Ri Bhoi district, (iv) organisation of commercial Muga Rearer for large scale production of silk cocoon and beneficiaries will be facilitated with grants-in-aid in kind at the total cost of Rs.5000/- each, (v) organisation of Muga P$_1$ seed cocoon of rowers of 50 numbers. The beneficiaries will received Rs.500/- each grant-in-aid in kind, (vi) establishment of commercial grainages, (vii) organisation of private Muga Reeling Societies/NGOs to organise 2 Muga Reeling Co-operative Societies in West Khasi Hills and East Garo Hills, (viii) augmentation of Muga Food Plants - the project envisages to assist the Muga beneficiaries under the Catalytic Development Programme of

11. P$_2$ - For multiplication of Muga seeds received from P$_3$ farm to supply to P$_1$ Muga seed cocoon growers.

12. P$_1$ - Organisation of Muga Seed Cocoon Growers for production of commercial seeds.
the CSB (Central Silk Board) with Rs.1575/- to each beneficiary for 1 acre of Muga plantation.  

CONCLUSION

We have come to the end of our discussion on some aspects of the economy of the Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya. The district is certainly poised for a brisk and an assured development of industries both in the secondary and services sectors depending on the desire of the people for further progress and on the emergence of a suitable political and institutional framework capable of creating the pre-conditions for an accelerated industrial development. We shall look into the agricultural economy of the district in the following chapter before our indepth study on the need of agricultural credit is taken up.

13. The Directorate of Sericulture and Weaving, Government of Meghalaya, Shillong.