CHAPTER I

Meghalaya - Its Resources with Relevance to Industry

Meghalaya was established in 1972, as the 21st state of the Indian Union. It consists of 5 districts, viz. East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills, West Garo hills and East Garo Hills. It is located in North East India between 25°. 45' and 26°. 10' north latitudes and between 89°. 45' and 92°.47' east longitudes. The state has a hilly terrain and is bordered by the plains of Bangladesh in the South and the Brahmaputra valley in the North. The hills start from west and increases in height, as they go towards east, from 300 mts to 1600 mts or more in Khasi hills. Later the hills slope down as they join the north cachar hills of Assam.

The North Eastern Region is abundantly gifted with various natural resources. The diversity of soil, climate, topography and culture provides great scope for developing complementarities and linkages with different parts of the region with Meghalaya. We give below a brief account about the various resources which have relevance for our study about the state.

1.1. Agriculture:

Due to the mountainous terrain there is scarcity of suitable cultivable land. The agricultural practices are traditional and considerably differ from those in the plains. The available land is mostly under agriculture
depend upon fruits as their raw materials. There is a
great demand for products of industries like fruit (Pine-
apple, Orange, Plum etc.,) canning, fruit juice and jam
making.

Minerals:

The hills in the state contain rich variety of
rich minerals which are yet to be exploited. The main
mineral deposits available in Meghalaya are: The coal
limestone, dolomite, sillimanite, clay and glass sand
e etc. The coal deposits are extensive in Garo hills,
Khasi and Jaintia hills; large deposits of lime stone
are found in Jaintia hills along the southern margin
of the Shillong Plateau. The other minerals are iron
ore, quartz, gypsum and granite. There are proposals
to start two more cement factories in east Khasi hills.
The Cherrapunji Cement Industry is located in this
district because of the availability of required raw
materials in the area. The Sonapahar region in Khasi
hills is important for Sillimanite. There is a great
scope in the state for hollow block industries, glass
manufacturing, ceramics and pottery, fire bricks, soda
ash, sanitary wares and coke manufacturing etc.

Forests:

The forests in Meghalaya occupy about 37% of
the total area. They are broadly divided into:
a) Ever green and Semi Evergreens of South Khasi and Jaintia hills.
b) Moist Deciduous sal forests in the North Khasi and Jaintia Hills.
c) Pine forests of Khasi and Jaintia in Central Plateau.
d) Remaining is distributed bamboo forests.

The Reserved forests are 71.07 (‘000 hectares), Protected forests are 1.17 and Unclassified forests are 779.18. The timber is the main resource from the forests. Bamboo, firewood, spices, cane, honey etc., are the other minor products from the forests. Important forest based industries at present are furniture works, wood carving and structuring, timber and card board products and Khasi herbal medicines etc.

There is great scope for industries like furniture works, manufacture of splints, safety matches, woodwool, chip boards, saw dust boards, pulp and paper, wooden and package boxes, crates, insulating panels etc. The shifting cultivation, frequent land slides, heavy rainfall and unauthorised sale of timber lead to the depletion of forest resources. The Forest Department Corporation of Meghalaya was set up for the protection and expansion of forests in the state,
A variety of agricultural crops including crops of commercial nature such as paddy, potato, turmeric ginger, betelnut and jute etc., are grown in the state. The horticulture is a dominant occupation with the growth of variety of fruits like Pine apple, Banana, citrus fruits, Plums, Papaya and other temperate fruits.

The major industry in the state is Bakery which consists of 54\(^1\) units and next important industry is Flour and Rice mills with 25\(^1\) units. Of other industries the main ones are Oil industry and manufacture of Potato chips and Banana fibre. The agricultural products for various reasons are not sufficient to satisfy the basic needs of the people. Hence food crops are given importance over commercial crops. Hence, there is a scarcity of raw materials for Agro-based industries. At present with improved methods and modern practices, the state is concentrating on self sufficiency in food production and trying to promote increased production of commercial crops.

There is a good scope for industries like manufacture of gunny bags, processing of tapioca and sweet potato etc. They can make useful items like flour, sagu, chips and noodles etc., the fibre of arecanut paddy husk and tea waste can be used to make sound proof building materials. There are very few industries which

Water Resources: 1.4.

The Meghalaya receives considerable amount of rainfall. The Umiam, Umtru and Umkhiu are important rivers in northern part of the state. Their tributaries are Kynshi, Umiew and Umsohrynkhiew. Their tributaries produce the surface water potential of 67216 Mm$^3$. The Great lake Umiam is situated near the Capital city Shillong. The hydel power produced from various projects is being used for various industries.

Power Resources: 1.5.

The heavy rainfall in Meghalaya provides a great opportunity to produce hydro electricity. Bulk of the power comes from hydel projects (126,71 Mw) and 5Mw from thermal and 1,95 from diesel power. The principal hydro electric projects are Umiam and Kopoly. The Kopily when completed in 3 stages is expected to produce 735 Mws. The state at present is exporting surplus power to neighbouring states. The Harapani area near Umiam Project and Burnihat are declared as Industrial areas. Various steps can be taken to increase the capacity of power generation so that the state can have advantage in encouraging power intensive industries to come up and assure uninterrupted power supply to the existing small scale industries at concessional rates.
Transport: 1.6.

The popular means of transport in the state is by road. The other transport systems like railways, waterways, are practically nil. The state capital Shillong is connected with regular air transport. The nearest railway station is in Guwahati which is more than 100 Kms away from Shillong. The state contains a number of streams and rivers but due to mountainous nature of the land they are not useful for navigable purposes.

The road transport also faces serious problems. The heavy rainfall causes difficulties like land slides, rapid deterioration of roads and heavy investment for their maintenance etc. The total length of roads is 4187 Kms in 1981 and increased to 5111 in 1982. With the development of roads the import and export of raw materials and finished goods of various industries is also increasing. The motor vehicles repairing, battery assembling and repairing, tyre retreading and vulcanising are some related industries.

People:

The total population is 1,23,343 according to 1981 census. The state ranks 21st according to population and its share in India's population is .19%. The density is 79 persons per sq. K.m. The estimated population in 1987 - 88 is 18 lakhs. Out of the total population the main workers constitute 5.2 lakhs.

Source 1 : Basic Statistics, NEC, Meghalaya.
which includes the house hold industry. The total female workers are 1.6 lakhs and the male workers are 5.6 lakhs out of the 5.2 lakhs.

**Education: 1.8**

The literacy rate of Meghalaya is 54.08 as compared to 56.22 which is national rate. The students mostly prefer to opt for arts than practical oriented subjects. There are very few technical and vocational training institutes like polytechniques in the state. The courses offered in engineering etc., will be mostly for the usefulness of the construction of roads and buildings rather than mechanical, electricals and electronics. Recently various workshops, entrepreneur Development Programs and Management Programs are being conducted by various institutions to motivate the people.

**Banks: 1.9**

Banks are the promotive and service oriented institutions acts as an essential aid for the development of the state. There are commercial banks, co-operatives, regional rural banks and developmental banks like IDBI, AFC, etc., which do both finance and service assistance. Recently the number is increasing and their introduction to various schemes and programs is pretty helpful to the needy entrepreneurs and artisans. A detailed study will be made in the coming chapters.
Export and Import: 1.10.

The state is rich in various resources like Minerals, Forestry, Hydel Power etc. Rich mineral deposits of coal, limestone, sillimanite and other minerals are available which have good export market. The timber, pine oil, honey etc., are being exported to other states. The surplus hydel power is being sold to neighbouring states like Assam. The state imports various items like foodgrains, consumer goods electronic goods and synthetic textiles. The industrial goods produced in Meghalaya hardly stand for competition with the goods produced elsewhere in the country. Various efforts are being made to exploit the potential consumer market in this region.