Chapter IX
EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

I. Introductory

As in the State of Assam as a whole, the employment opportunities are very limited in Cachar because of the underdeveloped nature of its economy. There was practically no industrial development during the first four plans, while the once-flourishing tea industry, the largest employer in the district, is now on a road of decline. The predominantly agrarian nature of the economy demands revitalisation of cottage industries, and establishment of small-scale industries; but little efforts in this direction have been taken; and, as a result of excessive population growth, the pressure on land has increased, for which, many have been rendered landless and they have swelled the category of agricultural labourers.

II. Growth of Employment Over the Plans

1. Workers and Non-workers

According to the 1971 Census, the district has a working force numbering 4,92,946 accounting for 28.8 per cent of the total population of the district, vide Chapter II. A comparative study with the figure as per 1951 Census reveals that the


2. Census of India, District Census Hand Book, Cachar District, 1951, pp. 96-138 (Data processed and compiled)
percentage of working force to total population has actually declined over the period from 35.7 per cent in 1951 to 26.8 per cent in 1971. This means that the number of non-working force has been increasing over the period. The total number of non-working force in the district as per 1971 Census comes to nearly 12.30 lakhs, accounting for 71.2 per cent of the total population of the district, vide Chapter II. The above analysis establishes beyond doubt the colossal wastage of manpower and the limited scope in the district for absorption of such a magnitude of non-working force.

In view of the increasing trend in the number of non-working force in the district, the importance of providing adequate and increasing employment opportunities in the development programmes cannot be overemphasised; and to the extent that any development plan falls short of generating adequate employment opportunities, it will necessarily give rise to a degree of social unrest which, if allowed to grow to unmanageable proportions, could wreck the other benefits that the Plan may seek to provide. It will, thus, be appropriate to study the employment situation in the district with particular reference to the employment trend and the contribution of the public and private sectors, in the light of the above observations.

2. Employment Trend:

The Census 1951 reveals that the total number of employees in the district in 1951 stood at \(1,19,828\.\)\(^1\) As the Tea industry was the only organised industry, so to say, at that time, this industry was the major source of employment in the district. But subsequently many uneconomic tea gardens were closed and, in fact, the number of tea gardens came down from 230 in 1951 to 114 in 1952 (vide Chapter V). The sudden closure of such a large number of tea gardens in the district within a year had its repercussions on the employment front, causing large scale unemployment in the district. Industrial development in the district over the years was too inadequate to fill in the gap created by the loss of so many tea gardens and the inevitable result has been the decline in the number of employees, which has come down from 1,19,828 in 1951 to 78,762 in 1974, vide Table IX.1. So it is a pity that the growth rate of employment in the district, over the years, is negative by about \(34\) per cent. Thus, the development programmes initiated through the four successive five year plans have failed to make any impact on the employment front of the district.

Employment trend in the recent years, however, demonstrates an improved picture. Taking both the sectors together, employment increased by 1,001 persons (or by 1.3%) on

---

1. Census of India, District Census Hand Book, Cooch Behar District, 1951, Economic Table III, p. 139
31.3.74 over the position prevailing on 31.3.73. The relevant figures of employment during the 5 successive years of the Fourth Plan period along with the base year (1969) are detailed below in a table.¹

### Table IX.1

**Employment Trend in Cachar District**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month/Year</th>
<th>No. of Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31st March, 1969</td>
<td>76,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 1970</td>
<td>77,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 1971</td>
<td>77,137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 1972</td>
<td>77,923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 1973</td>
<td>77,781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 1974</td>
<td>78,782</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following table will indicate the fluctuation in employment as a whole by broad industrial divisions as on 31st March, 1969, 1973 and 1974.²

---


² (a) U.B.I., Calcutta-1, Fact Finding Survey on Cachar District, 1971, p. 553

(b) District Employment Exchange, Cachar, op.cit., p. 2
Table IX.2

Employment by Broad Industrial Divisions in Cachar District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>No. of employees on</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31-3-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Plantation, Livestock, Factory etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52,959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mining and Quarrying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Manufacturing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Construction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Electricity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Trade and Commerce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Transport and Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3,514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16,379</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 76,402 77,781 78,782

5. Employment Index:

The employment index with March 1969 = 100 as base rose up to 102.0 at the close of the year ended March, 1974 as against 101.8 at the previous year ended March, 1973. The indices of employment for different years of the Fourth Five Year Plan period are given below:

Table IX.3

The Employment Indices of the Cachar District during 1969-74

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Index at the year ended</th>
<th>Public Sector</th>
<th>Private Sector</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31st March, 1969</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 1970</td>
<td>103.2</td>
<td>99.8</td>
<td>100.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 1971</td>
<td>113.9</td>
<td>96.6</td>
<td>101.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 1972</td>
<td>115.4</td>
<td>95.3</td>
<td>101.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 1973</td>
<td>119.9</td>
<td>95.3</td>
<td>101.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 1974</td>
<td>120.9</td>
<td>94.0</td>
<td>102.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident from the above table that the employment indices in the recent years are always higher in the Public Sector than that in the Private Sector.

4. Employment in the Private Sector

The Tea industry of this district accounts for about 94 per cent\(^1\) of the employment in the organised Private sector enterprises and it cannot be denied that a comparatively sustaining growth of employment in this industry has kept the rural economy of Cachar a bit free from economic peril.\(^2\)

1. District Employment Exchange, Cachar, op.cit., p. 3
2. ibid., p. 3
As far as employment in the private sector is concerned, it has been showing a declining trend over the past few years. Employment came down from 57,500\(^1\) in March 1968 to 55,479 in March 1973 and thence it increased marginally to 54,073 on 31-3-1974 (vide Table IX.4). The cumulative loss of employment up to March 1973 may primarily be accounted for by the conversion of some tea garden areas into agricultural fields, closure of one private Electric Company and some small manufacturing units, nationalisation of the major Scheduled banks and disengagement of casual workers in construction.\(^2\)

A table showing the changes in employment (under Private Sector) by broad industrial divisions between 31-3-73 and 31-3-74 is given below:\(^3\)

Table IX.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>No. of Employees as on 31-3-73</th>
<th>No. of Employees as on 31-3-74</th>
<th>Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Plantations</td>
<td>50,046</td>
<td>50,609</td>
<td>+563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Manufacturing</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>- 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Construction</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>- 84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Trade and Commerce</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>+ 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Services</td>
<td>2,818</td>
<td>2,706</td>
<td>-112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>55,749</td>
<td>54,073</td>
<td>+324</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. *ibid.*, p. 26
3. District Employment Exchange, Cachar, Silchar, *op.cit.*, p. 3
5. Employment in the Public Sector:

Employment in the Public Sector recorded a rise of more than 2.8 per cent during 1973-74, as against 4.05 per cent during 1972-73, 1.9 per cent during 1971-72 and 2.1 per cent during 1969-70. During 1973-74 a growth rate of 21 per cent, 24 per cent and 2.5 per cent was noticed in the construction, Electricity and Services Divisions respectively, while about 13 per cent fall was noticed in transport industry. Table IX.5, supplied below, reveals that employment in State Government Wing registered a rise of more than 5 per cent and Quasi-Government achieved a growth of about 6 per cent in 1974 over 1973, while Central Government establishments and Local Body establishments presented an employment out of 4.5 per cent and 10 per cent respectively over the same period.

The following table will represent the Wing-wise employment position under Public Sector as on 31-3-73 and 31-3-74.

Table IX.5
Wing-wise Employment position in Public Sector Establishments in the Cachar District for 1973 and 1974

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branches of Public Sector</th>
<th>No. of Employees as on 31-3-73</th>
<th>31-3-74</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Central Government</td>
<td>6,507</td>
<td>6,282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. State Government</td>
<td>9,727</td>
<td>10,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Quasi Government</td>
<td>6,557</td>
<td>7,108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Bodies</td>
<td>1,241</td>
<td>1,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>24,052</strong></td>
<td><strong>24,709</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. (a) District Employment Exchange, Cachar, Silchar, op.cit., p.3
(b) U.B.I., op.cit., p. 26
2. District Employment Exchange, Cachar, op.cit., p. 5
3. Ibid., p. 4
The available records\(^1\) indicate that the number of Assam Government employees which was 7,807 in 1958, rose successively to 8,980, 9,737 and finally to 10,292 in 1967, 1973 and 1974 (31st March) respectively.

6. Employment of Women:

Taking the two sectors together, women workers which constituted 34 per cent\(^2\) of the total employment of the district in March, 1970 declined to 31.7 per cent\(^3\) in March 1973, but thereafter increased marginally to 32.8 per cent\(^4\) in March, 1974. Of the total women employment, private sector alone contributed 90.8 per cent\(^5\) in March, 1974 which, of course, is confined mainly to Tea industry. A portion of the women workers in plantation industry is, however, of seasonal type rather than regular.

\(^{1}\text{(a) District Statistical Abstract, Cachar District, 1967, Table 15.4}\
\(^{2}\text{(b) District Statistical Hand Book, Cachar District, 1971, p. 71}\
\(^{3}\text{(c) Table IX.6}\
\(^{2}\text{2. U.B.I., Calcutta, op.cit., p. 26}\
\(^{3}\text{3. District Employment Exchange, op.cit., p. 4}\
\(^{4}\text{4. ibid., p. 4}\
\(^{5}\text{5. ibid., p. 4}
III. Unemployment Problem

1. A national problem

The unemployment problem is a national problem; and in the words of Dr. S.N. Nehrotra, "As unemployment and under-employment constitute the greatest social problem in the country at present, it has been decided that an important objective of the planning in India must be to get rid of unemployment. The problem of population growth has got an important bearing on this social problem as expansion of employment opportunities is to commensurate with the increase in the labour force over a given period."¹ It is, thus, necessary that a solution to such social problem should be found out at national level, through the planning process. In creating more employment opportunities, which is of utmost importance in the present economic set-up of the country, priority should, therefore, be given to social and financial investment and skill formation;² and "apart from other measures, the development of an adequate and effective placement service is of vital importance for ensuring that the available employment and the most suitable incumbents are brought together as early as possible. The placement services have an important role in providing not only suitable placement opportunities but also vocational guidance in enabling an individual to find the

¹. Nehrotra, S.N., Labour Problems in India, Delhi, 1965, p. 323
employment most suited to his talents and capabilities."1

2. Employment Exchanges

There are three Employment Exchanges in the district, one each at Silchar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. It needs mention here that the year-wise number of registrants in the Employment Exchanges does not actually reflect the magnitude of unemployment existing in the district for the reasons like ignorance, lack of confidence in Employment Exchange, communication problems, sense of reluctance to get self registered etc. An Employment Exchange cannot also create new employment opportunities, and necessary measures to be adopted for creating more employment also remain out of its scope. But inspite of all these, by bringing to light the employment position as well as employment market information, they help in reducing the avoidable unemployment caused by imperfection of knowledge on the part of labour. In fact, these Exchanges can render a good service in helping to provide the persons with right type of job. As Sri Nehru had remarked, "As long as the present structure of society remained, as long as it was not replaced by one under which training and employment would be automatically reserved to every citizen, so long must there be an employment service to bring the necessary adjustments between the demand for and supply of labour."2

2. Quoted in Labour Problems in India, S.N. Nehrotra, New Delhi, 1965, p. 40
Thus, although the Employment Exchanges are not all powerful to meet the problem of unemployment, they can do a lot by diffusing the employment news among the masses and act as a link between the prospective worker and the prospective employer. To be more precise, the Employment Exchanges facilitate the supply of labour to the demand for it.¹

3. Unemployment Trend

In all, 16,155 persons including 2,324 females registered their names with the 3 Employment Exchanges of this district for employment assistance during the year ended March '74 as against 3,927, 7044, 6,021, 6,602, 9,710, 9,752, 9,752 and 11,043 registered in 1956, 1964, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972 and 1973 respectively.

The Live Register of the Employment Exchanges reveals that the number of job seekers in the district continued to rise very rapidly from year to year. The number of applicants on the Live Register which was only 2,005 in 1956 rose to 2,841 in 1964, 9,375 in 1972, 13,883 in 1973 and then to 20,514 in 1974. From these figures, it may be observed that the number of job-seekers doubled between 1972 and 1974, i.e., within a span of merely two years, a situation which speaks for the severity of the problem of unemployment in the district.

The following table shows the percentage of different categories of the registrants recorded in the Live Registers of

¹ Mohrotra, S.N., Labour Problems in India, New Delhi, 1965, p. 36
the three Employment Exchanges of the district. 1

Table IX.6
Percentage of Trade-wise Classification of Registrants in the Live Registers of the Employment Exchanges of Cashar District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particulars of Trade</th>
<th>Percentage of Registrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Professional, Technical and related skilled workers</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Clerical</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Unskilled</td>
<td>56.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Others</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident from the above table that the registrants in the professional, technical and other related skilled workers occupy the second lowest place whereas unskilled and others have maintained to occupy the high steady position over the years. This is partly due to the inadequate facilities for technical education in the district and perhaps partly due to the immediate absorption after completion of technical education. The gradual increase in percentage of enrolment in the category of 'unskilled' and 'others' is somewhat alarming. It is presumed that this is caused due to unemployment in the agrarian sector. 2

1. Rural Industries Project, Cashar, Silchar, Techno-Economic Survey of Cashar District, 1976, p. 32
2. Ibid., p. 32
As many as 1,000 Scheduled Caste and 64 Scheduled Tribe applicants registered their names with the Employment Exchanges of this district during 1973-74.1 The Live Registers of the Employment Exchanges contain 1,654 Scheduled Caste and 41 Scheduled Tribe candidates as on 31-3-74.2

An analysis of educated applicants on the Live Registers of the Employment Exchanges of the district is given in the following table.3 This will display the position as it stands on 31.12.72 and 31.12.73.

Table IX.7

Educated Applicants on the Live Registers of the Employment Exchanges in Cachar District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Applicants</th>
<th>No. of Applicants in the Live Registers as on</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31.12.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Matriculate</td>
<td>2,281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Under-Graduate</td>
<td>1,078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Graduate</td>
<td>1,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,381</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. District Employment Exchange, Cachar, Silchar, op.cit., p. 4
2. ibid., p. 4
3. ibid., p. 4
According to the Cachar District Annual Employment Market Report for the year ended 31st March, 1974,¹ more than 85 per cent of the total registered job-seekers of this district belong exclusively to the (1) Educated and (2) Unskilled. Educated unemployed are of two kinds - (a) Specialists and (b) Generalists. Of the former, there is no problem for getting them employed. It is the 'generalists', however, who pose a real problem. The annual turnover of 'generalists' wanting employment exceeds the capacity of Service sector to employ them.² Table IX.7 reveals that in a single year the educated unemployed came to be nearly doubled, a situation which cannot but be viewed seriously.

4. Demand for Personnel

In all, 555 vacancies were notified to the Employment Exchanges of this district during the year ended 31st March, 1974, vide Table IX.8, as against 831, 1758, 571, 495 and 487 vacancies notified in 1966, 1964, 1968, 1971 and 1973 respectively.³

¹. District Employment Exchange, Cachar, Silchar, op.cit., p. 4
². Ibid., p. 5
³. (a) District Statistical Abstract, Cachar District, 1963, Table 17.3
 (b) District Statistical Handbook, Cachar District, 1971, p. 73
 (c) District Employment Exchange, Cachar, Silchar, op.cit., p. 5
During the year ended 31st March, 1974, 438 persons were placed in employment through the Employment Exchanges of this district as against 243 placed in 1973, 665 in 1971, 588 in 1968, 1372 in 1964 and 547 in 1966, vide Table IX.9.

An occupational analysis of vacancies notified to and filled in through Employment Exchanges of the district for the years ended March 1973 and 1974 is given below in a tabular form. 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Vacancies notified during the year ended</th>
<th>March '73</th>
<th>March '74</th>
<th>31.3.73</th>
<th>31.3.74</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Professional, Technical and Related workers</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Administrative, Executive and Managerial</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Clerical workers</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>114</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sales women</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Farmers, Fishermen, Loggers, Hunters etc.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Service workers</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Production and Related workers, Transport Equipment workers and Labourers</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>177</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>487</strong></td>
<td><strong>555</strong></td>
<td><strong>243</strong></td>
<td><strong>438</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. District Employment Exchange, Cachar, Silchar, op.cit., p. 5
The numbers of registration and placement through the Employment Exchanges of the district for the past few years are provided in the following table:

Table II.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Registration</th>
<th>Placement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>.. 3,927</td>
<td>547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>.. 7,044</td>
<td>1,372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>.. 6,838</td>
<td>738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>.. 6,081</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>.. 6,602</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>.. 9,710</td>
<td>663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>.. 9,752</td>
<td>841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>.. 11,043</td>
<td>845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>.. 16,155</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. (a) District Statistical Abstract, Cachar District, 1965, Table 15.8

(b) District Statistical Hand Book, Cachar District, 1971, p. 73

(c) District Employment Exchange, Cachar, Silchar, op. cit., pp. 4-5
IV. Training Facilities

In order to increase the employment potentials, there is need for increasing training facilities. As Professor Lewis puts it, "There is a greater demand for primary education, culminating in the demand that every child of school age should have compulsory education. More Secondary Schools are needed, either to supply more secondary education for its own sake, or else to provide material for the Universities, or for further training as secretaries, teachers, or technical assistants. A whole range of training facilities is required for artisans, agricultural assistants, teachers, nurses, secretaries, mechanics. Outside the range of these institutions there is the field of adult education, extending from literacy campaigns or agricultural extension to literary classes. And crowning the whole system is the need for training at University level in almost every branch of knowledge." ¹ The above quotation, thus, pinpoints to the importance of training facilities that will obviously supply skilled hands necessary for participation in the development programmes. But, in Cachar, training facilities are quite inadequate, as is reflected from the gradual increase in percentage of enrolment of unskilled registrants in the Live Registers of the Employment Exchanges of the district, vide Table IX.7.

The existing technical and professional institutions of the district are - one 'Polytechnic' at Meherpur near Silchar

having three year diploma course in Civil, Electrical and Mechanical engineering; one 'Industrial Training Institute' at Srikoma, near Silchar, having facilities for imparting training in craftsmanship in different trades; one 'Gram Sevak Training Centre' at Arunachal, near Silchar; one 'Medical College' at Ghungoor, near Silchar, having provision for teaching up to M.B.B.S. standard; two training centres for 'Nursing and Midwifery' training, one under the management of Christian Missionaries at Danskandi and the other under the Government Civil Hospital, Silchar; one 'Veterinary Field Assistant Training Centre' at Ghungoor; two 'Weaving Training Institutes' for females - one at Kabuganj under Silchar Sub-division and the other at Mohakal, under Karimganj Sub-division; one 'Industrial Estate' at Madarpur (vide Chapter V); one 'Package Programme' at Arunachal (vide Chapter IV); one 'B.T. College'; one 'Law College' and one 'Normal School' located at Silchar. Besides these, there are also private institutions to give coaching in Telegraphy, Stenography and Typing.2

In view of the mounting unemployment problem and at the same time shortage of skilled workers, the existing training facilities seem to be hopelessly inadequate3 and a comprehensive programme in this respect shall have to be undertaken along with

1. District Information and Public Relation Officer, Cachar, Silchar, Cachar District at a Glance, 1967, pp. 11-12
2. Ibid., p. 12
3. Rural Industries Project, Cachar, Silchar, op.cit., p. 32
various schemes of employment so that trained persons are available for various jobs.

V. Appraisal overall and Potentialities

No stock-taking as to the number of unemployed persons and the nature of unemployment problem in the district has been taken, while the Live Registers in the Employment Exchanges only show the numbers of job seekers, who for any reason may care to register their names; for which it is really impossible to form a clear idea about the nature and extent of unemployment problem in the district.

However, it appears almost certain that the real cause of unemployment problem in the district is the maladjustment and perpetual disequilibrium between the supply of and demand for labour. The supply side has been badly affected by the heavy refugee influx following the partition of India, generating in abundance of labour force; this has been further compounded by natural growth and increased output of educational institutions over the years. On the agricultural front, the picture is deplorable; due to excessive pressure of population on land and spiralling prices, many have disposed of their land or are driven out by co-sharers; and they increased the number of agricultural labourers. Most of the agriculturists have marginal and sub-marginal plots of land, and they can hardly make a full living out of these uneconomic holdings; and in absence of profitable subsidiary occupations, there prevails widespread disguised unemployment amongst the cultivators.
The demand side of labour is bleak indeed. As the district of Cachar is economically underdeveloped, the demand for labour is abnormally low while the supply is, as hinted in the foregoing paragraph, is just the contrary. The gap is continually widening, since the employment scope in the non-agricultural sector is limited. To quote the "Credit Plan for Cachar District", "The severity of the situation can be well-judged from the fact that the share of employment in the industrial sector has progressively declined from 9.39 per cent in 1961 to 3.65 per cent in 1971."¹ The backwardness and stagnation of the economy, non-availability of the right order of entrepreneurship, communication hazards, paucity of capital and above all the disadvantageous location of the district on the international border, have hindered the growth of industrialisation and hence of employment.² The Tea industry which is the only large-scale employer, is now in a state of moribund condition; and unless it is rejuvenated, demand for labour from this major employer is bound to go down. The growth of small-scale industries is so slow that it has failed to make any effect on employment generation. Turning to public sector, it is found that nothing has been done to exploit the employment potential in the district.

Unemployment is rampant in rural areas which cannot be solved by land alone, the supply of which is limited. Thus,

¹ U.B.I., Calcutta-1, Credit Plan for Cachar District, 1978, p.7
measures of land reforms and improvement of agricultural practices need to be supplemented by a streamlined development of allied activities like dairy, poultry, fishery and village and small industries. It needs to be stressed here that in a backward district like Cachar where the prospect of industrialisation in a big way seems bleak, due to various constraints, a self-reliant rural sector holds the key to employment prospect.

With the improvement of technique, limited scope of expansion of area under cultivation and prevalent underemployment in the agricultural sector, the intake of labour force in the agricultural sector cannot be more than what it is at present and as such the increase in labour force would exert pressure in the secondary and tertiary sectors of economy. In the context of Cachar, which is certainly not an industrially developed district, this would mean an acute situation. The district's poor industrial development has been certainly a factor for the present acuteness of the unemployment problem. Development in the tertiary sector is also far from happy. Thus, labour intensive schemes, which have to come in without sacrificing the accepted economic goal of the country in the context of the present surplus manpower problem, have to be undertaken in these sectors of economy. The schemes have to be so formulated that this manpower will be required to implement and man the schemes and this is the only way to prevent the

1. Statistical Hand Book, Silchar Sub-Division, 1976, p. 7
waste in human resources, which also presupposes expansion of existing training facilities. As a matter of fact, what is needed is a revolutionary approach for generation of employment by industrialising the district and utilising the vast natural resources.

In the context of the above analysis, one cannot but be happy to note that there are concrete proposals, as hinted earlier, to install one Paper and Pulp Mill and one Sugar Mill in the district in no very distant future. It is the assessment of the E.M.I. Unit of the District Employment Exchange, Cachar, Silchar, that the volume of direct employment in the proposed Paper Mill, is likely to vary between 2,500 and 3,500, and that of indirect employment between 10,000 and 12,000.1 As per the Techno-Economic Survey Report of Cachar District 1976, the Sugar Mill, when set up, will offer a direct employment opportunity of about 600 people besides benefiting about 16,000 cane growers indirectly.2

So far as rural employment is concerned, it is hopeful to note that the Government of India has projected an outlay of Rs. 10 crores, during the Fifth Five Year Plan for the upliftment of rural industries which will undoubtedly generate employment in rural sector.3

1. District Employment Exchange, Cachar, Silchar, op.cit., p. 6
2. Rural Industries Project, Cachar, Silchar, op.cit., p. 48
3. District Employment Exchange, Cachar, Silchar, op.cit., p. 6
Another important development which is likely to go a long way in solving the unemployment problem of the district, is the setting up of O.N.G.C. Project for exploration of oil resources from selected sites. This is sure to open frontiers of employment in near future.¹

So far as self-employment opportunities are concerned, it is necessary to note that the Government of Assam has set up an 'Entrepreneurship Motivation Centre' in this district for imparting training under 60 schemes.² The scheme is covered under a 'half-a-million job Programme' for educated unemployed youths. The training facilities are — Preliminary Motivation Market Study, Preparation of Project Report and Entrepreneurship Training.³ Such self-employment training facilities are likely to help the viable section of the unemployed to be the arbiter of their own fortunes. There is no denying, nor need any one deny the fact that self-employment programmes in this district will prove effective in times to come by changing the wave of job-seekers after the white-collar jobs.

In this connection it needs to be emphasised that in the present set-up, where there has been mushroom growth of institutions imparting general education only, divorced from the problems and realities, there is scope for vocational guidance in the district; individuals are coming from schools

¹. District Employment Exchange, Cachar, Silchar, op.cit., p. 7
². Ibid., p. 6
³. Ibid., p. 6
and colleges without any vocational training to register their
names for certain white-collar jobs in which the employment
opportunities are very remote, and, as such, unless guided
properly, they will feel frustrated.¹

VI. Conclusion

The study reveals that the problem of unemployment is
of alarming magnitude in the district. Although the live
registers of the Employment Exchanges do not present true
picture, yet it can be safely taken for granted that the upward
trend of unemployment among the unskilled persons as well as
educated job-seekers is on increase.

That the private sector plays a dominant role in the
economic exerwise of this district, is evident in the employment
front also. As it stands on 31.3.74, out of the total employees
numbering 78,763, as many as 54,073, or 68 per cent are absorbed
in the private sector as against only 31.4 per cent in the
public sector. Had the tea industry, which is controlled by
the private sector, not existed, what would have been the shape
of the economy of the district is anybody's guess.

¹ District Information and Public Relations Officer, Cachar,
Silchar, Cachar District At a Glance, 1967, pp. 12-13
Chapter X

TRADE AND COMMERCE

I. Introductory

The economic backwardness of the district of Cachar is reflected in its commercial activities also, where only 1.4 per cent of the total population are engaged in trade and commerce. The district is heavily dependent for almost all the essential commodities on imports while only a few items of primary commodities are exported.

The mercantile activities of the district are concentrated in urban areas, particularly in the Sub-divisional towns and the mercantile communities comprise mostly of Marwaries and Bengalees. The majority of the retail traders of the district are immigrant Bengali Hindus, particularly of the 'Paul' and 'Saha' sects, but the wholesale business is dominated, as in the State of Assam as a whole, primarily by the Marvari merchants. Like the natives of the State as a whole, the Barmas, who are considered as the natives of the

1. U.B.I., Calcutta-1, Credit Plan for Cachar District, 1978, p. 49

2. cf. The dominance of Marvari traders in the wholesale trade of the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam is evidenced from the following quotation: "Almost all the export traffic (except mustard) and nearly the whole of the import traffic of the valley is conducted by Marvari traders from Rajputana ... The Kayahs (Marwaries) monopolised the banking and wholesale business of the valley ... ." Dr. Khurshid Alam, Social Traits and Institutions of the Assamese People and Their Economic Significance; North Eastern Economic Review, April-June, 1977 Issue, Editor - Dr. U.N. Bharali, Guwahati, p. 152
district, have shown little interest in the commercial enterprise. As Allen writes: "very few of the indigenous inhabitants of the district have attempted to appropriate any portion of the profits that accrue from retail trade."

II. Trade Structure

The theoretical concept of the pattern of trade of a region is analysed below in the words of Nasser Shri Prakash, Navraj Van Gupta and Sankar Kumar Ghosh: "According to the Theories of International Trade, the pattern of trade of an economy with the outside world can be explained in terms of its 'factor endowments' or its 'relative comparative advantage' in different productive activities. Countries which are relatively labour surplus and capital scarce generally specialise in those lines of production which are labour intensive, whereas, the economies with surplus capital and

1. cf. The aversion to trade and commerce as a profession amongst the natives of Assam will be evidenced from the following quotation: "Local commercial class did not grow in Assam ... the local people did not acquire any aptitude for such occupation and the rest of the trade and commerce were operated by the people coming from Rajasthan and Bengal." Dr. Khurshid Alam, Social Traits and Institutions of the Assamese people and their Economic Significance; North Eastern Economic Review, April-June, 1977 Issue, Editor - Dr. U.N. Bardoloi, Guwahati, pp. 131-32


labour scarcity specialise in capital intensive lines of production. The actual patterns of trade, by and large, are found to be in agreement with this theoretic precept. ... Consequently, the bulk of exports of the developing countries is constituted by primary and agricultural goods while their imports are predominated by manufactures. On the other hand, developed countries export mainly manufactures and their imports are predominately constituted by primary and agricultural goods. The same pattern gets reflected, to a great extent, in the trade relations of regional economies within the nations.

"Faster endowments, however, do not remain static overtime. They are affected by the nature and stage of development of the economy. As the economy moves on its developmental path, labour intensive techniques of production tend to be replaced by capital intensive techniques. With the changing structure of output, import requirements for satisfying the final demand as well as the demand for intermediate goods and raw materials for different sectors also change. With economic development of the developing countries/regions, proportion of capital goods in imports is bound to rise, and the volume of imports tends to increase. In the growth process, some of the imported items may be substituted by domestic production, imports of some new items and more quantities of others may also become necessary. Some of the currently non-competitive imports may also become competitive in the long run.

"It has been empirically established that (1) the share of developed countries/regions in the total global trade
is manifold than the share of developing countries/regions;
(ii) a good proportion of national income of developing countries/
regions is dependent upon export production and a substantive
part of their domestic output is spent on imports from other
countries/regions; (iii) higher is the stage of development of
the national income/regional economy, more diversified is the
structure of its imports/export. Thus, the level of development
and the structure of the economy gets reflected in the level and
structure of its imports/export.

From the above citation it is clear, among other things,
that the composition of imports and exports of a region is
determined, to a considerable extent, by the productivity of a
region. A region that specialises in the production of different
types of essential goods and commodities on a large-scale may
have an adequate exportable surplus of these commodities and may
also export provided there is a demand for the commodities
outside the region. If different types of commodities are
produced, the region may not be required to import all the
products. To make an estimate of such economic relations, it
may be appropriate to have a stock-taking of the principal
products of the region, district of Cachar.

It is customary to classify the products of a region
into four categories, namely, (a) Agricultural products,
(b) Forest products, (c) Industrial products and (d) Mineral
products; and in the light of the above classification, the
important products of the district, under each of the above
categories, are detailed below:
(a) **Agricultural products:** Rice, Tea, Sugarcane, Cotton, Oil seeds, Jute, Pineapples, arecanut, betelnut, oranges, poultry products etc.

(b) **Forest products:** Important species of timber, such as Sam, Gumari, Sundis etc. and Agar, Cane, Galla, Thatch etc.

(c) **Industrial products:** Aluminium made utensils, Cane and bamboo products like baskets, Sital Pati, furniture etc. and various handloom products, particularly of the products of Manipuri weavers.

(d) **Mineral products:** There is no indigenous mineral products, worth the name, in the district.

Against the backdrop of the above mentioned products, the district of Cachar is found to import and export the following commodities:¹

(a) **Imports:** Textile products and other clothes, paper, petrol and petroleum products, edible oil, pulses, spices, sugar, salt, wheat, flour, coal, hardwares, leather, glass, cement, metal products, building materials, medicine, tyre and spare parts and many other essential and luxury goods.

---

(b) **Exports:** Tea, Jute, bamboo, timber, cane, cotton, molasses (gur), Pineapples, egg and cane and bamboo products.

It appears from the above disproportionate trade structure that there is almost one-way traffic of commodities in the district and as such, it is badly dependent on the inflow of essential commodities to meet the local requirements. Such a high proportion of imports, which makes for heavy drainage of financial resources is indicative of a narrow and limited production base and also reflects the backward character of the overall economy of the district.

One most depressing feature of the trade structure of the district is that there is no organised market in Cachar and that the middleman traders are exploiting the markets. The same is true for the State as a whole, as will be evident from the following quotation: "There is no organised market, but it can be organised if banks adopt a liberal attitude. At present middleman traders are exploiting the markets. Co-operative or partnership basis purchasing and selling centres can be established if the banks come out to give credit assistance to educated unemployed youths."²

The trade structure of the district, however, highlights the fact that there exists a good potential to substitute imports


by domestic production for satisfying demand for intermediate 
and final goods. If the extent of demand is taken as a 
criterion for locating industries in the district, several 
industries would be found to be viable and suitable for being 
located in the district. Paper, Sugar, Food and Fruit-
processing industries illustrate this point, vide Chapter V.

The District Census Hand Book (Cachar District) 1971, 
details some of the important products that are being imported 
to and exported from the eight towns of the district, through a 
table, as supplied below:

Table X.1
Trade and Commerce of Cachar District, 1969

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the Towns</th>
<th>Names of 3 most important commodities imported</th>
<th>Names of 3 most important commodities exported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Badarpur</td>
<td>Rice, Cloth, Pulses</td>
<td>Egg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Badarpur Rly Town</td>
<td>Rice, Cloth, Pulses</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hailakandi</td>
<td>Kerosine oil, Mustard oil, Salt</td>
<td>Handloom cloth, Egg, Bamboochip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Karimganj</td>
<td>Fine cloth, Pulses, Kerosine oil</td>
<td>Bamboo, Tea, Cotton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lakhipur</td>
<td>Cement, Kerosine oil, Pulses</td>
<td>Pineapples, Jute, Cotton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lala</td>
<td>Fine cloth, Kerosine oil, Pulses</td>
<td>Rice, Gur(molasses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ramkrishna Nagar</td>
<td>Cloth, Pulses, Salt</td>
<td>Tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Silchar</td>
<td>Wheat, Pulses, Sugar</td>
<td>Tea, Jute</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. Pre-Plan Scene

The natural communication of Cachar prior to the Partition of the country lay through the waterways and railways down the valley opening in Karimganj to Eastern Bengal and thence to Calcutta and, as such, in those days Cachar had trading relation with Bengal and through Bengal with the rest of the country. It used to export its natural products and import basic necessaries of life. The neighbours in the hills depended on this district for their supplies. Thomas Fisher, the first Superintendent of Cachar, has left behind detailed description of the timber, bamboo, cane and other trades of Cachar with Bengal. The river Barak, divided into Surma and Kushiana, was the channel through which Cachar timbers, bamboo and cane were conveyed to Bengal via Sylhet and as a consequence, Silchar and Karimganj (then a part of Sylhet) became trading centres.

But the partition of the country put a severe strain on the economy of Cachar and jeopardised her trade and commerce, reference of which is available in the Techno-Economic Survey of

2. (a) Pemberton, Capt. R.B., op. cit., pp. 213-215
   (b) Bhattacharyea, J.B., Cachar under British Rule in N.E. India, 1977, p. 203
3. (a) ibid., p. 203
   (b) Pemberton, Capt. R.B., op. cit., pp. 215-216
Assam, which remarks: "The economy of Cachar Valley is that of a relatively isolated area cut-off from its old traditional markets by political changes and separated from its parent area by a great distance. Formerly Cachar supplied the bulk of tea and timber requirements of East Bengal, which after partition has a very limited trade with Cachar Valley."  

As has been hinted earlier, in the pre-partition days, Silchar and Karimganj were the two trading centres of the region comprising present Cachar. Karimganj, which was one of the flourishing trade centres in the State of Assam, next only to Gambati and Tinsukia, used to cater to the trading needs of the region comprising Cachar, Mizoram, Tripura, etc. The importance of Karimganj as one of the famous trading centres of Assam in the pre-partition days is evident from the fact that it used to export tea, honey, wax, lac agar-wood, atar, pineapple, bamboo, ghban, timber, linseed, mustard, chati, besides rice, to various parts of the country. But such trading activities of Karimganj suffered a serious setback due mainly to the disruption of communication link with the rest of India since Partition.

2. Statistical Officer, Karimganj, Subdivisional Statistical Hand Book, Karimganj Sub-division, 1974, p. 1
3. (a) The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XV, Oxford, 1908, p. 41
   (b) Choudhury, A.C., Srihatter Itibritta, Vol. I, Part-I, Chapter-V, Silchar, 1984 B.S., p. 57
Steamer service through which Tea, Jute, Timber and bamboo products of the region and pulses, oil, soap, luxury goods etc. from Calcutta used to ply regularly between Karimganj and Calcutta in the pre-partition days via the water-ways, now forming the territory of Bangladesh, came to a standstill after the partition.¹ Though steamer service resumed after Partition, it again came to a halt in 1965 following Indo-Pakistani War. Similarly, the Surma Mail, the main railway link of the district with the rest of India, stopped functioning after the Partition.² Such a disruption of flourishing business activities at Karimganj threw hundreds of people to unemployment and as such gave a severe jolt to the socio-economic condition of the Karimganj Sub-division,³ and, as a matter of fact, of the district of Cachar as a whole.

IV. Growth of Trade over the Plan Period

According to the 1971 Census, only 23,885 persons (or nearly 1.4 per cent of the total population) are engaged in trade and commerce in Cachar, of whom 10,015 persons are in urban areas. This includes employees of trading establishments. In Assam, the highest number of persons are reported from Kamrup district(50,249)

2. ibid., p. 1
3. ibid., p. 1
followed by Goalpara (35,582).\(^1\) Cachar's position in this regard is 6th in importance. The number of persons engaged in trade and commerce per thousand population is 14 for Cachar as against 16\(^2\) for the State as a whole which indicates that the district lags behind the average condition of the State in the sphere of trade and commerce.

The absolute number of workers engaged in trade and commerce in the district has increased by 3,590 over the years since 1951 (from 20,295 in 1951\(^3\) to 23,885 in 1971). Therefore, the percentage increase of workers engaged in trade and commerce in the district over the years works out to be 18, as against 11 for Assam. However, the percentage of workers engaged in trade and commerce to total working force has remained more or less stagnant over the years both in Cachar as also in the State of Assam as a whole. This indicates that there has been no marked progress in the district as also in the State as a whole, in the sphere of trade and commerce over the period under review.


---

2. Ibid., p. 54
3. District Census Hand Book, Cachar District, 1951, pp. 96-137 (Data processed and compiled)
worker engaged in wholesale and retail trade, taken together, at 1,908 (as against 22,081 in Assam), 1,189 being in the Urban areas and 719 in the rural areas. Out of these, the number of 'directory establishments'\(^1\) are 465 - 383 for Urban and 82 for rural. Such urban rural composition of trading establishments reflects the concentration of trading activities in the urban areas. The number of trading establishments in Assam, district-wise, is supplied below through a table:\(^2\)

**Table X.2**

Number of Trading Establishments in Assam, District-wise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Goalpara</td>
<td>1,168</td>
<td>1,188</td>
<td>2,356</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>1,081</td>
<td>784</td>
<td>724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Kamrup</td>
<td>1,405</td>
<td>5,697</td>
<td>5,100</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>1,258</td>
<td>2,707</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Darrang</td>
<td>1,270</td>
<td>1,047</td>
<td>2,317</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>1,138</td>
<td>705</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Neugong</td>
<td>1,131</td>
<td>753</td>
<td>1,884</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>1,027</td>
<td>551</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sibsagar</td>
<td>1,750</td>
<td>1,872</td>
<td>3,022</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>1,557</td>
<td>806</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Dibrugarh</td>
<td>1,729</td>
<td>1,699</td>
<td>3,428</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>663</td>
<td>1,566</td>
<td>1,034</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Lakhimpur</td>
<td>1,089</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>1,381</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>881</td>
<td>246</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Mikir Hills</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. N.C. Hills</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Cachar</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>1,105</td>
<td>1,908</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>802</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Assam**

10,750 | 11,331 | 22,081 | 1,173 | 3,641 | 9,577 | 7,690

---

1. These establishments employing six or more workers and having an annual output/turnover/receipt of Rs. 1 lakh or more, vide Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, Guwahati, *Economic Survey, Assam, 1977-78*, p. 53

The above table reveals three important points that reflect the backwardness of the district of Cachar in the sphere of trade and commerce. First, Cachar shares only 8.6 per cent of the total trading establishments of the State, as against 25.1 per cent shared by Kamrup district. Secondly, as regards the number of trading establishments, Cachar ranks sixth in importance among the ten districts of Assam. Thirdly, the urban-rural break-up of the trading establishments reveals the pre-eminent position of trading activities in the economic scene in the urban areas of the district.

The growth of trade and commerce synchronises with the urbanisation and, as such, the large trading establishments as well as wholesale trading houses are concentrated in the urban areas of Silchar, Karimganj and Hailakandi, and exactly for the same reason, the innumerable retail shops have come up in these areas, which are doing flourishing business. But the position of trade and commerce is just the reverse in the rural areas, where, due to inadequacy of transport and communication, the wholesale trade could not make any headway, while the retail shops which cater to the needs of the huge rural population, are also few and far between.¹ The underdeveloped nature of trade and commerce of the district is a reflection of backwardness of the State as a whole in this respect where

¹ cf. Urban-oriented trading activity is the feature of the State of Assam as a whole, as will be revealed from the following quotation: "More than 90 per cent of the income generated was in the urban areas", The Survey of Distributive Trade, 1970-71, as quoted in Economic Survey, Assam, 1977-78, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, Guwhati, p. 56
the share of retail trade in the total income generated by the trading establishments is higher than that of the wholesale trade.  

As regards the growth of trading centres, it may be mentioned here that besides Silchar and Karimganj towns, three more towns in the district, namely, Lala in Hailakandi Sub-division, Badarpur in Karimganj Sub-division and Lakshipur in Silchar Sub-division, have developed as trading centres over the period, under study. Amongst the rural areas, Durlavoherra, under Ratapani P.S. in Karimganj Sub-division has come into prominence as trading centre.\(^2\) Huge quantities of bamboos are exported to Calcutta, besides being the centre of distribution of the essential commodities to the surrounding villages and the tea gardens. However, the "refugee township" of Bankrishmanagar could not develop into a trading centre although it has much potentialities and possesses relatively better infrastructural facilities.\(^3\)

Any study on the trade and commerce of the district will remain incomplete unless reference is made to the 'Math Basar' in Karimganj Sub-division, one-time famous buying and selling centre of handled products of the Sub-division, namely, cheap quality Gamusa, Sarees, Dhuties, Scarfs, Towels, Bed-

---

3. Ibid., p. 36
covers, Bed sheets and Lungie. "Previously merchants from all over the State used to purchase cloth at the Math Basar weekly (Thursday) cloth market, Karimganj, perhaps the only market of this nature in Assam, where there was a regular feature of transaction of lakhs of rupees in every market day."¹ But the investigation reveals that prohibitive price of yarn has badly affected this traditional handicrafts in the Karimganj Sub-division and the transaction of Math Basar, dwindled. It no longer holds the same position as it did before the rise of the price of yarn since 1970.

Another striking feature, connected with the growth of trading centres of the district, is the decay of the commercial eminence of Karimganj town since Independence (in view of its loss of direct link with the rest of the country through rail and water-routes and its strategic location on the international border) and the gradual growth of trading activities at Silchar town. In fact, from an ordinary centre of trade and commerce in the pre-partition days, the Silchar town has now emerged as one of the most flourishing centres of trade and commerce in Assam.² This is due mainly to its increasing importance as the district headquarters and its pre-eminent position as the supply base of the Union Territory of Mizoram.³ It needs be mentioned

¹ Sub-dvisional Planning Cell, Karimganj, Draft Outline of the Fifth Five Year Plan, Vol. II (Sectoral Plan), 1974-79, Karimganj, 1974, p. 190
² Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Government of Assam, Guwahati, Handbook of Assam, 1976, p. 112
³ Ibid., p. 112
here that the commercial eminence of Karimganj has not dwindled altogether. In fact, at present the town is working as a supply base for the whole of neighbouring Tripura State.¹

The growth of trade centres, as revealed from the foregoing analysis, does not, in all probability, indicate the commercial prosperity of the district. As a matter of fact, whatever growth there has been, over the period, may be ascribed as the offshoot of the growth of population and, as such, there has not been any real growth of trade and commerce in the district, mainly due to the fact that Cachar did not figure as an industrial district and that the raw materials of the district are yet to be exploited. Industrialisation, as Mainsel points out, leads to an increase in the ability to export and it helps to finance increased imports.² Again, as discussed in Chapter VI, the transport and communication facilities of the district, both external and internal, are far from satisfactory. Therefore, unless the climate of industrialisation is set in motion and the whole of the district is linked up with a net-work of railways and all-weather road-ways, connecting the interiors, the trade and commerce of the district will not look up.

¹. Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Government of Assam, Guwhati, Hand Book of Assam, 1976, p. 112
V. Conclusion

The foregoing analysis highlights the high degree of import-dependence of the district of Cashar upon the rest of the country even for its essential requirements. The almost one-way traffic in its trade relation with other districts/States, the near-stagnation of the percentage of persons engaged in trade and commerce in relation to its total working force over the period since 1951, the small number of trading establishments, accounting for only 8.6 per cent of the State total, and concentration of trading activities in the urban areas display a perpetual state of depression in the sphere of trade and commerce of the district.

Unless adequate steps are taken at the earliest in the right direction towards rapid industrialisation and revitalisation of its unsatisfactory transport and communication systems, it is unlikely for the district to come out of its existing pattern of trade, synonymous with an underdeveloped economy.