CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The state is far and not easily accessible from the mainland of India. And within the state there are large parts quite as inaccessible from the central plain. A traveller from the mainland of India, intending to visit the interior parts of Manipur, has to face the hazards of double inaccessibility. He can reach Dimapur Railway station by train. There he has to obtain a special permit called 'Inner Line Pass' to enable him enter Manipur through Nagaland. He has to break his journey at Imphal before proceeding to the hills in the interior. This is the present position. Of course, there has been progress in the road mileage but much remains to be done to bring communication anywhere near satisfactory.

The state thus handicapped, is hardly expected to be at par with other Indian states so far as economic development is concerned. Not that all states of the mainland are equally developed. The physical resources here at present, are limited to land and forest. Compared to population very limited good land is available for cultivation. The forest resources have been more misused than used. Very little is known about the minerals. Population has nearly doubled in the last twenty years (A.D. 1951-71). Thus, the pressure of population on land has almost doubled. Manipur has witnessed a lot of changes during the last two decades. There has been rapid spread of education, changes in dress and food habits and rise in the standard of living.
There has been a slow and steady rise in per capita income. According to latest statistics available, the per capita income of Manipur in A.D. 1970-71 at current prices was rupees 476.00 (refer to Table XXXV). In this respect Manipur is far behind some of the economically advanced states of India.

The writer conducted a sample survey in A.D. 1971-72, and worked out the per capita income of the sample households, the results of which are incorporated in Table XXIV. Notwithstanding the limitations of such sample surveys by individuals, the results are a pointer to the economic disparity prevailing in the society.

The number of daily necessities of life has increased manifold. The number of unemployed, specially the educated unemployed, has assumed serious proportions. There are now more persons available for farms, factories and offices. Thus, the state is beset with the problem of food and employment. Any planning for economic development must take into account the existing realities of the situation.

In the present circumstances the problems mentioned above may be solved if the following steps are taken in order of priority. Due improvement should be made in the fields of (a) agriculture, (b) irrigation and power, (c) industry, and (d) minor fields like (i) transport, (ii) forestry, (iii) animal husbandry, (iv) fishery, (v) mineral survey and (vi) population control.

Agriculture is by far the most important economic activity of the people. Up to A.D. 1961 the state was sufficiently surplus in rice, the staple food of the people. With the rapid growth of popu-
lation the demand for food has been increasing so much so that the food position of the state has reversed from one of surplus to that of deficit. It calls for immediate attention of the people as well as those at the helm of power.

For self sufficiency in food grains the steps suggested are:
(a) to increase the area under cultivation and (b) to increase the per acre yield. The area under cultivation can be increased by reclaiming the cultivable waste land. The waste land constitutes mainly jhoom land in the hills and swamps in the central plain. The fallow land too can be reclaimed for cultivation wherever feasible.

A planned scheme of drainage can well reclaim the swamps. The cultivators will willingly join in any reclamation effort. In the hills, the abandoned jhoom lands can be reclaimed by making contour bunding, checking soil erosion, and providing proper drainage channels for the rain water.

The land under cultivation in the central plain, at present, is predominantly a single cropped land. It is cultivated during the period of monsoon rain for Kharif crop. There is practically no winter rain to sustain a Rabi crop. It is suggested that the rivers draining the central plain be dammed in their hill courses and water so impounded be diverted for irrigation in the central plain. Thus, gradually more and more land could be converted into double cropped land and the total cropped area increased.

The next step is to increase the per acre yield. This can be done by introducing better seeds, specially high yielding variety, by
using manures and fertilisers and by adopting improved methods of
cultivation. The Japanese method of paddy cultivation, for example,
gives higher yield compared to the indigenous method. The old imple-
ments should be gradually replaced by new implements like mould board
plough, Japanese weeders, secateurs, hoe and racks combined, garden
rakes, paddy threshers, hand pumps etc.

Measures have to be taken against plant diseases. Co-
operative farming should be encouraged for better cultivation and
higher yield. In addition, a change in the cropping pattern is bound
to lead to higher yields. The writer favours the type of mixed farming
at present being practised by maize growers in the hills, who sow many
other seeds along with maize and derive a series of small supplementary
harvests.

Horticulture, introduced recently in the hills, has good
scope. A wide range of fruits, from tropical to temperate is being
grown successfully. And, in the process, the abandoned jhoom lands
are being reclaimed. The supply of pineapples and oranges comes mainly
from the hills. Fruits serve as cash crop and occupy a position next
to maize. The successful fruit cultivation has opened a new horizon
for the cultivators. It is felt that promotion of horticulture in the
hills will be in the best interest of the hill people. Cotton culti-
vation should be augmented in order to reduce the import of cotton
and to provide raw material for the future spinning mills.
Food production has increased but not proportionately to the growth of population. Future planning should aim at attaining self-sufficiency in this matter. This requires arresting the fast rate of population growth and accelerating the slow increase of food production.

Any appreciable improvement in the field of agriculture and industry depends on substantial development of irrigation and power resources. The power resources of the state in the form of hydro-electricity, still remain untapped. They may be utilised for generating hydro-electricity. The flow of river water could be regulated and floods minimised. After electricity is generated, water could be diverted downwards, along well built channels, to be used for irrigation.

The hydro-electricity so generated, will be cheap. It could be used, for lighting, as fuel for domestic use, and as power for industrial establishments. As fuel it will be cheaper than firewood in the central plain. One maund of firewood costs six rupees at present, which, in a family of 10 members, would hardly last three days. It is a problem in the central plain. Its cost is high due to transport charges.

The present Loktak Project is more a power project and less an irrigation project. A major scheme in Barak valley is under investigation. In the near future it is likely to be taken up. It will serve Manipur, Cachar, Mizoram, and, perhaps, Bangla Desh. In the absence of other power resources like coal, petroleum and natural gas, Manipur has to meet its power requirement from hydro-electricity, which also is an inexhaustible source of power.
The present industrial picture of Manipur includes cottage industries of various types. These industries have been meeting the local needs since ancient times. They have lost much of their importance in the face of modern mechanisation and refinement. A handloom cloth cannot compete with the mill-made cloth in the market. The former is rough, sagging, heavy, outdated and costly; the latter fine, light, attractive and cheap. The cottage industry products cannot compete with the factory products.

The geographical position of Manipur in India, and its near resourcelessness for large scale industrialisation, leave no option for the state but be content with the small scale industry. A small population of about a million offers a very small home market. And for this state to capture external market for its industrial products is out of question in the present circumstances. On the other hand, if the import of industrial products continues it will adversely affect the cottage industries as well as drain away huge amount of money from the state. Further, the state, after the eclipse of its indigenous industry, will completely depend on imports. If so, a big avenue of employment will also be blocked for ever.

Therefore, the existing industries have to be encouraged and modernised in order to improve the quality of products. Cottage industries based on cheap skilled labour and cheap electric power can sustain themselves. In the hills loin-loom products have great limitations. When hill men visit the central plain, they find the handloom cloths much superior and go in for them. Another notable trend is that the
new generation of girls in the hills, now a days, does not like to learn weaving. They prefer fine fabrics and bright ready-made dress. The industry in the hills is on the wane; is quite perceptible.

In Manipur plain, handloom cloths are made from imported fine yarn. They are quite good and passable by Indian standards. But such home-made cloths are worn by the people of older generation. The younger generation prefers finer fabrics, like dacron, chiffon, terylene, nylon etc. As a result, Manipur handloom products have lost most of their own home market. Thus, for this industry, to make for this loss, by capturing outside market, will be an uphill task. If the industry is not modernised and some specialisation not introduced it cannot stand the onslaughs of imported artificial fabrics and ready-made dress. Regarding handloom industry in the hills, a gradual shift from loin-loom to handloom, semi automatic loom and power loom is desirable. The revival of silk industry can provide fine silk handloom products. It will get a home market as well as one outside. Specialisation in quality and craftsmanship may be introduced in various products, specially scarf, bed sheet and sari, for which there is a good market outside.

The state imports buckets and other metal sheet products from outside. Metal sheet industry based on imported metal sheets and pipes can be developed here. This may include the manufacture of some cycle parts too. At present the local hides are sold outside. It is felt that if a leather industry is started, it will partially reduce
import of footwear and other leather products. Fruit preservation and canning may be promoted where it is grown.

A huge quantity of soap at present is imported. The quantum of its import can be reduced by utilizing local resources of animal fat and oil seeds in manufacturing soap locally. At present, maize from the state is exported. Some of it could be used within the state by starting a cornflake industry. The state imports tobacco products like Biri\(^1\), cigarettes and processed tobacco called Zarda. This can be sizeably reduced by starting tobacco processing industry here.

In Manipur there is no aversion to taking wine. It is regarded as good for health while in the hills, it is a climatic necessity. The hill people prepare rice beer in their homes. In the central plain also, beer making is a profitable household industry in the tribal villages. From the view point of public health, it is felt that beer should be manufactured under proper hygienic conditions and for this purpose a distillery unit may be established.

With the local manufacture of these items set in motion, their import can be greatly reduced. The small scale mechanised and modernised industrial units will produce many of the articles of day-to-day requirement, provide employment to more people and reduce the state's dependence on supply from outside. The present position is that with every landslide on Dimapur road, prices of all imported commodities increase in Manipur and the common people have to bear the brunt of it.

\(^1\)Biri is a kind of country cigarette.
Tourist industry offers new prospects of revenue for the state. The hurdle of 'Inner Line Pass' at Dimapur should be relaxed for the convenience of the tourists. The state Government has earmarked rupees two million for promoting this industry. With this end in view the following schemes should be implemented.

A Tourist Home consisting of 100 to 200 rooms should be constructed at Imphal to provide accommodation to the tourists at reasonable charges. The attraction of Loktak lake should be exploited to the full. The hyacinth and other floating weeds should be removed. Motor boats should be provided for pleasure boating. Roads should be beautified by planting trees on either side. At present Imphal offers only a few places worth visiting. The town has to be streamlined on modern lines so as to look like the epitome of Manipur. There is a plan for a five-star hotel. This is praiseworthy. But if tourists don't pour in large numbers it will fail to be profitable.

The existing spots of tourist attraction should be preserved along with their surroundings. Facilities for transport and stay should be provided to the tourists. The existing Dak Bungalows and Tourist Homes should be improved and accommodation increased. At present a Dak Bungalow exists at every important place in the state. By A.D. 1961 their number was 46, since then some more have been added, so the Government need not spend huge sums on the construction of buildings at the first instance.

There should be attractively printed pamphlets giving information about the places worth visiting, distance, mode of conveyance,
time taken, facilities for recreation and stay etc. The Tourist Office should launch publicity campaign in the All India papers for attracting tourists. Some persons should be given necessary training and license to act as guides. The local people should show utmost courtesy and helpfulness towards the tourists, so that they may have a memorable experience of their visit to Manipur. This will lead to gradual rise in the tourist traffic.

The development of the state is reflected in the development of roads. There has been a great emphasis in the past on road construction. As a result, mileage of developed roads in the valley is nearly satisfactory. But in the hills, people are still greatly handicapped. There are many hill villages where people have to walk along hill trails for miles together to reach the nearest jeepable road.

The current 20-year road development scheme, A.D. 1961-81, is underway. The progress in this regard has been slowed down in the hills due to natural factors and at places hostile activities. Of late, hostile activities have decreased due to the realisation of the people that these will affect their own peace, progress and prosperity.

Along with the construction of state highways, i.e., the main roads in the hills, link roads from main roads to the individual villages should be constructed under the overall scheme of village uplift. The work may be entrusted with the local people. This will give them a sense of participation as also a sense of belonging. The central Government has assured the Autonomous Hill districts, of
enough funds for their local development projects, part of which could be utilised for construction of local roads.

Forests are the storehouse of natural wealth for the state. About 64.25 per cent of the land is under forests. Forests are the source of firewood and structural timber. In addition to this, cultivable land is carved out of forest land by outright burning. Such plots are abandoned after the fertility is exhausted, which happens too soon, and the process of burning is repeated. The result is that the forests have been progressively diminishing in size with the passage of time. To-day, the climax forests are confined to very high hills from where the transport of firewood or structural timber is difficult, and it is not possible to use that land for cultivation. Thus, the real forests have escaped violence because of natural circumstances.

The forests, in fact, need very effective management. The existing official classification of forests as reserved, protected and unclassed, makes very little difference to the hill people who believe in utilising the forest as they please. The authority of the Government is not very effective to deter them. The present survey and demarcation work in the forest and afforestation of certain economic species like teak and pine should be continued.

What is more important is that the hill people must be persuaded to give up jhooming and adopt terrace cultivation. For this purpose there should be a vigorous propaganda. This should be matched by incentives, financial or otherwise, to be given to them for adopting...
terrace cultivation. At the same time stringent measures must be taken against jhooming. Economic species should be enumerated and their destruction declared a punishable offence. The Government policy in this regard should be one of fairness and firmness.

The live-stock of the state consists of cattle, buffaloes, pigs, horses, sheep and goats. The number of sheep and goats is negligible. There are some horses in the central plain but they are absent from the hills. Thus, the list of live-stock of economic importance is narrowed down to cattle, buffaloes and pigs.

As milk animals buffaloes are not preferred. That the yield of milk of a she buffalo is more than twice that of a cow goes unnoticed here. Local people have not developed the habit of taking milk as an item of food in their regular diet. As to cows, their economic value lies in the fact that they produce oxen to be used for cultivation. The milk is either sold or used in preparing Ghee. In the sweet-meat shops and tea stalls there is a great demand of milk.

In the absence of grazing grounds it is difficult to organise cattle rearing on a large scale. The main fodder at present is the straw derived from paddy fields. It is a fact that those supplying and consuming milk are mainly outsiders. Nepalis are engaged in cattle rearing in an organised way. In Kanglatongbi area they rear cattle in the hills. They collect the milk at appointed places, load it in vehicles and bring it to Imphal for distribution among customers. Theirs is a flourishing business. They have ably demonstrated that cattle rearing can be

Ghee is a fat derived from burning the butter.
profitably promoted here. There is no reason why others cannot do the same.

The milch-animals can be greatly improved by raising fodder crops, and providing better food in addition to their present staple food viz., hay or paddy straw. Their breed is being improved by making available high pedigree bulls and artificial insemination. This should continue in the days to come.

There is, however, much scope of piggery development. The hill people don't mind taking beef and relish pork. In a tribal village pigs are reared in almost every house. They are being improved by introducing better breed and by paying more attention to their food requirement and medical facilities. Pig farms have been established in the hills on large scale in the district headquarters. This will provide the hill people with a model to follow.

Still greater is the scope of poultry farming. Of late, the demand for poultry products has increased manifold. The tribal people and Muslims take chicken. A section of the enlightened younger generation of Meiteis has no aversion for it. Most of the outsiders take it. Moreover, the greatest demand for chicken comes from the army camps. Therefore, poultry farming has an assured market in the state itself.

At present the Muslims are engaged in poultry farming and are doing well. Besides chicken, ducks too could be raised profitably. There are tanks and ponds in every village in the central plain. These can serve as water bodies required for rearing ducks. There is a
great demand for eggs which are in short supply in the market. The local birds are of small size. They are being replaced by improved birds, reared in Government poultry farms. Thus, poultry farming may be promoted both in the hills and the central plain.

Pisciculture has great prospects here and it must be reorganised on scientific lines. Every section of the population takes fish. The state can reasonably expect to attain self sufficiency in fish supply. Some tanks and beels\(^2\) should be reclaimed for culture fishery. The Lektak lake should be reclaimed for intensive stocking, largely with minor carps. The seed of Indian major carps could be raised locally by induced breeding and of the minor carps by natural breeding instead of importing from outside. For the purpose of smoking fish, some smoking kiln-cum-curing yards should be established in course of time.

So far, there has not been undertaken a detailed investigation of mineral deposits in the state. At a few spots certain minerals have been found, e.g., limestone in a number of places, asbestos, nickel ore, copper ore, chromite ore in Moreh area, gold ore near Tolloi, petroleum bearing rocks in Tamenglong similar to those of petroleum belt of upper Assam, and inferior iron ore in Thangjing through Cheirang, southwest of central plain. The information so far gained is inadequate.

A detailed investigation is very desirable to know the variety, quality and quantity of minerals. The present unit of the Geological Survey of India at Imphal is very small. It has been decided

\(^{2}\) Beel is a lowlying area submerged under water during rainy season.
to expand the unit for a detailed investigation. The Government must know the position of mineral resources to be able to plan its exploitation.

There has been almost a population explosion during the recent past. It is increasing at an alarming rate, putting severe strain on state's resources. The Five-Year Plans are becoming ineffective due to the fast rate of population growth. Government has been making desperate attempts to slow down the rate of population growth. In this respect, co-operation of the people is highly desirable.

For providing gainful employment to the expanding working force, skilled or otherwise, careful planning is called for. All possible physical resources must be tapped without inhibition, for increasing production and providing employment. This is a great challenge before our planners in the state and at the centre. An era of economic prosperity has to be ushered. The existing economic disparity between the hill and the plain has to be narrowed down. This calls for emphasis on and investment in the development of the hill areas.

The present import of commodities like sugar, mustard oil, soap, mill yarn, footwear, ready-made dress, paper and kerosene should be gradually reduced by developing indigenous industries and helping modest ventures. The export of indigenous products like handloom cloths and silk fabrics, agricultural products like maize,
ginger, chilli, timber, cardamom, cassia bay leaf, turpentine etc. should be increased. The state should aim at self-sufficiency on the one hand and a balanced development on the other.