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Urbanization in
North-East
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Tarun Kumar Bahadur

URBANIZATION IN NORTH-EAST INDIA



TARUN KUMAR BAHADUR



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TARUN KUMAR BAHADUR

PREFACE

This book is an attempt to present the key aspects of the pattern of urbanization in the North-Eastern Region of India from socio-economic point of view. It presents the cohesive platform for the scholars to do further work on urbanization, especially in the North-Eastern Region of India. Indian students are compelled by circumstances to read a rapidly proliferating volume of Western textbooks, wherein the western phenomena and perceptions of non-western cities dominate. There has been rare authentic document, which could mirror the pattern of urbanization for Indian students. The result is that the Western textbooks on the pattern of urbanization only tend to confuse the understanding. It is hoped that this book will provide guidance and torch bearing to the aspirants for their academic pursuit.

The trend of urbanization in the North-East and its consequent impact on the regional economy in the forms of commuters, slums and squatters have been analyzed in the book. The correlation between urbanization and industrialization in these states is also a sincere effort to analyze the degree of inter-relationship between these two variables in the North-east which will definitely open new vista of knowledge for further analysis and research. The conceptualization of urban development as a phenomenon of over-urbanization and detribalization is again a new area of thought which can open a new area of thoughts and findings of my research work, adding to a further scope of research.

TARUN KUMAR BAHADUR

LIST OF TABLES, MAPS AND DIAGRAM

TABLES

1.1	Area and Population of States in the North Eastern Region: 2001	10
1.2	District-wise Population of Arunachal Pradesh	13
1.3	Geographical Area of the Districts of Arunachal Pradesh	13
1.4	Districts and Area of Assam	17
1.5	Population Growth Rate in Assam & India (1901 – 2001)	17
1.6	District-wise Population & Decadal Growth Rate in Assam (1991 & 2001)	18
1.7	District-wise Geographical Area of Manipur	21
1.8	District-wise Population & Decadal Growth Rate in Manipur (1981, 1991 & 2001)	21
1.9	District-wise Population & Decadal Growth Rate in Meghalaya (1981, 1991, & 2001)	23
1.10	District-wise Area of Meghalaya	25
1.11	District-wise Area of Mizoram	27
1.12	District-wise Population Distribution, Density & Literacy in Mizoram	27
1.13	District-wise Area of Nagaland	29
1.14	District-wise Population Distribution & Decadal Growth Rate in Nagaland (1981 – 2001)	30
1.15	District-wise Population & Decadal Growth Rate in Tripura (1981 -2001)	31
1.16	District-wise Area of Tripura	32
1.17	District-wise Area of Sikkim	34
1.18	District-wise Population Distribution, Growth Rate & Density in Sikkim (1991 – 2001)	35
2.1	Rates of Population Threshold in North-Eastern States (1901 – 2001)	40

2.2	Rural-Urban Decadal Growth Differential in N.E. Region & India (1901 – 2001)	41
2.3	Area Served by a Town in the N.E. States (1901-2001)	42
2.4	Levels of Urbanization Under the Three Criteria and the Composite Index of North-Eastern States for 2001	44
2.5	Urban Population Ratios in the North-Eastern States: (1901 – 2001)	45
2.6	Degree/Rates of Urbanization in the North-Eastern States	45
2.7	Percentage Distributions of Urban Population & Number of Towns as per Size Class in the North-Eastern Region (1951 – 2001)	46
2.8	Decadal Variation of Population Growth in Fifferent Size Class Towns of the N.E. Region (1951 – 2001)	47
2.9	Urban Towns & % Population as per Size Class in the N.E. Region of India (1951-2001)	49
2.10	Population Distribution of Class I Cities in the N.E. Region in 2001	50
3.1	Types & Numbers of Small Scale Industries of Arunachal Pradesh in 2001	59
3.2	Production of Some Selected Industries in Assam	60
3.3	Small-Scale Industries Units in Manipur in the year 2000	61
3.4	Small-Scale Industries Units in Nagaland for the year 2000	64
3.5	Small-Scale Industries Units in Tripura for the year 2000	65
3.6	Estimate of Some Important Characteristics of all Industries by State in the North-East India for the Year 1999-2000.	65
3.7	Correlation Co-efficient of Urban Population (%) & Non-Agricultural Workers (%) in the N. E. States: 2001	66
4.1	Estimates of Annual Birth Rate, Death Rate & Natural Growth Rate of Population in Rural and Urban Areas of N.E. States	77
4.2	Rural-urban Population Distribution & Annual Growth Rate in North-Eastern States of India	78
4.3	Actual and Natural Annual Growth Rates of Population & their Growth Differentials in North Eastern States	79

CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgement</i>	vii
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>List of Tables, Maps and Diagram</i>	xiii
1. Introduction	1
Concept & Nature of Urban Places and Areas – Criteria for Identifying Urban Places – Definition of Urban Areas from Census – The Process of Urbanization – Urban Demography of the North-Eastern Region of India	
2. Macro-Level Analysis of Urbanization	37
Levels of Urbanization – Urban Population Ratio – Rural Population Served by Urban Centres – Distance to the Nearest Town – Composite index of Urbanization – Structural Patterns of North-Eastern States – Small and Mini Towns – Macro Spatial Patterns – Foothill and Mountain Alignment – River Alignment – Railway Alignment – Urban Agglomerations and Clusters – Urban Clusters – Urban Dispersal	
3. Urbanization, Industrialization, Trade and Development	55
Industrial Overview of the North-Eastern Region	
4. Migrants and Commuters in North-eastern States	73
Commuters from Rural-Urban Fringe	
5. Economy of Slums, Squatters and Pavement-Dwellers	87
Slums – Squatters – Pavement-Dwellers – Slums in the North-Eastern States	

6. Local Urban Administrations	101
Water – Sewerage – Urban Transportation – Social Protection – Local Urban Bodies in the North- Eastern States	
7. Inter-State Diversity	117
Arunachal Pradesh – Assam – Manipur – Meghalaya – Mizoram – Nagaland – Sikkim – Tripura – Analysis of Inter-state variance.	
8. Conclusion	143
Urban Governance – State Finance Commission - Capacity Building – Centre's Assistance to Urban Local Bodies – Desirability or otherwise of Urbanization – Decentralization and Centralization Policies – National and State Policies – Challenges for Local Bodies – Perspective on Urbanization Policy – City Size and Spacing Policies – Rural- Urban Migration Policies – Suggested Modifications for Urban Plan	
<i>Bibliography</i>	161
<i>Index</i>	165

1

INTRODUCTION

Concept & Nature of Urban Places and Areas

Urbanization is a continuous and complex process whereby the proportion of population living in the places defined as 'urban' by an appropriate notional authority increases, vis-à-vis, the rural component. Though the increase may result from growth in existing urban population, rural-urban transfer, numerical proliferation of urban centres and spatial expansion of existing urban areas, however, rural-urban transfer has been the moving force behind the rapid pace of urbanization. Urbanization refers to the transformation of society including some drastic geographic, economic, and social changes. It represents the movement of population to towns and cities, an increase in the proportion of population engaged in secondary and tertiary sectors of economy and a corresponding change in the behavioral pattern.

Urbanization is characterized by W.S.Thompson (Urbanization in Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, Vol. XV, Macmillan, 1935, p. 189) as movement of people of small communities concerned solely with agriculture to other larger communities whose activities are primarily centered to government, trade, manufacture and allied interests. It implies an increasing shift from agrarian to industrial services and distributive occupation, in a process by which the number of points of population concentration increases involving a shift from agrarian to non-agrarian occupation.

It has been customary to define urban in terms of physical characteristics and reflecting the spatial agglomeration of population and activities. The features common to such definitions are:

1. A physical element which emphasizes the high density settlements of the continuous build-up area and its

separation from other urban centres by a much greater area of thinly settled land;

2. An occupational element which recognizes the concentration of employment in secondary and tertiary industries.

These types of definitions point out to the irrelevance of the administrative and political boundary of the urban areas in the definitional context. This is equally true for the urban area's economic identity although the existence of local political boundaries is not without economic consequences.

The concept of city is clear cut. The nineteenth century city was predominantly monocentric in form and tended to be contiguous since crossing empty spaces involved high transport costs.

Criteria for Identifying Urban Places

We can define cities in terms of political status, demographic attributes, economic variables, socio-cultural patterns of behaviour independent of sustenance activities and even psychological characteristics. Here comes the need for an adequate frame of references for defining and identifying urban places. There are the marginal cases of small towns and large villages, where there is a need for precise qualitative or quantitative yardsticks. A single criterion may not be satisfactory, and the issue has to be decided on the basis of a set of suitable criteria. These criteria in general fall into five categories:

Demographic: The population of an urban place may be as low as 1,000 or as high as 20,000 persons. Between these two extreme limits, any number of cutoff population values may be suggested. In India, a population of 5,000 is used as a cutoff point. The chief merit is its general acceptance by administrators and academics alike. A second demographic variable is the density of population. Urban areas have a higher concentration of people within a small area. Ordinarily, the gross density of population in urban areas varies from 500 persons per square kilometer to over 10,000 persons per square kilometers, while the rural densities of population range from 200 persons to 1,000 persons per square kilometers. Densities of more than 1,000 persons per square kilometers are certainly indicative of an urban setting. The limit has by necessity to be arbitrary and subjective.

Economic: The economic criteria for identification of urban places tend to focus on the occupation of the working population—

agricultural and non-agricultural. The basic assumption is that agriculture is a non-urban occupation and hence absence of this occupation is an indication of urban character of a place. The differentiation between rural and urban areas depends upon the relative importance of agricultural and non-agricultural occupation. Here again we can only setup arbitrary limits in terms of the percentage of workers in agricultural or in secondary and tertiary activities. The places with 50% or more workers in non-agricultural activities can be assumed to be urban.

Social: In towns salaried wage earners form the dominant social group. The self-employed are fewer in numbers, but perhaps more influential and economically more prosperous. In India, the self-employed in urban areas include both businessmen and people who perform a variety of services in the residential areas. Their number is often several times larger than that of the salaried class; nevertheless, the typical urbanite is a salaried person.

Social Heterogeneity: Rural and urban societies are also differentiated in terms of the degree of social heterogeneity. Urban areas have a substantial proportion of new migrants. Their population consists of people coming from different regions, speaking different languages and belonging to different faith. Finally urban population in India has a greater proportion of literates and degree holders.

Morphological: To the layman, urban places are different from rural areas in terms of their physical appearance. In terms of morphology, the urban areas are characterized by a core area with brick and mortar structures; with at least some of the structures having two or more stories. The main street is often paved and carries heavy vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The public buildings, such as administrative offices, courts, schools and hospitals, stand out prominently in the urban landscape.

Functional: The clustering of shops within a bazaar or market area is a characteristic phenomenon of an urban place. Even the smallest urban places have 20 or more shops in a cluster, forming an important focal point of the settlement. The presence of such a cluster may be used as a criterion for identifying urban places and differentiating urban from rural places.

Definitions of Urban Areas from Census

Various population censuses of India have given different definitions

of urban areas. 1951 census has included following areas under the urban concept: municipal corporations; municipal areas; town area committees; civil lines not included within municipal limits; and cantonment boards. The tests prescribed for distinguishing towns from villages in different states were based on ideas common to all states but they were not identical nor had they been applied with meticulous uniformity. In case of princely states, the definition was applied a little indiscriminately. The definition has been widened in 1961 by framing some distinct conditions to be satisfied while classifying an area as urban. According to 1961 census of India the areas covered under Municipal Corporation, municipal areas, town committees, notified area committees and cantonments were the urban. Some selected places with following features are also brought under urban purview:

- a. Density not less than 1000 per square miles;
- b. A population of minimum 5000;
- c. Three-fourths of the working population should be working outside agriculture;
- d. Or any other place which, according to the superintendent of the state, possesses urban characteristics or amenities.

Further modifications in the criteria have been made in 1971 census. Apart from well-defined urban centres, all other places which satisfied the following criteria were classified as urban:

1. a minimum population of 5000;
2. at least 75% of the male working population being non-agricultural;
3. a density of population of at least 400 persons per square kilometer, i.e., 1000 persons per square mile;
4. The directors were, however, given some discretion in respect of some marginal case in consultation with state government to include some places that had other distinct urban characteristics and to exclude undeserving cases.

The census criteria are conservative as well as vague. The census confers a wide power of discretion to its officers at the state level. This indeed is a totally unscientific procedure. In fact the state level officers do exercise their discretion in an arbitrary manner and as a result the comparisons of the number of towns in different states can be misleading. This has also led to the phenomenon of sudden increase or decrease in the number of towns in different states from one census to the next.

The census prescribes a lower population limit of 5,000 persons for an urban place. However, according to census there were over 12,000 places in India with a population of 5,000 or more, while again according to the 1981 census only 3,245 of these places were fit to be recognized as urban. Obviously, the census has not taken its own criteria seriously.

The density criterion of urbanization is also arbitrarily fixed in the census. The average density of population in India in 2001 census is 324 persons per square kilometer, and 13 states/UTs have densities of well over 400 persons per square kilometer. As per the given criteria all these states/UTs ought to be recognized as urban. A much higher value of around 1,000 persons per square kilometer would have been appropriate in the India situation.

The third criterion is based on the assumption that agricultural activity is unsuited in urban environment. According to the census data 25% of the census towns have agriculture as the dominant activity. Further, female workers are excluded from this criterion without any specific reason. In fact, the distinction made between rural and urban labour force is arbitrary and bears no special significance.

The definition adopted in 1971 census is continued to be accepted in the following censuses. However some specific terms related to urban areas have been defined in various censuses as follows:

Standard Urban Area (SUA): The concept was introduced in 1971 census. The essentials of an SUA are:

- It should have a core town of minimum population size of 50,000;
- The contiguous urban area made up of other urban areas as well as rural administrative units should have close mutual socio-economic links with it;
- The probabilities are that this entire area will get fully urbanized within a period of two or three decades.

The SUA covers not only the built-up city but also the adjoining rural belt, which is likely to be urbanized in the future. It extends far beyond the geographical city and includes what is generally known as the rural-urban fringe zone.

Town Group (TG): This concept was introduced in 1961 census. The town group was made of independent urban units not

necessarily contiguous to one another but independent to some extent. A town group is a group of towns which adjoined one another so closely as to form a single inhabited urban locality. The census identified town groups only when the aggregate population of the towns in a group exceeded one lakh. In 1961, there were as many as 132 town groups out of a total 2,700 urban places. The data for such town groups did not permit comparison from census to census as the boundaries of towns changed and intermediate areas were left out of account. This idea was replaced by SUA in 1971 census.

Urban Agglomeration (UA): In several areas, fairly large railway colonies, university campuses, port areas and military camps have come up around a core city or statutory towns. Though these are outside the statutory limits of a corporation, municipality or cantonment, they fall within the revenue boundary of the place, by which the town itself is known. It may not be altogether realistic to treat such area as rural; at the same time, independently, it may not be treated as an urban unit as it may not satisfy the minimum population criterion. The main town and the continuous spread including urban outgrowths would deserve to be treated as an 'integrated urban area' called urban agglomeration (UA) from the 1971 census. The following are the different situations in which UAs would be constituted:

- A city with a continuous outgrowth (the part of outgrowth being outside statutory limits but falling within the boundaries of the adjoining village or villages);
- One town with a similar outgrowth or two or more adjoining towns with their outgrowths as above; and
- A city and one or more adjoining towns with their outgrowths, all of which form a continuous spread.

Outgrowths (OG): This concept was introduced in 1981 census modifying the idea introduced in 1971 census, with respect to parts of urban agglomeration. An area will be treated as an outgrowth if:

- It is contiguous to urban area, municipal or non-municipal;
- The fulfill the density and occupational criteria for being eligible as to be urban;
- Their population lies between 500 and 6000.

The census typology of urban places is entirely based on the

population criterion. The term 'metropolitan area' is applied to places with a population of a million or more, while the term 'city' refers to the places having population of one lakh or more. All other urban places are designated as towns of different categories as per the population - class II towns with population between 50,000 to 1,00,000; class III towns with population of 20,000 to 50,000; class IV towns with population of 10,000 to 20,000; class V towns with population of 5,000 to 10,000; and class VI towns with population less than 5,000. This census classification has got general acceptance and has been used consistently from 1901 onwards.

The Process of Urbanization

India is frequently regarded as a land of villages and hamlets. Nevertheless, in reality, it is equally a land of towns and cities. With over 12000 settlements with population of 5,000 persons or more, India has an urban infrastructure of gigantic magnitude. In terms of the absolute number of urban settlement and size of urban population, India is possibly the largest urbanized nation in the world today. India's urban population in 2001 is slightly more than 285 million which is greater than the total population of many countries in the world. India's recognized urban settlements are at various stages of technological and cultural modernization with a remarkable unevenness of development in the different states and regions of the country.

The study of urbanization in the North-East India by its very nature involves several dimensions of analysis. Fundamentally, these include a time dimension covering a period 20th century (1901-2001); a spatial dimension that spans around 29.5 hectares of land in the North-East including Sikkim; and a socio-cultural dimension that covers a wide spectrum of people of diverse ethnic origins, speaking a variety of languages and having an abiding faith in some oldest religious traditions. Fourth dimension relevant to the study of urbanization in the North-East has to do with the economic and political processes that have shaped and are continuing to shape the basic character of urban life.

Several urbanization processes at different points in time show different factors leading to urbanization over time. In the pre-historic period, urbanization was synonymous with the origin and rise of civilization itself, thus manifesting itself essentially as a cultural process. In the historic periods, from ancient times to the British period, urbanization was exclusively related to the rise and fall of

kingdoms, dynasties, and empires, and thus in effect, urbanization during this period was essentially a political process. In recent times, urbanization has been associated with industrialization and economic development. Urbanization in North East India is essentially an economic process, since it happens to be a post-independence phenomenon in particular.

A classical view of urbanization characterizes an urban place as an economic parasite thriving as the agricultural surplus produced in its hinterland. Today, the city as a focal point of productive activities, relates to production at three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary.

Primary production has to do with agriculture, fishing, forestry and mining. Assam has some specialized mining towns like Ledo, Margherita; etc. These towns have their unique urban attributes and are clearly distinguishable. Similarly oil based towns like Digboi, Naharkatia, Dhuliajan, have grown in Assam. These activities employ a high level of technology and the workers both highly skilled and unskilled. The workers often come from far off places. A number of towns in the North-East India have emerged at the edge of forests, dealing in forest produce. As against the traditional urban centres based on forestry, there are new towns where the manufacture of plywood, paper or furniture forms the main productive base.

Agriculture, particularly of commercial variety, has also given rise to many urban centres in the North-East India. The tea plantations in Assam have generated hundreds of settlements, often relatively small, for housing the plantation workers. These settlements also have modern factories for the processing of tea. The plantation settlements are in no sense rural villages. In their layout, community life, and economic activity, they are indeed true urban centres. The people here are wage earners, in much the same sense as people in towns and cities. In fact, the urban amenities enjoyed by the plantation settlements, in terms of housing, water supply, electricity and so on, are often unavailable in many census towns. The process of urbanization through modernization of primary activities is an ongoing and potentially most significant urbanization process in the North-East India.

There can be no doubt that secondary productive activity has been a major factor in urbanization throughout our long history. In

reality, urbanization has been gaining momentum along with industrialization, particularly since independence, when the legitimate interests of this sector were firmly protected by the government.

In villages, tertiary productive activity is relatively less important; nevertheless, the tertiary sector exists in any village and is represented by the village money lenders, purohits, astrologers, medical men, dhobi, and other service classes. In urban areas, these activities become more varied and employ a larger proportion of the population. The nature and variety of tertiary services available in a town depends on the socio-economic conditions of life and the level of technology. The range of tertiary services has expanded to include educational institutions, hospitals, cinema houses, law courts, bank and financial institutions, shops selling a wide variety of goods, and finally the bureaucracy to regulate the entire gamut of socio-economic relationships. It is true that in the process of development, the tertiary activities in a city assume a more dominant role than primary and secondary production.

During the British period, district and tehsil headquarters emerged as main urban centres with collector's or tehsildar's offices, the courts, post offices, police stations, and other paraphernalia of British administration. These centres were further aided by the introduction of the railways; railway stations and their related tertiary services became important landmarks in a number of cities. Educational and medical institutions owe their origins in this period. The facilities offered at these institutions attracted people to cities and towns. In the 20th century, Indian cities witnessed the introduction and spread of cinema houses, city bus transportation, electricity, piped water supply and sewerage were also introduced. While all cities and towns did not enjoy these services, those that had the benefit of them saw rapid growth. It was the tertiary sector that provided the basic stimulus to urbanization during British period.

The role of tertiary sector in urbanization is no less important at the present time. The city and the countryside interact more closely today than ever before. The cultural gap between city and village is being narrowed. Tertiary services in the cities are largely responsible for this closer interaction between the city and its hinterland. Towns today function as the service stations for the villages.

Urban Demography of the North-Eastern Region of India

North-East India, a macro-geographic region of the country, comprises of eight states, viz., Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. The region has

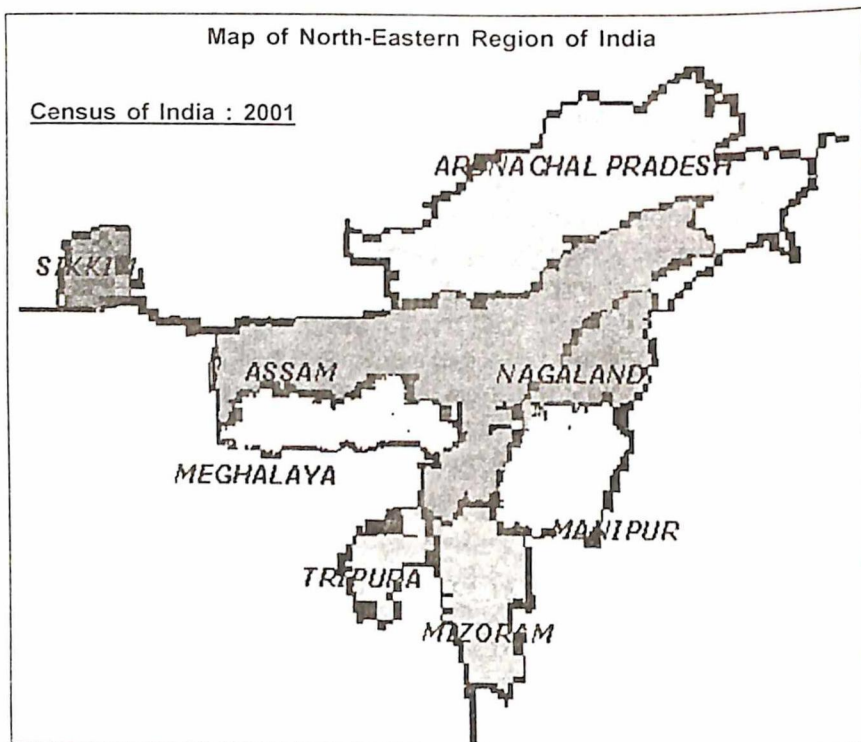


Table 1.1 : Area and Population of States in the N.E.Region: 2001

States	Area (KM ²)	Population in 2001		
		Urban	Rural	Total
Arunachal Pradesh	83,743.0	222,688	868,429	1,091,117
Assam	78,238.0	3,389,413	23,248,994	26,638,407
Manipur	22,327.0	570,410	1,818,224	2,388,634
Meghalaya	22,429.0	452,612	1,853,457	2,306,069
Mizoram	21,087.0	441,040	450,018	891,058
Nagaland	16,579.0	352,821	1,635,815	1,988,636
Sikkim	7,096.0	60,005	480,488	540,493
Tripura	10,486.0	543,094	2,648,074	3,191,168
N.E.Region	2,61,985.0	6,032,083	33,003,499	39,035,582

Source: Directorate of Census, Govt. of India, Census, 2001.

an area of 2,62,179 square kilometer and a population of 39.03 million according to 2001 census. The North-Eastern Region (NER) covers 3.8% of the total population of the country as reported in census 2001. The region is full of heterogeneity in both physical and cultural fronts. It is treated as one region only on the basis of its isolation from the rest of the country. The region is open to the rest of the country through a narrow corridor in the northern part of West Bengal.

With innumerable ridges and valleys, plateaus and eroded surfaces, the region is having uneven physiographic. Broadly, three major physiographic features can be identified in the region:

- The old plateau of Meghalaya and Karbi-Anglong;
- The young folded hills and mountains of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Sikkim and Tripura; and
- The riverine plains of Assam, Manipur and Tripura. The plains with an area of 68,785 square kilometer accounts for nearly 26.24% of the region's total geographical area. The whole region is drained by two major river systems --
- the Brahmaputra and the Barak. The Brahmaputra river system alone covers about 70% of the area of the North-East India.

Socially North-East Region is characterized by intermingling of different racial, linguistic and cultural groups. The region is inhabited by as many as 148 tribal groups besides non-tribal groups like Assamese, Bengalis, Nepalis and others from northern and southern parts of the country. Almost all the tribes bear Mongoloid characteristics and speak Tibeto-Burman language, except the Khasis of Meghalaya who linguistically belong to Austro-Asiatic group. The tribal population constitutes nearly 34.72% of the total population of the North-East (1,35,51,315 persons as per 1991 census). North-East is one of the least urbanized region of India. The census figures of 2001 reveals that only 15.45% of the total population of this region lives in urban areas, settled in 252 urban centres as against 27.78% for the country as a whole.

Economically, NER is perhaps, the most backward region in India. The main factors behind the region's backwardness are isolated location, difficult terrains, lack of infrastructural facilities for industrialization and lack of capital and entrepreneurship. Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy, both in the hills and the plains.

While shifting cultivation (jhuming) is the general practice in the tribal-inhabited hills, the plains are dominated by subsistence peasant type of farming. The cultivation of tea, and recently coffee, in certain part of the region is also an important part of the economic activities of the NER. As regards industrialization, the region is lagging far behind. Only Assam, with its tea and oil industries is relatively advanced in industrialization among the states of North-East India.

The socio-economic and geographical identity of the North-Eastern states needs further clarity with state level discussion.

Arunachal Pradesh

This state is strategically located in the extreme North-East corner of India. It is bounded by China on the north and north-east, Bhutan on the east, and states of Assam and Nagaland on the south. Arunachal Pradesh has got recognition of statehood only since February 20, 1987. The state has an area of 83,743 square kilometer covering 31.94% of the total land surface of the North-East. The folded eastern Himalayan Mountains of tertiary origin characterize the topography of the state. In the foot-hill zone, sub-tropical mixed forests occur, while the temperate evergreen forests predominate in the middle mountainous part. On the other hand, alpine vegetation characterizes the northern Greater Himalayan zone. The foothill zone favours the growth of valuable species like simul, titachap, hollocks and a variety of bamboos.

The state is thinly populated. Its population of 3.37 lakhs in 1961 has increased to 10.91 lakhs in 2001. The density of population has increased from 10 persons per square kilometer in 1991 to 13 persons in 2001. It is the least densely populated state of India. With 54.74% literacy rate, Arunachal Pradesh has 64.07% literate male and 44.24% female literate population according to the census report of 2001. The district-wise population breakups of Arunachal Pradesh for preceding three census periods are shown in table 1.2.

There are as many as 110 tribal groups in Arunachal Pradesh. They constitute nearly 63.58% of the total population in 1991 as against 69.82% in 1981. Among the tribal groups the Adi, Nishi, Wancho, Nocte, Mishimi, and Apatani are important in terms of population strength. All these tribal groups occupy separate territories in the state.

Though the state has poor urban structure, yet it witnesses

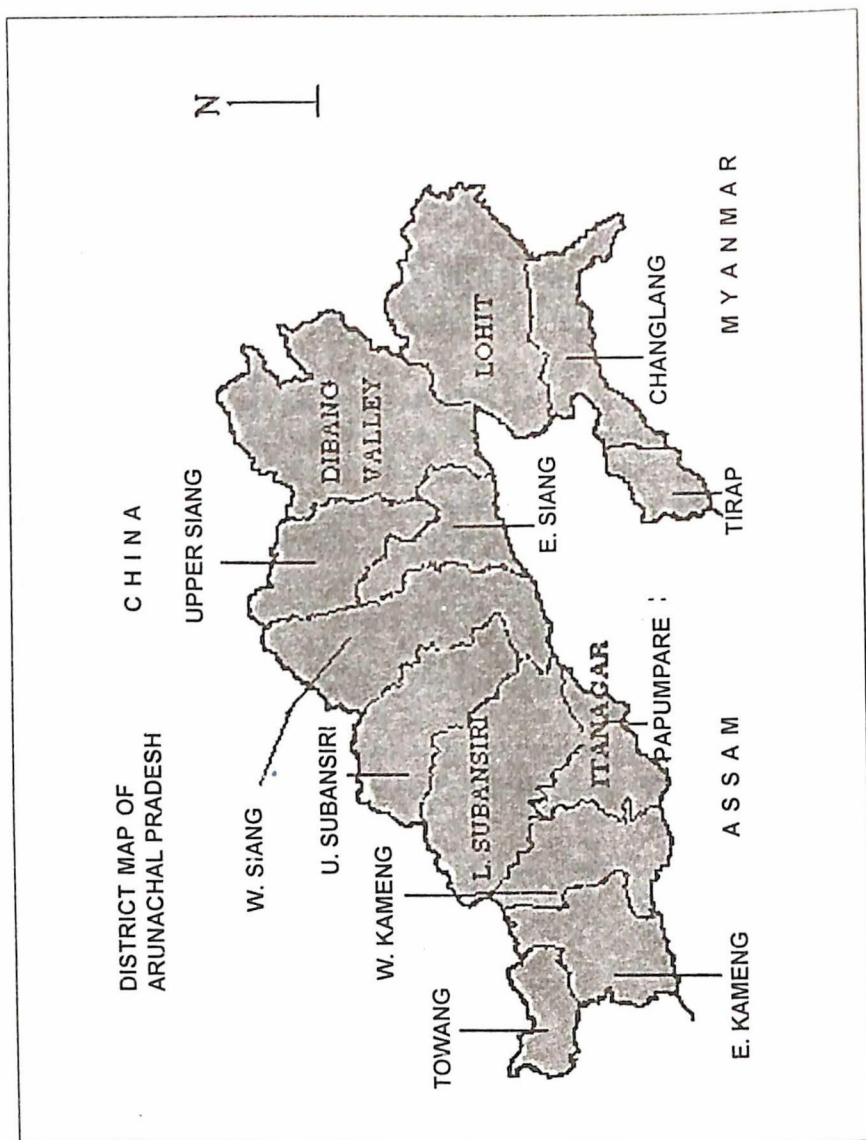
District	Total population			Decadal growth rate	
	1981	1991	2001	81-91	91-01
Changlang	62211	92891	124994	49.32	34.560
Dibang Valley	30978	42928	57543	38.58	34.045
East Kameng	42736	50238	57065	17.55	13.589
East Siang	76295	99985	87430	31.05	12.557
Lohit	69498	109632	143478	57.75	30.872
Lower Subansiri	112650	154591	97614	37.23	41.899
Papum Pare	na	Na	121750	-	**
Tawang	21735	27574	34705	26.86	25.861
Tirap	66439	85210	100227	28.25	17.624
Upper Siang	na	na	33146	-	**
Upper Subansiri	39410	49163	54995	24.75	11.863
West Kameng	41567	56402	74595	35.69	32.256
West Siang	68320	89778	103575	31.41	52.288
Arunachal Pradesh	631839	858392	1091117	35.86	27.112

** Districts are formed in 2001 census by carving out portions from lower Subansiri and West Siang. Thus decadal growth rate is estimated as per the districts of 1991.

Source: Census of India of relevant years.

District	Area
Changlang	662.0
Dibang Valley	3029.0
East Kameng	4134.0
East Siang	3895.0
Lohit	11402.0
Lower Subansiri	9548.0
Papum Pare	3462.0
Tawang	2172.0
Tirap	2362.0
Upper Siang	6590.0
Upper Subansiri	7032.0
West Kameng	7422.0
West Siang	8033.0

Source: Census of India, 2001.



rapid urbanization. The urban population constitutes 20.44% of the total population of the state in 2001 distributed in 16 small towns. The rugged topography with steep slopes does not permit a well developed transport and communication network in Arunachal Pradesh. However certain good roads have been constructed in recent years. The road connection between Tezpur and Bomdila, North Lakhimpur, Jonai and Pasighat are worth mentioning. The

recently constructed 35 kilometers long railway line between Balipara and Bhalukpung has at least linked Arunachal Pradesh with the Brahmaputra valley. The national highway no.52 runs for 264 kilometers, and 52A has a length of 32 kilometers. The length of other roads maintained by PWD, DG, Border roads is 4536 kilometers.

Assam

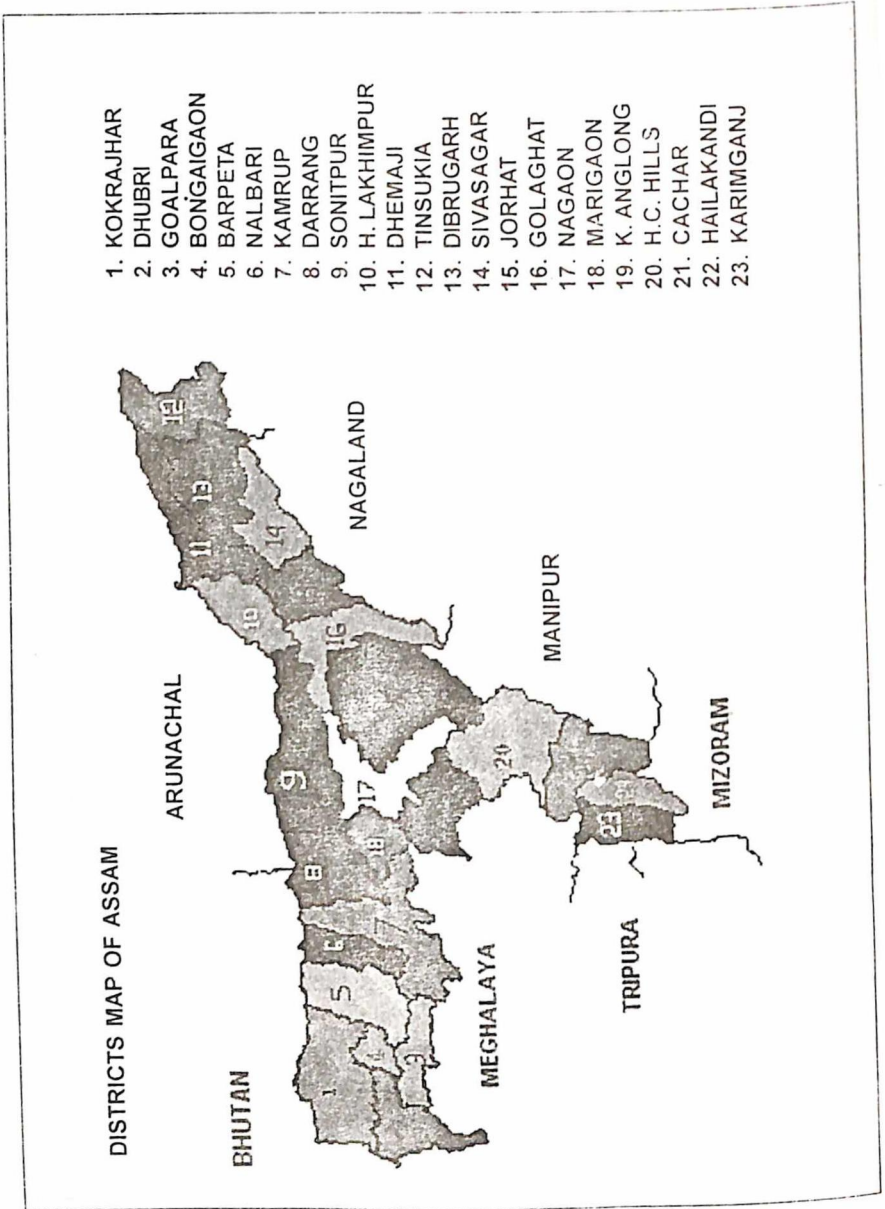
Assam is located in the north-eastern part of the country, bounded by Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh on the north; Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur on the east; Mizoram and Meghalaya on the south; and Bangladesh and West Bengal on the west. The state is open to the main land of the country on the west through a narrow corridor of 35 kilometer wide between Bangladesh and Nepal. The total geographical area of the state is 78,523 square kilometers.

The physiography of Assam is characterized by diverse features such as flood plains, marshes and beels, scattered hillocks, folded hill range and old plateaus. On the basis of the physiographic characteristics, Assam is broadly divided into three major divisions:

1. *The Brahmaputra Valley*: Extending east-west for about 725 kilometers with an average width of 80 kilometers, the Brahmaputra valley is an important physiographic unit. The Meghalaya plateau and the hills of Karbi-Anglong gently slope down to the valley, while the lesser Himalayas on the north drop abruptly to the valley. The valley is dotted with occasional hillocks locally known as tila.

2. *The Hills of Karbi-Anglong and North Cachar*: The hills of Assam are mainly confined to the districts of Karbi-Anglong and North Cachar Hills. The Karbi hills are basically parts of the Meghalaya plateau and Rengma hills. The N.C.Hills, on the other hand, is parts of Barail range. The average height of the Karbi hills is 300 - 400 meters. The area is drained by the Kopili river system and the tributaries of the Kalong and Dhansiri.

3. *The Barak Valley*: Named after the river Barak, the Barak valley or the Cachar plain lies in between North Cachar Hills on the north and the Mizo hills on the south. On the east of the plain stand the Manipur hills and on the west lays the Sylhet plains of Bangladesh. About 3/4th of the valley area has an altitude of less than 150 metres. The Jiri, the Diksha, the Chiri, the Mahura and the Jatinga are the major tributaries of the Barak



Assam is, at present, the home of several population groups such as the tribes, the indigenous non-tribes, the Bengali Hindu immigrants, the Muslim immigrants, the Nepali immigrants and the tea labourers etc. These groups have their own tradition and culture.

<i>District</i>	<i>Area (km²)</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Area (km²)</i>
Barpeta	3245.0	Karbi Anglong	10434.0
Bongaigaon	2510.0	Karimganj	1809.0
Cachar	3786.0	Kokrajhar	3169.0
Darrang	3481.0	Lakhimpur	2277.0
Dhemaji	3237.0	Marigaon	1704.0
Dhubri	2798.0	Nagaon	3831.0
Dibrugarh	3381.0	Nalbari	2257.0
Goalpara	1824.0	North Cachar Hills	4888.0
Golaghat	3502.0	Sibsagar	2668.0
Hailakandi	1327.0	Sonitpur	5324.0
Jorhat	2851.0	Tinsukia	3790.0
Kamrup	4345.0		

Source: Census of India, 2001.

The total population of Assam was 32.9 lakhs in 1901 which increased to 146.25 lakhs in 1971 and 266.38 lakhs in 2001. The growth rate of population in Assam till 1991 had been relatively high compared to the average growth rate in India as shown in Table 1.5.

<i>decades</i>	<i>Growth rate of population</i>	
	<i>Assam</i>	<i>India</i>
1901 -11	16.99	5.75
1911 -21	20.47	(-)-0.31
1921 -31	19.93	11.00
1931 -41	20.37	14.22
1941 -51	19.87	13.31
1951 -61	35.06	21.52
1961 -71	34.95	24.80
1971-81	36.05	25.00
1981 -91	24.24	23.86
1991 -01	18.85	21.34

Source: Census of India of relevant years

Table 1.6 : District-wise Population and Decadal Growth Rate in Assam (1991 & 2001)

State/Districts	Population in 1991			Population in 2001			Decadal Growth Rate	
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	1971-91	1991-01
Assam	2487795	19926527	22294562	3389413	23248994	26638407	53.26	18.85
Barpeta	97318	1288341	1385659	125140	1517280	1642420	76.75	15.05
Bongaigaon	73854	733669	807523	110287	796028	906315	56.47	23.42
Cachar	119224	1096161	1215385	201418	1240723	1442141	54.12	23.07
Darrang	63984	1234876	1298860	85725	1418218	1503943	64.64	12.23
Dhubri	161981	1170494	1332475	190546	1444043	1634589	43.02	18.53
Dhemaji	8891	469939	478830	39330	530138	569468	65.72	25.75
Dibrugarh	183580	858877	1042457	219976	952080	1172056	49.27	11.98
Goalpara	52096	616042	668138	67289	755017	822306	55.63	15.79
Golaghat	48838	779258	828096	79156	866625	945781	50.90	21.29
Hailakandi	34138	414910	449048	45557	497421	542978	51.26	22.30
Jorhat	133032	738174	871206	170648	838549	1009197	57.14	17.80
Kamrup	655215	1344856	2000071	900518	1614512	2515030	56.29	18.34
Karbi Anglong	70466	592257	662723	92751	719569	812320	107.50	18.93
Karimganj	60381	766682	827063	73547	930131	1003678	47.03	19.52
Kokrajhar	50724	749935	800659	63632	866772	930404	37.78	12.43
Lakhimpur	49130	702387	751517	65129	824196	889325	38.76	15.95
Marigaon	32989	606693	639682	38061	737813	775874	33.10	15.84
Nagaon	205722	1687449	1893171	277921	2037466	2315387	58.12	14.21
Nalbari	23475	992915	1016390	27478	1110706	1138184	74.72	22.57
N.C.Hills	34486	116315	150801	58079	128110	186189	98.30	23.47
Sibsagar	65689	842294	907983	97101	955701	1052802	47.59	18.66
Sonitpur	103908	1320379	1424287	147831	1530043	1677874	42.08	21.35
Tinsukia	158674	803624	962298	224174	925972	1150146	45.94	20.92

Source. The census of India 1991 & 2001

The population density in Assam is 340 persons per square kilometer in 2001. Nagaon is the most densely populated district (494 in 2001) whereas N.C.Hills is the least densely populated district in Assam (38 in 2001).

The proportion of urban population in Assam remains substantially low as compared to the national average. The century begins with 2.34% of urban population in 1901 as against 10.85% of national average. It marginally increased to 4.3% in 1951 and further to 12.72% in 2001 as against the national average of 17.29% and 27.78% respectively for the same periods. However, the distribution pattern of urban population clearly shows three areas of major concentration—around Guwahati in the west, Dibrugarh-Tinsukia in the east, and Silchar in the south. The process of urbanization is extremely slow in the hill districts. There are 125 urban centres in the state in 2001.

The tribal populations of Assam accounts for 11.16% of the total in 2001. The tribal belong to 15 tribes inhabiting both the hills and the plains. The major tribes include the Boros, Mishings, Rabhas, Tiwas, Karbis, and Dimasas. The major religious groups in Assam are the Hindus (72.51%), the Muslims (24.56%), and the Christians (2.6%). Assamese, the state language, is spoken by 60% of the state's population, followed by Bengali (19%), Boro (5.5%), and Hindi (5.4%).

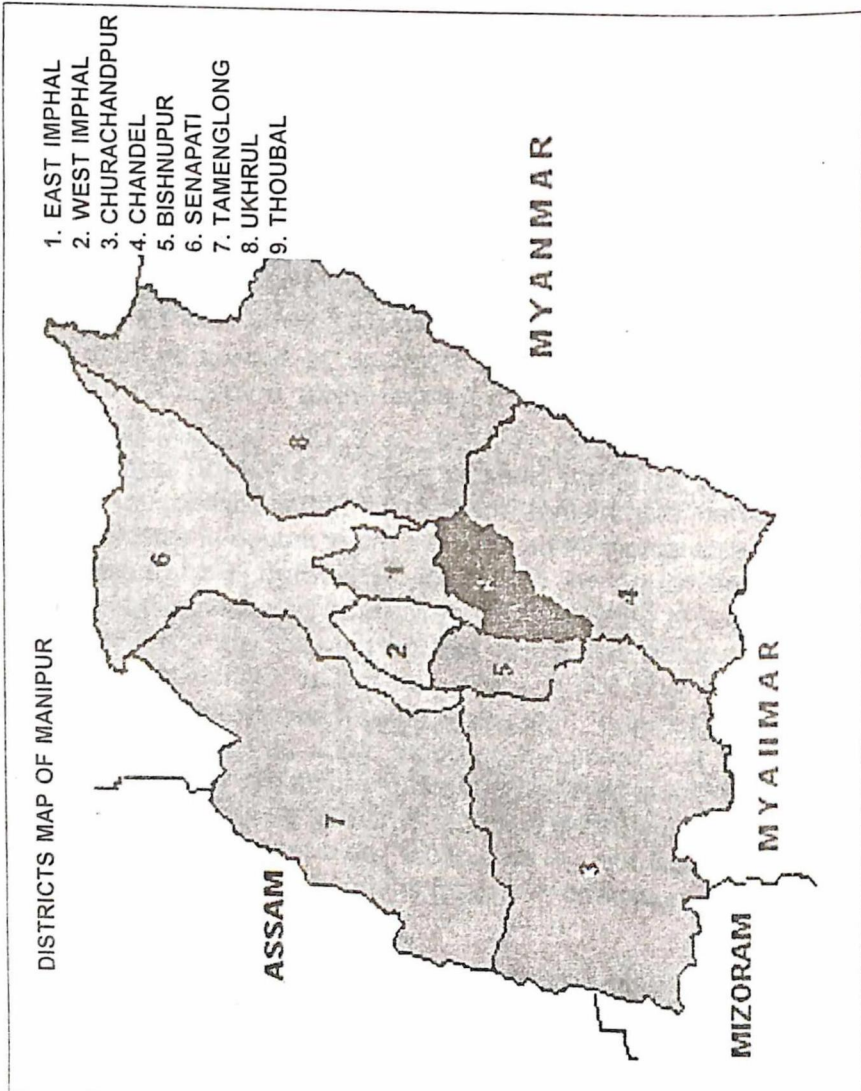
In spite of being blessed with a very high potential for development of industries, the pace of industrialization in Assam is not very satisfactory. At present, the major industrial establishments include oil refineries at Digboi, Noonmati, Bongaigaon and Numaligarh; a fertilizer plant at Namrup; a sugar mill at Baruah Bamungaon; a silk spun mill and paper mills at Jagiroad, Panchgram, and Jogighopa; a jute mill at Silghat and a cement factory at Bokajan. The state is well-known for its variety of handloom and handicraft products, such as eri, muga, and pat fabrics, bell-metal and brass-metal products etc. But most of these household industries are almost at the verge of death due to the dearth of entrepreneurial motivation. The district-wise breakup of the demographic scenario of Assam is shown in the table 1.6.

Manipur

The state of Manipur, on the eastern frontier of India, came under British rule by losing kingdom in 1891, and further got the statehood in 1972. This land-locked state has a border of about 854 kilometers, of which 353 kilometers constitute the international border with

Myanmar on the east and south. And the remaining 501 kilometers long border separates it from Nagaland on the north-west, Assam on the west and Mizoram on the south-west. The total geographical area of the state is 22,327 square kilometers.

The hills cover about 9/10th of the state's geographical area. But the central part of the state is a plain known as Manipur plain covering 9% of the total land area of the state. Almost 67% of the total land area of the state is covered under forests. The forests these days have become sparse mainly due to indiscriminate cutting and the practice of Jhuming.



District	Area
Bishnupur	496.0
Chandel	3313.0
Churachandpur	4570.0
Imphal East	709.0
Imphal West	519.0
Senapati	3271.0
Tamenglong	4391.0
Thoubal	514.0
Ukhrul	4544.0

Source: Census of India, 2001.

The population in the state at the beginning of the century was 2.84 lakhs which increased to 23.88 lakhs in 2001. The density of population in the state is 107 persons per square kilometer in 2001 as against 82 per square kilometer in 1991. 68.87% of the population is literate in Manipur in 2001. There is significant difference in the distribution of population at the district level as shown in table 1.8.

In Manipur, the tribes constitute nearly 34.41% of the total population of the state. The percentage of tribal population is highest in Ukhrul district (89.5%) followed by Churachandpur district (86.26%). The tribal people belong to more than 29 subgroups.

District/State	Total Population			Growth rate	
	1981	1991	2001	1981-91	1991-01
Chandel	56444	70734	122714	25.32	73.49
Bishnupur	141150	179903	205907	27.46	14.45
Churachandpur	134776	176043	228707	30.62	29.92
Imphal East	262779	334145	393780	27.16	17.85
Imphal West	293367	373039	439532	27.16	17.82
Senapati	155421	206933	379214	33.14	83.25
Tamenglong	62289	85572	111493	37.38	30.29
Thoubal	231781	290393	366341	25.29	26.15
Ukhrul	82946	109952	140946	32.56	28.19
Manipur	1420593	1826784	2388634	28.59	30.76

Source: Census of India, 1981, 1991, & 2001

The Nagas, Kukis, and Mizos are the broad tribal groups of Manipur.

The urban population in the state is 5.7 lakhs, which accounts for 23.87% of the state's total population in 2001. Imphal, the capital city of Manipur, alone has a population of 2.17 lakhs (2001). Out of 33 towns in the state, 23 are located in the plains.

About 60% of the population in Manipur is Hindus. The Meities, Nepalies and Bengalis mainly constitute the Hindu population. The other important religion in terms of population is Christianity. The Christians account for nearly 29.7% of the total population of the state.

Manipur is traditionally famous for handloom weaving. About 0.5 lakh workers are engaged in the household weaving of the state. There are about 2,000 registered factories in Manipur. These include sericulture, bamboo, and cane industries, leather goods processing, rice milling, gur and khandsari processing etc.

The transport and communication system is not well developed in Manipur, especially in its hilly areas. The national highway no. 34 links Manipur with Nagaland and Assam. It runs for a length of 435 kilometers through Imphal upto Moreh near Myanmar border. The state highways connect Imphal with Jiribam in the west, Ukhrul in the north-east, and Chandel town in the south-east. Imphal is connected with Guwahati, Silchar and Kolkata by air.

Meghalaya

The Garo Hills and Khasi-Jayantia Hills districts of Assam constituted a state called Meghalaya on 20th January, 1972. The state is bounded by Assam on the north and east, and Bangladesh on the south and west. The total geographical area of Meghalaya is 22,489 square kilometers. Geographically, Meghalaya is a part of the Deccan plateau.

The surface of the plateau is made uneven by the presence of hill ranges and valleys. It raises abruptly from the Sylhet plains of Bangladesh, and then the central highland slopes down gradually eastward. The height of the plateau also decreases northward to merge ultimately with the Brahmaputra valley. The state has 33.5% of its total area under forests.

The total population of Meghalaya was estimated as 3.41 lakhs at the beginning of the 20th century, came 23.06 lakhs in 2001, the density being 103 persons per square kilometer. The majority of the population is concentrated in the districts of East Khasi

Hills and West Garo Hills. The main towns like Shillong and Tura are located in these two districts. The district-wise population distribution and the decadal growth variations are shown in Table 1.9.

District/State	Total Population			Growth rate	
	1981	1991	2001	1981-91	1991-01
East Garo Hills	136550	189043	247555	38.44	30.95
East Khasi Hills	395937	508774	660994	28.50	29.92
Jaintia Hills	156402	219186	295692	40.14	34.90
Ri Bhoi	115477	148386	192795	28.50	29.93
South Garo Hills	55482	77017	99105	38.81	28.68
West Garo Hills	314395	400758	515813	27.47	28.71
West Khasi Hills	161576	217462	294115	34.59	35.25
Meghalaya	1335819	1760626	2306069	31.80	30.98

Source: Census of India, 1981, 1991 & 2001

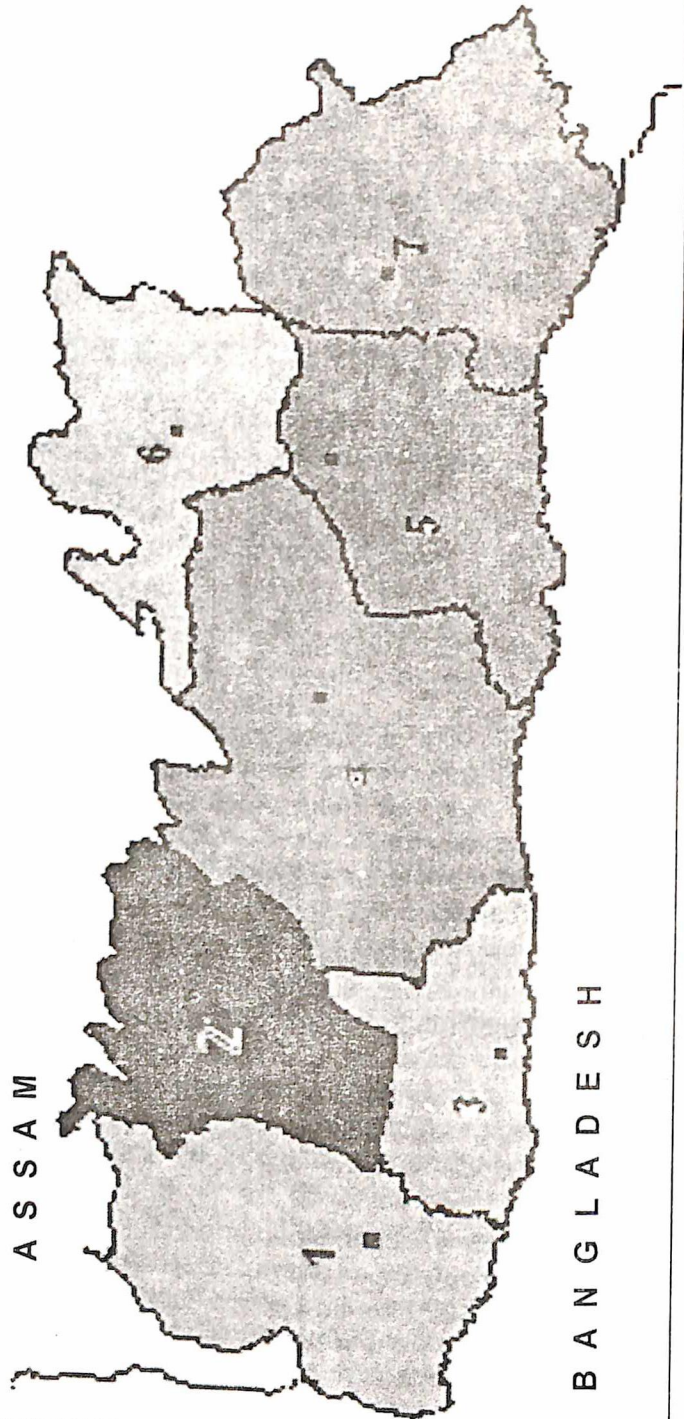
Almost 85.46% of the population of Meghalaya is tribal. The Khasis and Garos are the two principal tribes of the state. The Syntengs (Khasis) and Pnars (Jayantias) are two subgroups of the Khasis. However, Khasis and Garos together constitute 84.5% of the state's total population. Other major tribes are Hajong, Mizo, Lalung, Karbis etc.

Of the total population of Meghalaya, 19.64% are urban. The urban population is distributed mainly in Shillong (1,32,876 in 2001) and Tura (58,391 in 2001) and other towns of the state. These two towns together cover 46.76% of the total urban population of the state. 52.6% of the population of Meghalaya is Christians and 25.9% follow different tribal religions. The Hindus constitute nearly 18% of the state's population followed by Muslims with only 3.1% population.

Jhuming continues to be an important practice of cultivation in Meghalaya. About 40% of the net sown area is under this practice. In the state, 52,290 families with a total population of 2.56 lakhs are directly involved in jhum cultivation. The state is not industrially flourishing in spite of its richness in mineral resources. Among the notable industries, the cement industry at Cherrapunji, the plywood

DISTRICTS MAP OF MEGHALAYA

- 1. WEST GARO HILLS
- 2. EAST GARO HILLS
- 3. SOUTH GARO HILLS
- 4. WEST KHASI HILLS
- 5. EAST KHASI HILLS
- 6. RI-BHOI
- 7. JAINTIA HILLS



<i>District</i>	<i>Area (km²)</i>
East Garo Hills	2603.0
East Khasi Hills	2820.0
Jaintia Hills	3819.0
Ri Bhoi	2376.0
South Garo Hills	1849.0
West Garo Hills	3715.0
West Khasi Hills	5247.0

Source: Census of India, 2001.

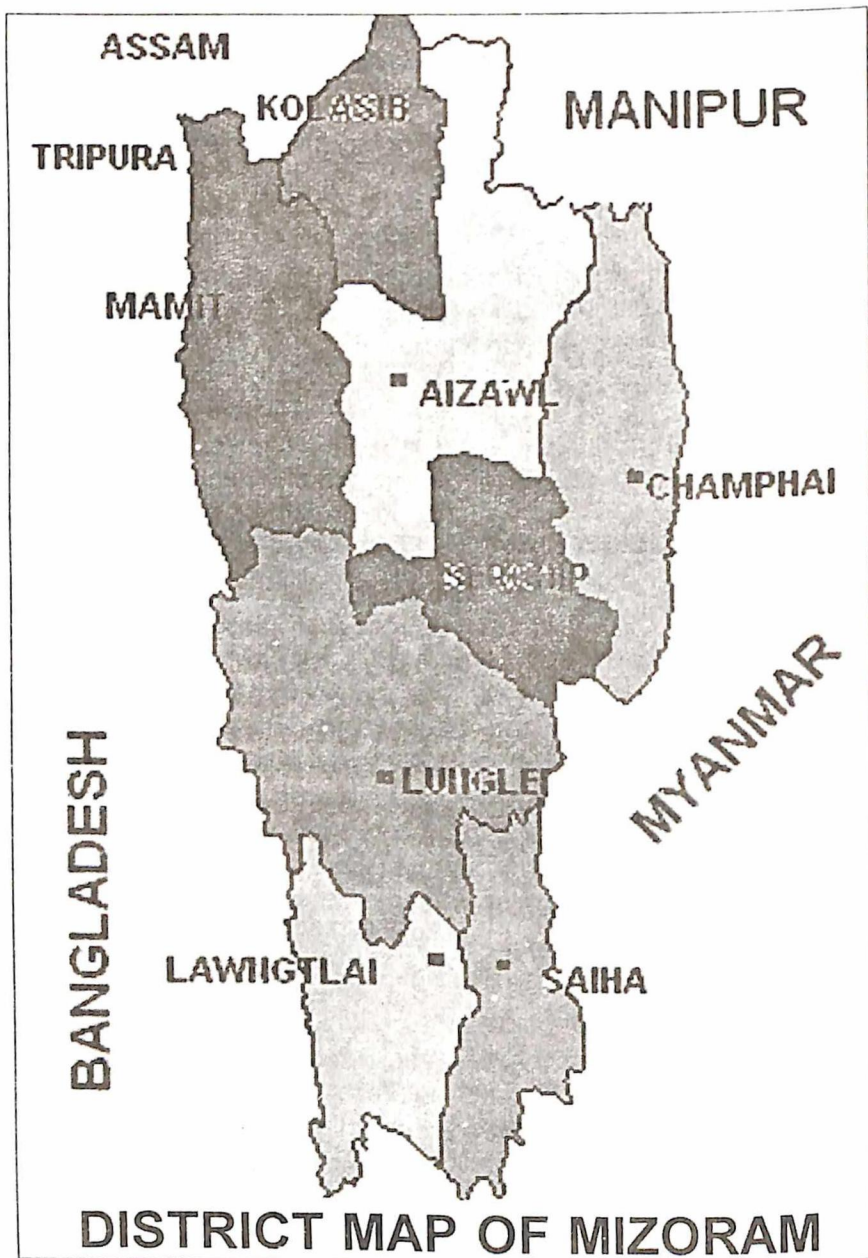
and the fruit processing industries at Burnihat, and the timber treatment factory at Darugiri are worth mentioning. The state has about 2,000 small industries.

The total road length of Meghalaya is 5,245 kilometers. Of this, 334 kilometers are covered by the national highway no. 40 which runs from Guwahati to Dawki via Shillong. There are some state and district roads also connecting Tura in the west and Shillong in the east with the neighbouring important places. The surfaced roads thus have a total length of 2,763 kilometers. Shillong, the capital and commercial, educational and defense centre of Meghalaya, serves as the nodal point from which most of the important roads radiate to different places.

Mizoram

Mizoram is the southern-most hilly state of the North-East India. It is bounded by Myanmar on the east, Bangladesh and Tripura on the south and west, and Assam and Manipur on the north. It covers a geographical area of 21,087 square kilometers with a population of 8,91,058 in 2001. It has received its full-fledged statehood since 1983. The mountain ranges mostly run from north to south parallel to each other. Narrow and deep valleys leaving no plains separate these ranges. The ranges are higher gradually eastward. The highest peak, called the Blue Mountain, is located near the Myanmar border in the district of Lunglei. Thus the state can be divided physiographically into two divisions, viz., the eastern mountainous tracts, and the western ridge and valley tracts. The forests occupy nearly 575 of the total area of the state.

The state had a population of 0.82 lakhs at the beginning of



20th century which increased to 1.96 lakhs in 1951 and to 8.91 lakhs in 2001. The density of population in the state was 23 persons per square kilometers in 1901 which raised to 42 persons per square kilometers in 2001. The district-wise population distribution in the

<i>District</i>	<i>Area (km²)</i>
Aizawl	3576.3
Champhai	3185.8
Kolasib	1382.5
Lawngtlai	2557.1
Lunglei	4538.0
Mamit	3025.8
Saiha	1399.9
Serchhip	1421.6

Source: Census of India, 2001.

state and the decadal growth rates are shown in the table 1.12 given below.

<i>Districts/state</i>	<i>Population 2001</i>			<i>Density</i>	<i>Literate</i>	<i>%of</i>
	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>per km²</i>	<i>popⁿ</i>	<i>literate</i>
Aizawl	248852	90960	339812	95	282523	83.14
Champhai	38124	63265	101389	32	77466	76.40
Kolasib	36171	24806	60977	44	46346	76.01
Lawngtlai	0	73050	73050	29	33478	45.83
Lunglei	58153	79002	137155	30	96513	70.37
Mamit	10803	51510	62313	21	41161	66.06
Saiha	19731	41092	60823	43	41133	67.63
Serchhip	29206	26333	55539	39	44642	80.38
Mizoram	441040	450018	891058	42	663262	74.44

Source: Census of India, 2001.

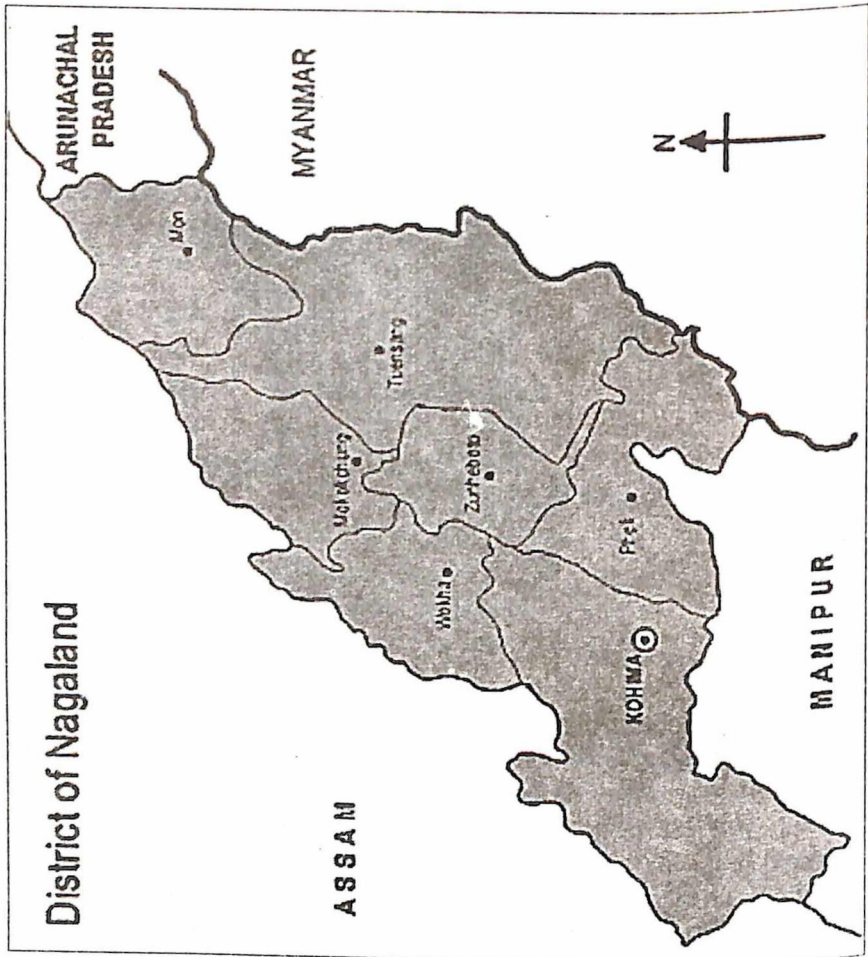
About 94.72% of the total populations of Mizoram are tribals (1991). The major tribes are Lushai, Pawi, Hmar, Lakher, and Kuki. Nearly 83.6% of the total population is Christian. The state has 22 towns and 49.49% of the state's population lives in towns. Remarkably, 52.07% of the urban population is concentrated in Aizwal town alone (2,29,714 in 2001). Agriculture alone engages 59.77% of the total workers of Mizoram and nearly 14% are the industrial workers (2001). The state does not possess large scale

industry. Weaving, rice-milling, saw-milling, and bamboo works are the main industrial activities in the state.

The state is open to the rest of the country only through Assam. National highway no.54 runs from Silchar to Tuipang in the southern corner of Mizoram through Aizwal and Lunglei. The south-western part of the state has almost no road network making the place isolated and inaccessible.

Nagaland

Nagaland is the eastern frontier state of India, bordered by Myanmar and Bangladesh on the east, Assam on the north and west and Manipur on the south. The state has acquired its statehood in the year 1963. The total geographical area of the state is 16,579 square kilometers.



District	Area (km ²)
Dimapur	927.0
Kohima	3114.0
Mokokchung	1615.0
Mon	1786.0
Phek	2026.0
Tuensang	4228.0
Wokha	1628.0
Zunheboto	1255.0

Source: Census of India, 2001.

The topography of Nagaland rises abruptly from the Brahmaputra valley eastward. The hills bordering Myanmar attain a general height of 2000 meters. The state can be divided physiographically into three main divisions:

- (i) the low foothills bordering Assam;
- (ii) the central high hills;
- (iii) the low hills of south-east.

Nagaland had a population of 1.02 lakhs in 1901 which increased to 19.88 lakhs in 2001. The density of population as per the last census is 120 persons per square kilometers. The rapidity in the population growth in the state is a post-independence phenomenon. The decadal growth rate of population is 64.41% in 1991-2001 as against 56.08% in the preceding decade. The distribution of population is very uneven, mainly due to variations in the altitude and terrain characteristics. The district-wise population distribution and the decadal growth rates are shown in table 1.14.

About 87.74% of the population of Nagaland belongs to different tribal groups. Although the term Naga is applied to the autochthonous inhabitants of the state, there are about 14 tribes among Nagas. The major tribes are Konyak, Ao, Sema, Angami, Lotha and Songtom.

The urban population of Nagaland, which was 2.94% at the beginning of 20th century, shares 17.76% of the total population in 2001 census. There are 9 urban centres in the state. Dimapur, the class 1 town (107,382 in 2001), and Kohima, the class 2 town (78,584 in 2001) together covers 52.41% of the total urban

District/State	Total Population			Growth rate	
	1981	1991	2001	1981-91	1991-01
Dimapur*	116986	195985	308382	67.53	57.35
Kohima	121761	198194	314366	62.77	58.62
Mokokchung	103736	156207	227230	50.58	45.47
Mon	94162	150065	259604	59.37	72.99
Phek	70618	101823	148246	44.19	45.59
Tuensang	137108	232972	414801	69.92	78.05
Wokha	58040	82394	161098	41.96	95.52
Zunheboto	72519	97933	154909	35.04	58.18
Nagaland	774930	1215573	1988636	56.86	63.6

Source: Census of India of relevant years.

* Dimapur district is enumerated in 2001 by carving out the land area from Kohima district

population of the state. Almost 80% of the state's population is Christian, followed by Hindus with 14.4% of the population.

Nearly 75% of the total cultivated area in Nagaland is under Jhuming. The state exhibits a very low percentage of workers engaged in the industrial activities. Handloom and other cottage industries, based on wood and bamboo are very common in Nagaland. Some large scale industries like sugar mill with a distillation unit at Dimapur, the paper mill at Tuli and ply-wood factory at Tijit are worth mentioning.

Nagaland has 6331 kilometers of roads of different types. The surfaced roads have a total length of 878 kilometers. National highway no. 34 connects Kohima with Dimapur and Imphal, and carries about 40% of the state's total traffic. There is only 10.45 kilometers of railway route that passes through the Dimapur plains. Dimapur, the only class 1 town of Nagaland, is linked with Guwahati and Kolkata by air service.

Tripura

Tripura is located in the south-western part of North-East India. It is bordered by Bangladesh on the north, south and west covering a length of 839 kilometers; Assam and Mizoram lie on the east of the state. Tripura happened to be a princely state before independence and got the status of statehood in India on 1st January, 1974. The total geographical area of Tripura is 10,479 square kilometers.

The western part of the state is a part of Great Bangladesh plains covering 40% of the total area, while southeastern part, bordering Mizoram is completely hilly. The total population of Tripura during the 1st census of the 20th century was 1.73 lakhs, which increased to 31.91 lakhs in 2001 census. The growth rate was moderate till 1951, but rose tremendously during the second half of the century. The density of 17 persons per square kilometers in 1901 has come up to 263 in 1991 and 304 in 2001. The population variations within the state can be shown in table 1.15.

Districts /state	Total population			Growth rate		Density
	1981	1991	2001	81-91	1991-01	(km ²) 2001
Dhalai**	185269	239142	307417	29.08	28.55	139
N. Tripura	355979	451423	590655	26.81	30.84	281
S. Tripura	535558	765176	762565	42.87	(-)0.34	243
W. Tripura	976252	1289086	1530531	32.04	18.73	505
Tripura	2053058	2744827	3191168	33.69	16.26	304

Source: Census of India of relevant years.

** Dhalai has come up as a district by carving out the area from North Tripura district in 2001 census.

Tripura has 8.53 lakhs of tribal population that constitutes nearly 31.08% of the total population of the state as estimated during 1991 census. The major tribes are the Tripuri, Jamatia, Riang, Mag, Chakma, and Noatia. Majority of tribal population is concentrated in West Tripura and South Tripura districts. The Tripuris alone constitute 56.7% of the state's tribal population. Hinduism is the main religion of the state covering nearly 90% of the total population of the state.

The urban population of Tripura was around 64 thousand at the beginning of the century, which now comes to 5.43 lakhs. The level of urbanization is as low as 17.02% in 2001. Tripura has 23 urban centres according to the census report of 2001. Agartala is the only class one town in the state supporting 34.85% of the total urban population of the state (1,89,327 persons in 2001).

The economy of Tripura is mainly based on agriculture. This primary sector engages nearly 67.29% of the total work force of the state. Only 1.32% of the workers is engaged in manufacturing,

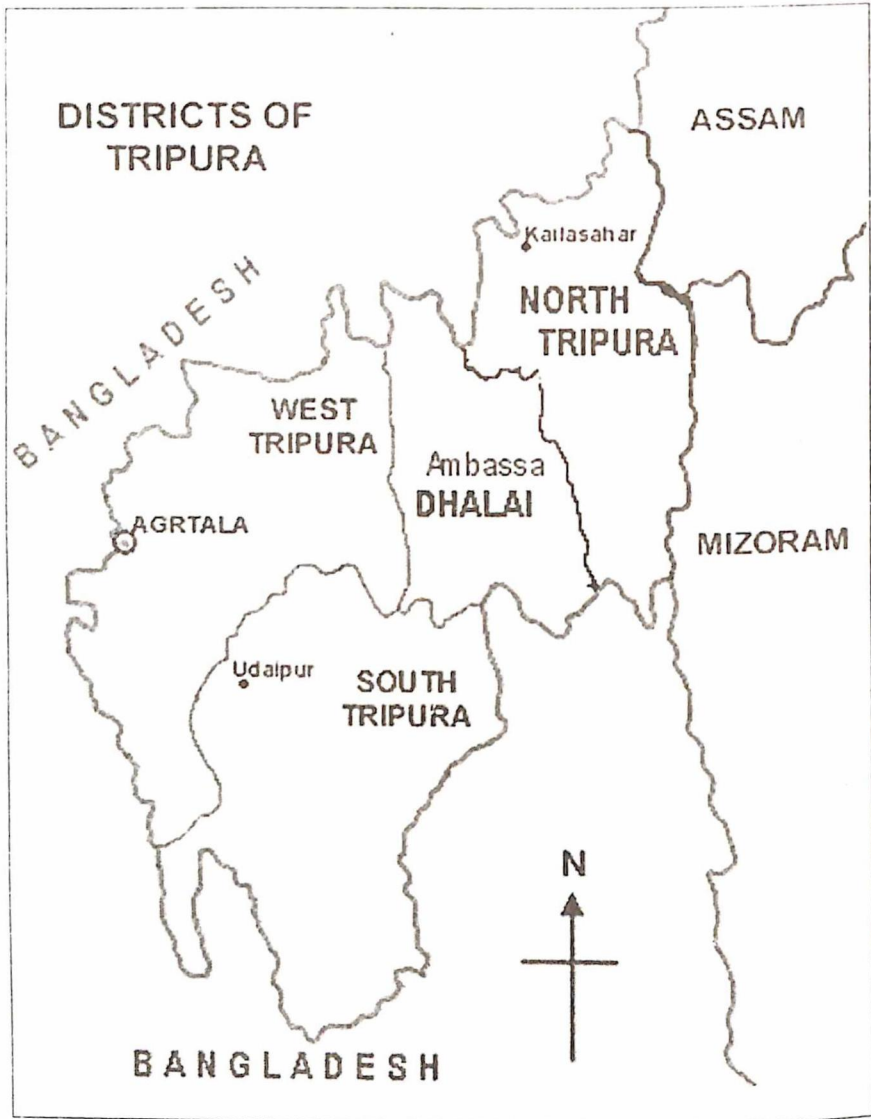


Table 1.16 : District-wise Area of Tripura

District	Area (km ²)
Dhalai	2212.3
North Tripura	2100.7
South Tripura	3140.0
West Tripura	3033.0

Source: Census of India 2001

servicing, processing, and household industries. Except a paper mill at Fatikroy, a jute mill and some tea factories, all other industries in the state are small scale counting almost 1000 in numbers.

The difficult terrains particularly on the eastern part of the state create hindrances toward the development of transport network in the state. Tripura has 198 kilometers of National Highway no. 44 running from Karimganj of Assam to Agartala through Dharmanagar of Tripura. The state highway have a length of 136 kilometers. Thus the state has a road length of 5400 kilometers including surfaced and unsurfaced PWD roads. The railway route in Tripura is operative only up to Kumarghat from Karimganj district of Assam. The survey work to extend the railway route up to Agartala has been completed and the construction work is yet to be initiated. The capital town of the state is connected by air with Kolkata, Guwahati, and Imphal.

Sikkim

Sikkim is the 22nd state of Indian Union, situated at the north of West Bengal. The state is most recently included under the jurisdiction of North-Eastern Council. The North Eastern Council is the nodal agency for the economic and social development of the North Eastern Region which consists of the eight States of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. The North Eastern Council was constituted in 1971 by an Act of Parliament. The constitution of the Council has marked the beginning of a new chapter of concerted and planned endeavour for the rapid development of the Region. Over the last thirty five years, NEC has been instrumental in setting in motion a new economic endeavour aimed at removing the basic handicaps that stood in the way of normal development of the region and has ushered in an era of new hope in this backward area full of great potentialities.

Sikkim has been brought under NEC on 20th December 2002 through The North Eastern Council (Amendment) Act, 2002.

In section 2, clause (b) of the North Eastern Council Act, 1971 (hereinafter referred to as the principal Act), the words "Nagaland and Tripura", has been replaced by the words "Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura".

The Princely state of Sikkim has been under the control of Indian Union since 1961, particularly, in the field of foreign policy and defence maintenance. It came under the agreement of Indian unification on 26th April 1975. Earlier in 1974; it had become an

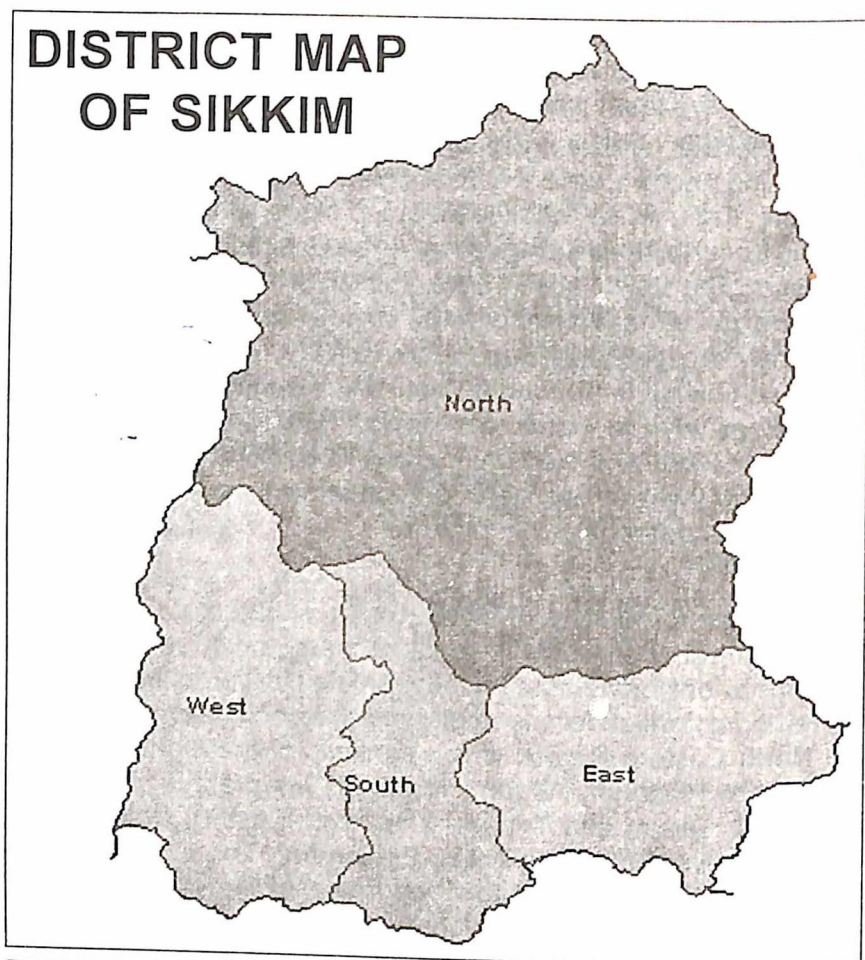


Table 1.17 : District-wise Area of Sikkim

<i>District</i>	<i>Geographical area (km²)</i>
East	954.0
North	4226.0
South	750.0
West	1166.0
Sikkim	7,096.0

Source: Census of India, 2001.

associate state of the Indian Union. Its legislative Assembly adopted a resolution on April 10, 1975, doing away with the institution of Chogyal and integrating the territory into India, with its status of full statehood. Its population consists of the Lepchas, Bhutanese,

Nepalis and Tibetans. Sikkim has long been the attraction of tourists being regarded as the beauty spot of Eastern Himalaya and the crown of West Bengal. It is the 2nd smallest state of India in terms of its geographical area. It covers a land area of 7096 square kilometers. The entire state of Sikkim is hilly. The hilly region is spread to a length of 100 kilometers from north to south and almost 60 kilometers from east to west. Its height from sea level varies between 244 metres to 8450 metres. The state is bordered with Dargeeling Hill Council of West Bengal on the south, demarcated by the rivers Runjit and Rangpo. Kanchenjanga, China and Tibet are at the north. The fabulous Kanchenjanga, with a dizzy height of 8597 metres is the third highest in the world, called Khang-chen-dzod-nga, "the house of five treasures" represented by its five peaks, has forests on its slopes, that rank amongst the finest. Tibet and Bhutan across Chumbi valley make the eastern border; and Nepal is on the west separated by Singlila mountain range. Nearly 36% of the geographical area of Sikkim is covered under forests.

Sikkim has a total population of 540,493 sharing 0.05% of the Indian population according to the census 2001. Male population is estimated as 288,217 and female being 252,276; the sex ratio as per 2001 census shows 921 females per 1000 males as against 907 in the census 1991. The decadal growth rate is 32.98% during 1991-2001 as against 28.47% during the decade 1981-91. The density per square kilometer is 76 persons in the current census. Almost 69.68% of the population in the state is literate. The district-wise variation of population distribution is shown in the table 1.18 given below.

Table 1.18 : District-wise Population Distribution, Growth Rate and Density in Sikkim (1991 - 2001)

District /State	Total population						Growth rate		Density (km ²) 2001
	1991			2001			1991-01	1991	
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total			
East	146580	31872	178452	191803	52987	244790	37.17	187	257
West	96399	1762	98161	121350	1824	123174	25.48	23	29
North	30437	803	31240	39775	1248	41023	31.32	42	55
South	96035	2569	68604	127560	3946	131506	91.69	59	113
Sikkim	369451	37006	406457	480488	60005	540493	32.98	57	76

Source: Census of India, 1991 & 2001

The level of urbanization in Sikkim has been very slow. The state had only one urban centre in 1951 inhabited by 2.39% of the total population of the state, which increased to 16.15% in 1981, came down to 9.34% in 1991 and further slightly increased to 11.11% in 2001. The urban population is inhabited in 9 urban centres of Sikkim. Gangtok, the capital town of Sikkim, alone shares 48.6% of the total urban population (29,162 in 2001) of the state.

Nearly 22.36% of the population of Sikkim is tribal (90901 in 1991). The main tribes in Sikkim are Lepchas, Gorkhas, Limbus, Bhutias, and others. Nearly 75% of the population is Nepali, 18% is Lepcha, 6% is Bhutia and others. Hindu constitutes 60% of the total population and 28% people are Buddhists.

Almost 56.34% of the workers in Sikkim are cultivators and agricultural labourers as per the census report of 2001. Only 1.23% of the workers are engaged in household industries. Percentage of workers engaged in tourism industry, hotels and resorts and other service sectors constitute 42.42% of the total workforce.

Sikkim is connected with the rest of the country only by the national highway no.31-A running via Siliguri and Sevak. The inhabitants of the state can avail railway service only from Siliguri and Jalpaiguri of West Bengal. These nearest railway stations are well connected with developed road network. The state has state highways on the border of Tibbet and China, mainly used for defence purposes. Gangtok is connected to Bagdogra through air.

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