

CHAPTER VII

COMMUNICATION

The main trade route, connecting the plains in the south with Tibet in the north passes through the district.

A large number of pilgrims came from the plains via Tanakpur and Kathgodam and proceeded to the holy Manasarowar and Kailas in Tibet. The pilgrims generally undertook the journey in June and July. The routes from the railheads, Kathgodam and Tanakpur, converged at Askot and reached Manasarowar. From lake Manasarowar, the pilgrims proceeded to Kailash on the last stage of their upward journey. Conductors and guides available at Garbyang, and the Geeta Satsang Kailashkshetra, Naini Tal, Conducted pilgrims to these shrines. The Chinese stopped the pilgrimage in 1962.

Pilgrims have been visiting the shrines at Badrinath and Kedarnath for centuries and some of these have followed the Pithoragarh Karnaprayag route which bifurcated to Badrinath and Kedarnath from Karnaprayag. Now a metalled led road connects Karnaprayag with Pithoragarh.

The age-old footpaths and footholds were replaced by bridle-roads about a century ago. The first motor road was constructed in 1946.

The public works department maintains about 360 km. of metalled roads. The department also maintains 625 km. of bridle-roads which are generally unmetalled. The government has laid emphasis on the making of new roads and about 124 km. of metalled roads are under construction.

The forest department maintains about 840 km. of bridle-roads which are mainly located in the broad belt of forests.

The Antarim Zila Parishad maintains about 112 km. of bridle-roads.

The Kali and Ramganga are the main rivers of the district, through which logs are floated down to the plains. It takes great skill to fell tall trees. Expert wood-cutters assist in the operations. The branches and barks of the felled trees are removed and they are sawn by hand into rectangular 2.13 m. lengths, known as sleepers. The sleepers are first brought to the banks of the rivers which carry them to Tanakpur. The journey of the sleepers in the rivers begins when there is enough water in them. Men armed with long poles patrol the river banks and pushes back into the river such sleepers as are stranded on the sand banks or among rocks. Timber worth Rs 4,92,688 and Rs 3,58,068 were floated down in 1965 and 1966 respectively. About 350 men were employed in the trade in 1967.

Travel Facilities

There are eight dharmsalas in the district which are under private management and charge a nominal rent for accommodation but do not supply food.

There are a number of inspection bungalows and rest-houses in the district, which are maintained by different departments mainly for the use of their own officers, but officers of other departments and the public can also be given accommodation in them if it is available. The public works department maintains one dak-bungalow, 13 inspection houses and 20 rest-houses. The Zila Parishad maintains 9 dak-bungalows. The forest department maintains 3 rest-houses, 5 wood hutments and one log cabin.

Post—Telegraph—Telephone Offices

Post-offices—The service of runners was instituted in 1886 in the area now covered by the district and the government levied a cess, called dak cess, and introduced a postal service which was extended to *pattis* and populated localities. The first post-office was established at Pithoragarh in 1886. In addition to mail, medicines were also distributed in times of emergency. In subsequent years some more post-offices were opened and their number rose to 182 in 1967. As more roads are being built and new localities are emerging, more and more post-offices are being established. There are 9 telegraph and public call offices.

Broadcast Receivers

The people are buying more and more radio sets as broadcasting is becoming popular. The number of broadcast receiver licenses issued in the district in the district in 1966-67 was 2,588.