

CHAPTER IX

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

GENERAL CONDITIONS

Of the five subdivisions in the district, all but Meherpur are traversed by at least one branch of the Eastern Bengal State Railway. The Meherpur subdivision is cut off from the railway and is unfortunate in its water communications as well; this subdivision is bounded on the north-east by the Matabhanga, and on the north-west by the Jalangi, which also cuts through a portion on the west, but the only river which traverses it is the Bhairab, and that is now so hopelessly silted up as to be useless as a means of communication except during the height of the rains. However, it is fairly well off in the way of roads, though it has only one road of the first class. The Ranaghat subdivision is well served in every respect. Ranaghat itself is an important junction on the Eastern Bengal State Railway; from this place the new branch leading to Murshidabad, and the central branch (formerly known as the Central Bengal Railway) both take off from the main line, the former roughly to the north-west and the latter in a direction slightly south of east. There is also the light railway which takes off from the east bank of the Churni, not far from Ranaghat, and leads to Krishnagar *via* Santipur. As regards waterways there is the Hooghly which forms the eastern boundary of the subdivision, and throughout this part of its course is navigable by steamers throughout the year; there is also the Churni, which traverses the northern part of the subdivision and joins the Hooghly not far from Chakdaha. There are two first class roads, one from Ranaghat leading to Santipur and the other from Chakdaha to the eastern boundary of the

district. The Krishnagar subdivision is also very well served. It is traversed throughout its greater length by the Murshidabad branch of the Eastern Bengal State Railway; and, through the eastern portion, by part of the main line. It also has connection with Santipur by a light railway. As regards waterways it is bisected roughly from north to south by the Jalangi; its western boundary is the Bhagirathi; and towards the east it is traversed by the Churni. It has three first class roads, connecting the headquarters station with Bagula on the east, the eastern bank of the Bhagirathi opposite Nabadwip on the west and Santipur on the south; there are also good second class roads leading to the north and north-west. The Chuadanga Subdivision is bisected by the main line of the Eastern Bengal State Railway, and is also served by the river Matabhanga from north to south, and by the river Kumar or Pangasi on the north-eastern boundary. It is also traversed from north-east to south-west by a first class road, leading from Meherpur over the eastern boundary of the district into Jessore. The Kushtia Subdivision is served by the main line of the Eastern Bengal State Railway from near Alamdanga on the south to Damukdia on the north, and by the Goalundo branch from the junction at Poradah to the eastern boundary of the district at Khoksa. It is almost completely surrounded by rivers, except for portions of the eastern boundary; the Padma runs along the north and the Matabhanga along the west and south; the Kumarkhali thana, which forms the north-eastern corner of the subdivision, is traversed by the Garai. As regards roads it is perhaps the least well served of the subdivisions.

WATER COMMUNICATIONS

A full history of the river system of the district has been given in chapter I of this volume. Now that the railways have reached their present stage, the importance of maintaining a through connection by water between Calcutta and North-West India is no longer as paramount as it

was. But the Nadia rivers still have a good deal of local importance, and Government goes to a considerable expense to keep them open for navigation for as many months in the year as is possible. Several regular services of steamers are maintained. Messrs. Hoare Miller and Company run a daily service between Calcutta and Kalna in Bardwan, calling at Santipur. The same Company run another service between Kalna and Murshidabad, calling at Nabadwip on every alternate day during the rainy season, and, during the dry season, from Kalna to Nabadwip twice a week. These services are on the Hooghly or Bhagirathi. Until Krishnagar was connected up by rail with the main line of the Eastern Bengal State Railway, and a bridge built over the Jalangi, steamers used occasionally to come up the Jalangi to Krishnagar, and even beyond that town, when there was sufficient water in the river for them. A steamer of the India General Steam Navigation and Railway Company plies twice a day (except on Sundays) between Kushtia and Pabna. Other steamers belonging to the same Company, and to the River Steam Navigation Company ply daily between Damukdia and Godabari on the Padma. Other through steamers between Patna and Dacca call at Damukdia at irregular intervals. Country boats on their way from up-country to Calcutta come down either the Bhagirathi or the Jalangi, whichever at the time offers the better facilities for navigation. The annual report of the district for the year 1908-09 shows that the imports into, and the exports from, the district by the rivers were, in that year, 388,049 and 33,105 maunds of goods, respectively. The chief items among the imports were paddy 300,695 maunds; rice 69,268 maunds; and coke and coal 14,723 maunds. The only other article of which 1,000 maunds or over was imported by river was unmanufactured tobacco, the import of which was 1,343 maunds. Among exports by river the chief items were raw jute 12,751 maunds; gram and pulses 7,330 maunds; and *gur* (molasses) 2,781 maunds. Kerosene oil amounting to 6,302 maunds, also appears among the exports, but is not, of course, a true export of the district.

The Executive Engineer, Naia Rivers Division, has furnished a statement of the various classes of boats which are ordinarily used upon the rivers in the district, and it is reproduced below—

Name of boat	Used by <i>manjhis</i> at—	DESCRIPTION IMPORTANT CARGO CARE		Capacity in maunds	REMARKS
		Down	Up		
Malini ...	Up-country ...	Grain ...	Salt, hardware and miscellaneous	500 to 2,500	} Ply only during the rains, <i>via</i> Bhagirathi.
Patli ...	Ditto ...	Do. ...		Ditto ...	
Bhar ...	Ditto ...	Do. ...		Ditto ...	
Katra ...	Ditto ...	Stoneware		Ditto ...	
Sarong ...	Ditto ...	Grain ...	Salt, hardware and miscellaneous	200 to 1,000	} All the year round if the river is navigable, <i>via</i> , Bhagirathi.
Sangri ...	Murshidabad and Malda districts	General cargo		Ditto ...	
Pansway ...	Nadia and Bardwan	Ditto ...		100 to 1,000	
Khajnaghatta ...	Ditto ...	Ditto ...		Ditto ...	
Jang ...	Rajshahi ...	Rice ...	Salt, hardware and miscellaneous	200 to 500	} Only during the rains, <i>via</i> Matabhanga.
Ulak ...	Faridpur ...	Jute ...		500 to 1,500	
Kosa ...	Purnia ...	Jute and unmanufactured tobacco		100 to 500	
Phukni ...	Howrah ...	Rice and grain		500 to 1,000	
					Throughout the year <i>via</i> Hooghly and lower reaches of Jalangi, Bhagirathi and Matabhanga.

The *Malini* is described as being round both in the stem and the stern, with stern somewhat higher than the bow; it is wider and of greater draft than most other boats used on these rivers; the oars are worked from the roof.

The *Patli* is a flat-bottomed, clinker-built boat of less width and draft than the *Malini*; the oars are worked from the roof.

The *Bhar* is a strong, heavily built boat, capable of carrying stone, coal and similar articles; it is of equal

width for nearly the whole of its length, and has very blunt stem and stern.

The *Katra* is a flat-bottomed, clinker-built boat, of very light draft for its size; when loaded it is generally towed; when empty it is driven by oars worked from inside the roof. This particular type of boat seems to suit the exigencies of traffic on the Nadia rivers, and the proportion of them to be seen is yearly increasing.

The *Sarong* is a much smaller boat, with rounded bow, and flat stern; it is comparatively narrow, and has a deep draft for its size.

The *Sangri* is a peculiar shaped boat, with a bottom bulging down below the keel on each side; it has a very low free-board, and is in consequence liable to be swamped when the rivers are in flood.

The *Ulak* is a long, well-shaped boat, covered with a roof throughout its length.

The *Phukni* is a biggish boat, open with the exception of a small portion in the stem, which is roofed over.

RAILWAYS

The district is now (1909) very well served with railways. About 170 miles of the Eastern Bengal State Railway, all broad gauge, lie within its borders. The main line from Calcutta to Siliguri passes through the district, roughly from south to north; the distance from Kanchrapara on the southern boundary to Damukdia on the Padma is about 92 miles, and this section has 21 stations. The Lal Gola branch takes off from Ranaghat junction; it passes in a north-westerly direction; the portion within the district is about 48 miles in length, and there are 8 stations upon it. This branch traverses the Kalantar, which is the tract that is most liable to famine in the district and generally contains the lowest stock of food grains. In the 1896-97 famine the supply of food suddenly gave out in this tract, and, in the absence of the railway, which had

not then been constructed, the greatest difficulty was experienced in importing enough grain to prevent deaths from starvation. If another famine should unfortunately occur, this line will save the District Officer much of the anxiety which his predecessors had to bear. The central branch of the Eastern Bengal State Railway also takes off from Ranaghat junction; only about nine miles of it (with two stations) lies within the boundaries of the district; it passes in an easterly direction through the Ranaghat subdivision into the Bangaon subdivision of the Jessore district. The Goalundo branch takes off from Poradah junction, and passes in an easterly direction for about 21 miles, when it crosses the boundary of the district near Khoksa into Faridpur; there are five stations on this portion of the line. The light railway which runs from Aistola Ghat, on the right bank of the Churni about two miles from Ranaghat, to Krishnagar *via* Santipur, is about 20 miles in length, and has seven stations. This line was constructed by Messrs. Martin and Company at a cost of Rs. 7,00,000, upon a guarantee by the District Board of 4 per cent. interest on the capital expenditure. The line was opened in the year 1898, and was worked, by the company until it was taken over by the Eastern Bengal State Railway on 1st July 1904. During the intervening years it never worked at a profit of more than 3 per cent., and the District Board in consequence lost a considerable sum annually in making good the guarantee which it had given. The arrangements for crossing the river at Aistola Ghat were defective, especially during the rainy season, and it was this and the fact that the stations at Santipur and Krishnagar are at some distance from the centre of the town, that caused the receipts to fall below the figure which it was expected that they would reach. Orders have recently been issued for the preparation of detailed plans and estimates for the construction of an extension of this line from Ghoralia station to Kalna Ghat *via* Santipur city, and from Santipur city to Santipur station on the light railway; also for the construction of a new bridge over the Churni, and the

conversion of the present broad gauge siding from Ranaghat station to Aistola Ghat to 2 feet 6 inch gauge.

A detailed project and estimate amounting to Rs. 15,36,522, as finally revised, have been prepared for constructing a 2 feet 6 inch light railway, 56 miles in length, from Krishnagar to Jalangi, *via* Meherpur.

A rough project and estimate have also been prepared for a branch from Shibnibash station on the Eastern Bengal State Railway to Kotchandpur in Jessore. The Manager of the Railway has recommended a line *via* Khalispur, Kaliganj and Jhenidah; the length of this would be about 55 miles, and the estimated cost is Rs. 52,49,115. From Statistics which have been taken it appears probable that this line could count upon gross earnings of Rs. 90 per mile per week from the date of its opening.

The total rail-borne imports into, and exports from, the district during the year 1908-09 amounted to 1,374,277 and 1,642,660 maunds respectively. Among imports the most important items were—paddy 622,399 maunds; salt 212,124 maunds; kerosene oil 116,369 maunds; and rice 113,207 maunds. Among exports the most important items were—raw jute 755,324 maunds; gram and pulses 474,934 maunds; "other food-grains" 114,456 maunds; and *gur* (molasses) 84,189 maunds.

ROADS

The District Board maintains 107 miles of road of class I, metalled, bridged and drained throughout; 230 miles of class IIA, unmetalled but bridged and drained throughout; 392 miles of class IIB, unmetalled and partially bridged and drained; 21 miles of class IV, banked but not surfaced, partially bridged and drained; and 52 miles of class V, cleared, partially bridged and drained. Village roads to an aggregate length of about 526 miles are also maintained by the Board.

The chief roads in class I are described below.

Bagula to Krishnagar—Until Krishnagar obtained a direct railway service this was the most important road in the district, as it connected the head-quarters with the railway. It is about $9\frac{1}{2}$ miles in length, and a metalled surface 12 feet wide was formerly kept up; the width is now being gradually reduced to 8 feet, as the traffic along the road has greatly decreased since the advent of the railway. At the third mile the Churni river has to be crossed by a ferry.

Ranaghat to Santipur—This is about eight miles in length. A metalled surface nine feet wide is maintained. The Churni river has to be crossed by a ferry in the 1st miles.

Krishnagar to Santipur—The total length of this road, including four miles within municipal limits and maintained by municipalities, is 14 miles; the metalled surface is 9 feet wide. This road is not interrupted by any ferries. According to local tradition this road was originally constructed by Maharaja Rudra Rai of Nadia.

Chuadanga to Meherpur—This road is $17\frac{1}{2}$ miles in length, and has a metalled surface eight feet in width. It is interrupted by two rivers, one of which has to be crossed by a ferry. It is of importance, in that it furnishes the nearest outlet to the railway from the Meherpur Subdivision.

Chuadanga to Jhenida—This is in continuation of the last-mentioned road. It is ten miles in length, with an 8 feet wide metalled surface. It is an important feeder road for the railway.

Other roads of this class are: (1) Kushtia to Salgamedia, 8 miles, not now of much importance; (2) Kushtia to Daudpur, 5 miles; (3) Kissengunge to Hansada on the Jessore boundary, 11 miles; (4) Krishnagar to Nabadwip, 7 miles; (5) Chakdaha to Balia on the Jessore boundary, 10 miles.

Among the class IIA roads the longest are :
 (1) Krishnagar to Plassey, 31 miles, of diminished importance since the opening of the Lalgola extension of the Eastern Bengal State Railway ; (2) Krishnagar to Jaguli, 32 miles ; (3) Meherpur to Gopalpur *via* Mamdagari, 23 miles ; (4) Darsana railway station to Kedarganj *via* Kapasdanga, 17 miles.

In class IIB the three longest roads are Krishnagar to Meherpur, 25 miles ; Meherpur to Kaliganj *via* Plasipara and Mira, 29 miles ; and Nischintapur to Hat Boalia, 23 miles.

FERRIES

The District Board maintains eight major and three minor ferries. The most important ferries are those at (1) Subalpur over the Matabhanga on the Darsana railway station to Kedarganj road ; (2) Nonaganj, over the Ichhamati, on the Bagula to Chankhali road ; (3) Meherpur, over the Bhairab, on the Meherpur to Nandanpur road. The total income which the Board derived from ferries during the year 1908-09 was Rs. 5,486.

POSTAL COMMUNICATIONS

The district contains altogether 143 post offices, and 529 miles of postal communication. The number of postal articles delivered in the year 1908-09 was 187,697, including 109,300 post cards and 49,828 letters. The value of money-orders issued in that year was Rs. 15,87,646, and of those paid Rs. 25,59,647. The total number of Savings Bank deposits was 16,300, the amount deposited being Rs. 13,18,196. There are eight postal-telegraph offices situated at Krishnagar, Kumarkhali, Kushtia, Kushtia Bazar, Meherpur, Nabadwip, Ranaghat and Santipur ; 8,794 messages were issued from these offices in 1908-09.