

## CHAPTER VII.

### COMMUNICATION.

#### OLD TIME TRADE ROUTES AND MODES OF CONVEYANCE.

The district of Saran because of its geographical position in North Bihar was considered important so far as trade is concerned in the pre-British days. On one side Saran is contiguous to some of the districts of Uttar Pradesh and on the other side she is on the border of Nepal. Saran was practically the gate-way of North Bihar from the northern side and there were recognised trade routes by road and water between Saran and the other districts of North Bihar and Patna in South Bihar. But these trade routes were very much interfered with by the incidence of crime in the last phase of the Mughal administration. The district along with the other districts of North Bihar had a number of petty zamindars who were almost like ruling chiefs and they used not only to control trade and commerce but would often interfere with the natural flow of trade. It was even considered an act of right to seize the merchandise goods unless some money was paid. The available records prior to the advent of the British show that there was a wave of lawlessness and the roads were neglected. As a matter of fact the neglect of the roads led to a certain extent to the development of water-borne traffic. *Bojras* (big boats) laden with merchandise used to go down from Uttar Pradesh, and pass Saran district for Patna or other places of commercial importance down below. There were quite a number of important calling stations for these boats which connected and developed the trade centres. Prior to the advent of the British administration it was a common sight to find hordes of freebooters passing by the trade routes of Saran and to the other districts of Bihar. The army of the Delhi Emperor used to pass by the roads of Saran quite often on their way to Gauda in Bengal either to take revenge on some recalcitrant frontier Governors or to realise a defaulting tribute. Sometime or other, some sections of the Muslim population in Saran and the other districts of North Bihar had attained a high level of culture. It is on record that even Muslim saints from Arabia used to be attracted to Saran and the other districts of North Bihar. It is a significant fact that there are patches of Muslim population culturally quite advanced not only in portions of Siwan in Saran district but also in the other districts of North Bihar. The belt of Muslim population on the border of Nepal Frontier is a remarkable feature and ultimately the belt fans out in Kishunganj subdivision in Purnea which is now on the borders of East Pakistan. Though undeveloped, the transdistrict routes of North Bihar, a considerable portion of which ran through Saran district, kept up the flow of culture and trade in pre-British days.

There was another reason why the roads of Saran used to attract a considerable volume of trade and commerce. The *mela* at Harihar

*Kshetra* (Sonepur) on the banks of the Gandak and Ganga has been running from old times. This *mela* is considered as the second largest cattle fair in the world. Horses were in great demand during the time of the later Mughal and the possession of a good horse was considered to be a sign of prestige and power. There are records to show that Arab horses, *dumba* sheep, camels, etc., used to be regularly brought for sale at *Harihar Kshetra mela*. Merchants from far flung Tatari and Persia used to bring their animals, carpets, musk and other luxury goods to the *mela* for sale.

The early British administrators were traders first and administrators next. They carried on an extensive trade in saltpetre, opium, indigo, textiles, etc. They quickly saw that the routes must be improved if they have to carry on a successful commerce. The development of the roads was taken into hand. Europeans were licensed and settled in the interior of the district for business purposes. They raised their concerns, commonly known as *kothis* and these *kothis* were connected with each other by roads and with the factories which were scattered in Saran district. But the development of the roads did not mean any decline of water-borne trade. The main factories were situated in Patna and Patna was accessible from Saran by boats only. There are still remnants of old Dutch and English *kothis* in the interior of the Saran district. One such remnant could be seen at Karinga village on the Baniapur road to the north-west of Chapra at a distance of 8 miles containing a mausoleum erected to the memory of Jacobus Van Horn, the Dutch Chief in Bihar, who died in 1712 soon after the Dutch had abandoned Patna and withdrawn to Singhia in consequence of the exactions of Farrukhsiyar.

The Dutch had a refinery for curing of saltpetre at Chapra. The English did the refining at Singhia and at other places and the cured saltpetre used to be carried by 'saltpetre boats' to Patna. The 'saltpetre boats' were above 50 yards long, 5 yards broad and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  yards deep and could carry 200 tons. The establishment of the Patna Factory gave a great encouragement to boat-traffic of commercial goods.

Before the proper development of the roads water-communication was very important. The river route made Patna one of the important marts for saltpetre and other commodities and the place of contact between the merchants of Eastern and Western India. It has been rightly observed that if Calcutta was the south-eastern gate for foreign trade, Patna was the north-western gate for up-country trade. 'The Patna fleet', as the saltpetre boats were also called, formed a great feature in the economic and political life of Bengal which comprised Bihar as well in the early eighteenth century.

The usual mode of conveyance besides boats were bullock-carts and head load or shoulders involving a great waste of man power.

Light-wheeled bullock-carts were common. Rubber-tyred bullock-carts came into vogue very much later. Pack horses and donkeys were also common. Elephants had always been in demand in rainy season. It may be mentioned here that Sonepur fair always has a big turnover of elephants. Zamindars had always been fond of elephants along with horses. As a matter of fact elephants are more useful in Saran district many portions of which used to get flooded and are still flooded.

#### PEOPLE EMPLOYED IN TRANSPORT.

In recent decades like the other districts of North Bihar, Saran has tried to keep pace with development in transport and communications. Vast improvements have been made in transport by roads, railways and water, and in communications by post, telegraph and telephone. The communications by air and wireless do exist in the district but to a limited scale. The following are the figures of population according to the *Saran District Census Hand-Book* engaged in transport and communications during the year 1951 :—

| Category.             | No. of persons engaged. |          | Total. |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------|--------|
|                       | Males                   | Females. |        |
| Transport by road ..  | 1,110                   | 387      | 1,497  |
| Transport by water .. | 422                     | ..       | 422    |
| Transport by air ..   | 5                       | ..       | 5      |
| Railway transport ..  | 1,451                   | ..       | 1,451  |
| Postal services ..    | 315                     | ..       | 315    |
| Telegraph services .. | 26                      | ..       | 26     |
| Telephone services .. | 13                      | ..       | 13     |
| Wireless services ..  | 8                       | ..       | 8      |
| Total ..              | 3,350                   | 387      | 3,737  |

#### DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION.

From the end of the eighteenth century to the earlier part of the nineteenth century, the British administrators in Saran gave top priority to the construction of roads and the other services of the public utility. The means of communication when the British stepped into the administration were very unsatisfactory. Communication received a good deal of attention because bad communication prevented transshipment of goods and the quick movement of troops so essential in the early part of the British administration. In the old correspondence volumes kept in the District Record Room at Chapra, there are several letters which mention that some roads were

constructed with the labour of the convicts. Regarding the development of communication the old *District Gazetteer of Saran* published in 1930 mentions as follows:—

“Bounded as it is on three sides by great rivers, Saran, till within a comparatively recent period, occupied a position of isolation ill befitting its great resources, its teeming population and its agricultural wealth, while its means of internal communication were little less backward. There were no canals and no railways; the existing roads were not nearly sufficient in number for the wants of the people; and the utility of those which did exist was much impaired by the fact that many of them were unbridged. In earlier times these defects were still more pronounced. In 1794 there were only three roads in the district, and in very bad condition. These were the roads from Chapra to Champaran *via* Mashrak and Sattarghat, which was hardly passable in the rains, people being obliged to wade up to the waist in water at several parts; that from Chapra to Muzaffarpur *via* Rewa Ghat which was scarcely passable; and that from Chirand to Manjhi *via* Godna which was also impassable in many places owing to the want of bridges. In 1800 the Collector reported that this last road was the only one in the district; it was repaired partly by the zamindars and partly by convict labour, and as he said ‘well calculated for every description of carriage’. Bridges, however, were still practically non-existent, for in 1815 the Collector wrote that he knew of only one bridge worthy of notice in the district, at Barauli on the Daha.

“In 1830 the following main roads were in existence: (1) Chapra to Darauli; (2) Chapra to Salimpur Ghat and Gobindganj; (3) Chapra to Sattar Ghat; (4) Chapra to Rewa Ghat; (5) Chapra to Sonapur; (6) Chapra to Sherpur Ghat, the direct route to Dinapore; and (7) Chapra to Gorakhpur *via* Siwan and Baragaon. These roads were, the Collector reported, to be considered more in the light of military roads and were ‘all good’. This description, however, appears to have somewhat euphemistic in the light of the following account of the roads of Saran given in the *Bengal and Agra Gazetteer* of 1841. Good roads are much wanted in the district; those in the vicinity of the station of Chapra are kept in repair by the Magistrate and those in the interior by the zamindars, whose system is attended altogether with very bad consequences. The great road from Chapra to Gorakhpur *via* Darauli is wretchedly bad; that leading to Gorakhpur *via* Baragaon is not much better, and in many places so narrow as scarcely to admit wheeled-carriages, besides having deep ditches on each road side. On the road several bridges are much required, more particularly across the nullah at Siwan, Aliganj, where a ferry boat plies in the rains, and many accidents occur; these remarks also apply to the Gobindganj and Bettiah roads. From Chapra to the eastward as far as Sonapur, a distance of about 30 miles, the roads are in excellent repair, and passable for wheeled-carriages

nearly the whole year. The Chirand and Sherpur Ghat on the Ganges, the direct route to Patna and Dinapore, have good roads. The road leading to Rewa Ghat on the Gandak, which is the road of Tirhoot, is of considerable importance, and very little expense would keep in good repair throughout the year. The road leading to Sattar Ghat on the Gandak, which is the high road to Champaran, is hardly passable in many places for five or six months in the year. The cross roads from one village to another are in a few instances repaired by the zamindars and if the high roads are indifferent in many parts of Saran, the cross roads are wholly neglected.

“The famine of 1874 gave a great stimulus to road making and numerous new roads were constructed, while existing highways were raised and improved. Still in 1877, when the *Statistical Account of Bengal* was published, it was stated that, with the exception of some short detached lengths in the vicinity of towns, all the roads were unmetalled and their chief defect was a want of bridges, many having been swept away in the flood of 1871. The introduction of the Road Cess Act in 1875 placed the District Road Fund on a satisfactory basis and enabled the bridges to be built and repaired, besides a finish being given to much rough earthwork which remained after the famine year and in 1884 the Bengal and North-Western Railway was opened throughout the south-western portion of the district. ~~Since~~ <sup>From</sup> that time there has been steady progress in extending and improving the roads, building bridges, replacing old wooden bridges with masonry erections, and providing more waterway and better drainage. The length of the district roads has been increased to 1,205 miles and of village roads to 1,419 miles or approximately one lineal mile of road to every superficial square mile. The district also contains altogether 158 miles of railway, for besides the main line of the Bengal and North-Western Railway there are branch lines from Chapra to Mashrakh, Chapra to Manjhi, from Daraundha to Maharajganj, and from Siwan to Gorakhpur *via* a loop line as well as a loop line from Sonepur to Banwar Chak. There are now few places which are not easily accessible at all times of the year, and the result has been only not to develop trade but also to minimize the liability of Saran to famine.”

After the formation of the District Board, roads became the responsibilities of the Board. The Public Works Department of the Provincial Government did not extend their activities to the roads but confined to the buildings only. The District Board with the available funds could not possibly do much to extend the roads to the interior. Proper road building materials were not easily available within the district. The European indigo planters, however, contributed considerably to the maintenance of good roads connecting their factories and the nearest market. The occasional social meets of the European planters were also an incentive to make roads. As there was one indigo factory in every 15 to 20 miles there were

a number of fairly kept roads within the district. The European planters had a tremendous pull on the District Board and some of them were members of the Board. The important *ghats* and ferries continued to receive attention either from the Board or from the Government. Some of the *ghats* were under the zamindars or other individual owners. When taken over by the Government, they used to be leased out. The embankments were also another important aid to communications.

The road building projects are now mainly done by three agencies—Public Works Department, District Board and Local Boards. The total length of the Public Works Department roads is 176.50 miles; the mileage of the District Board roads is 967.36 and village roads 1,956.52 on the 31st December 1957. The district has altogether 195 miles under the railway communication.

#### ROADS.

Regarding roads the old *District Gazetteer of Saran* (1930) mentions that "The roads of Saran may be divided into two categories, either according to their construction, as metalled or unmetalled, or according to their importance, as main or village roads. Of metalled roads the district has comparatively few, their aggregate length being only about 234 miles. The macadamizing material used on them is nodular limestone (*kankar*), which is found in many places in the district. The small lump of *kankar* are carefully packed so as to form a level surface; water is then poured over it, and the surface rolled or beaten down with rammers. When properly consolidated, it forms an excellent metalling. The great cost of keeping these roads in a state of efficiency, under the heavy traffic which they have to carry, and the large number of unmetalled roads which demand maintenance and repair, have let the District Board of Saran for sometime past to abandon further efforts to extend their metalled system and to devote all available funds to improving existing unmetalled communications especially in extending, widening, raising and bridging them. The cart traffic of the district is very great, though it has somewhat diminished since the railway has been opened and all efforts directed to the improvement of the unmetalled roads are a direct benefit to the poor classes. The best kind of unmetalled roads consists of a raised road in the centre for light wheeled traffic, horsemen and pedestrians, with a grass berm on each side; outside these, on one or both sides is a cart track for heavy wheeled vehicles, and beyond these again the borrow pits, whence earth is taken for the repairs of the road. It is a distinct custom of long standing that heavy wheeled traffic should be confined to the lower cart tracks so long as they are passable; and owing to the great volume of traffic, the friability of the soil, and the immense length of roads to be kept in repair, any other system would severely strain the resources of the District Board. The increase, in recent

years, of motor traffic over roads not suitable for it, has provided a new problem which still awaits a satisfactory solution.

“Turning to the classification according to importance it should be explained that all the principal roads of the district entered in a carefully prepared list and known as district roads, are under the direct control of the District Board, whilst smaller roads including the tracks from village to village are subject to the administration of the Local Boards in the three subdivisions. The total length of district roads in existence in 1928-29 was 1,150 miles and of village roads 1,772 miles. The upkeep of all the main roads and all original construction work on village roads requiring engineering knowledge are in the hands of the District Engineer, who is assisted by a Supervisor, and the district is sub-divided into twelve sections each in charge of a sub-overseer who looks after both District and Local Board roads. Repairs are usually carried out by contractors. Most of the main roads near the principal towns and villages are already shaded with fine trees, and plantation of others is steadily progressing.\* Road demarcation has also been actively taken up, as it has been found that, unless this is thoroughly done, encroachments are frequent which are detrimental to the interests of the public. The operation is effected either by erecting boundary pillars or stones, or by palm trees, the latter method is especially suitable as it is inexpensive and lasting and the trees neither overshadow the neighbouring fields nor are damaged by cattle; where the road passes through villages and *bazars*, its limits are defined by masonry drains on either side.”

It is important to mention that the district of Saran was not very badly affected so far as the communications are concerned by the great Bihar Earthquake of 1934. Communications, although damaged, played an important part in restoring normal conditions, as quite a large number of villages had been badly affected by fissures and sand of various types and textures. Some such villages were Tatwa, Devapur, Phajulpur, Rajaputty, Sahbazpur, Satjora, Basatpur, Kakri, Hathwa and Mashrakh. The only building severely affected at Sonapur was the dak bungalow, a lofty, one-storeyed, old building.

Before 1946 the Public Works Department had no activities so far as the roads were concerned. The Executive Engineer of the Public Works Department, Saran, is in charge of the roads and buildings of the district. There are three Assistant Engineers, besides sectional officers who work under him. The District Board has its own District Engineer for the maintenance and construction of the roads. There are two Assistant Engineers of the District Board each in charge of a road subdivision. The Assistant Engineer, Sadar, is

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\* Road arboriculture was rather neglected in the recent years and many of the old trees have died out (P. C. R. C.).

in charge of the roads falling in Parsa, Chapra, Ekma and Mashrakh sections with headquarters at Chapra. The other Assistant Engineer is in charge of the roads falling in Maharajganj, Gopalganj, Siwan, Darauli and Bhorey sections. Each section is placed under the charge of a sectional officer. The metalled roads of the district have increased from 234 miles in 1932 to 320.82 miles in 1957 of which 176.50 miles are under the Public Works Department and 144.32 miles under the District Board.

#### VILLAGE ROADS.

The village roads are *katcha* roads and maintained by the three Local Boards of the district. The total length of the village roads is 1,956.12 miles. The newly-constituted *Gram Panchayats* are also taking part in the road-building activities. The total mileage of the newly-constructed and the old repaired roads is 157½ and 477½, respectively. Regarding the village roads the old District Gazetteer mentions that "They form a perfect reticulation between the main arterial highways, and range from the well-planned road, hardly differing except in name from the main road to the winding tract from village to village which the cattle first made, then the villagers widened, and an energetic Magistrate at last decided to maintain. With so many excellent routes piercing the district in all directions, there were few points on the railway, which were not already served by existing roads when it was opened. A few stations, however, remained, which though admirably placed as regards the traffic to be carried and the convenience of passengers, were not provided with satisfactory means of communication with the interior of the district. For these places several new roads have already been constructed, others are being constructed, and it is the policy of the District Board, as opportunity offers, to provide every station with good metalled approach".

#### DISTRICT BOARD ROADS.

As mentioned before the total length of the roads under the District Board, Saran, is 967.36 miles, out of which 144.32 miles are metalled and 823.04 miles unmetalled. The total length of the village roads is 1,956.12 miles. Some of the important roads of the district have been described below :—

*Mairwa-Guthni road.*—It is a major district road and its total length is 9½ miles. There is a plan to build a bridge at Guthni on this road by the Public Works Department and if constructed, it will form a link with the Deoria district of Uttar Pradesh.

*Chapra-Salimpur Ghat road.*—Its total length is 51 miles, which leads due north from Chapra to the important ferry of Salimpur on the Gandak opposite Gobindganj, through which most of the traffic from Nepal and Champaran passes into Saran and Gorakhpur.



*Chapra-Guthni road.*—The Chapra-Guthni road, 54 miles, skirts the left bank of the river Gogra, and passes through Manjhi and Darauli. It serves ferries on the Gogra between Saran and the districts of Ballia and Azamgarh in Uttar Pradesh.

*Chapra-Sohansi Ghat road.*—The total length of it is 30 miles. It leaves Chapra in a north-easterly direction, and passes through Mirzapore and Marhowrah, terminates at Sohansi on the Gandak south-east of Siwan.

*Chapra-Sattar Ghat road.*—The Sattar Ghat road of the District Board is 34 miles in length and runs almost due north to the Gandak. It is one of the most important roads in the district, connecting it with the southernmost portion of Champaran. This road for many miles passes through low *chaurs*, and until it was raised and metalled, was constantly damaged by floods.

*Siwan-Maharajganj road.*—It leads south-east for 12 miles to the important market of Maharajganj, and thence continues in the same direction to Rewa Ghat, 53 miles, and to Sonapur, 68 miles, thus crossing the roads of the Chapra-Rewa Ghat and the Chapra-Siwan and joins Chapra-Sonapur road at Dighwara.

*Siwan-Sohagpur Ghat road.*—The Siwan-Sohagpur Ghat road runs north-east for 10 miles to Barharia, to avoid marshy and low land, and from there to Sattar Ghat by a route necessarily devious for the same reason. The total length of this road is  $35\frac{1}{2}$  miles.

*Siwan-Salimpur Ghat.*—This road is identical, as far as Barharia, with the Siwan-Sattar Ghat road and thence runs through Barauli police-station to Salimpur Ghat, 15 miles.

*Siwan-Guthni road.*—The Siwan-Guthni road, 22 miles, *via* Mairwa, runs due west from Siwan till it reaches the Chapra border, which it follows south-west joining Chapra-Guthni road.

*Siwan-Siswan road.*—It is a major district road and its total length is 21 miles. The vehicular traffic on this road due to sugarcane is heavy. There is a plan to construct a bridge on the river Daha on the 17th mile of this road.

*Andar-Raghunathpur road.*—It is a major district road and its total length is 8 miles. The vehicular traffic on this road due to sugarcane is heavy.

*Siwan-Basantpur-Mashrakh-Marhowrah road.*—This road passes through central Saran and its total length is 42 miles. The District Board has inspection bungalows—one at Basantpur and another at Mashrakh.

#### ROADS UNDER PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.

*Chapra-Siwan road.*—The main roads in Saran group themselves into the Chapra and the Siwan systems, these two principal towns being the foci of administration and trade in their respective neighbourhoods. It is a metalled road and its total length is 40 miles.

There is a large sugar factory at Pachrukhi which is situated on this road. The District Board has its inspection bungalows—one at Ekma and the other at Siwan on this road.

*Chapra-Sonepur-Pahleza road.*—This is one of the important highways of the district, 36 miles long, which runs in a general south-easterly direction through Dighwara to Sonepur, at the junction of the Gandak and the Ganga, famous for its shrine and great fair. A ferry and the Gandak bridge connect it with Hajipur in the Muzaffarpur district. A pontoon bridge has also been recently built to facilitate communication between Saran and Muzaffarpur districts.\* A link road at the 30th mile of this road connects it with Pahleza Ghat; where a steam ferry of the North-Eastern Railway plies to and from Patna. Another scheme for a pontoon bridge on the river Ganga near Patna is under investigation. This road is metalled throughout and its total length is 36 miles.

*Siwan-Mairwa road.*—It serves as an important route for transport of sugarcane from hinterland to factories. Siwan and Mairwa are both stations of the North-Eastern Railway and are served by this road for the import and export of agricultural produce in the locality. The road forms an important link between Chapra and Deoria across the Gandak and Guthni Bazar. A *mela* on the Ram Navami day is held on the 12th mile of this road on the bank of river Jharhi. The total length of this road is 13 miles.

*Chapra-Rewa Ghat road.*—The Rewa Ghat road runs east-north through Garkha, where there is a police-station, and past Jalalpur and Makair to Rewa Ghat on the Gandak. The total length of this road is 25 miles.

*Chapra-Marhowrah road.*—It serves as an important route for transport for sugarcane to the sugar factory at Marhowrah. The first seven miles of the road has had an exceptional heavy vehicular traffic, as it is an outlet for marketing facilities to areas in central Saran, which has not yet provided with good roads. At Silouri which is on the 15th mile, a *mela* is held on the *Shivaratri* day. There are a number of factories at Marhowrah, namely, Cawnpore Sugar Works, Saran Engineering, Marhowrah Distilleries, which also add to the vehicular importance of the road. The total length of this road is 17 miles.

*Siwan-Gopalganj road.*—The Siwan-Gopalganj road passes through Mirganj from where Hathwa is only 3 miles. From Mirganj it passes on to the north-west and leads to the outlying parts of the Siwan and Gopalganj subdivisions and the boundary outpost of the district. The total length of this road is 20 miles.

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\* The pontoon is dismantled when the river is in spate. The present railway bridge is being substituted. It is in contemplation that the State Government will take over the present railway bridge and maintain it for vehicular and foot traffic (P. C. R. C.)

*Siwan-Andar road.*—The Siwan-Andar road goes due south from Siwan to the large village of Andar, 9 miles, where it bifurcates, one branch joining to Narhar Ghat on the Gogra and the other to Darauli on the same river. The total length of this road is 11 miles.

*Mairwa-Darauli road.*—The road takes off from Mairwa and terminates at Darauli at the bank of the Gogra. It serves as an important road for transport of sugarcane to Mairwa Railway Station and also to the New Siwan Sugar Factory. In mile 8th of this road near village Done, there is a mound which is reported to be the reminiscent of the *ashram* of the famous Dronacharyya of the Mahabharata. There is an inspection bungalow of the District Board on the 10th mile of the road. The total length of the road is 12 miles.

*Bharutpokhar-Zeradai road.*—The road has been thoroughly metalled and improved. The vehicular traffic on this road is heavy due to sugarcane. The total length of the road is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles.

The proposed National Highway no. 28 connecting Delhi to Kathmandu will pass through the district connecting Salimgarh on Uttar Pradesh border to Dumariaghat on Champaran border and will pass *via* the subdivisional town of Gopalganj. The survey for this scheme has been completed and the project is under the scrutiny of the Government.

#### TRANSPORT VEHICLES.

The bullock-cart remains as it shall remain for a considerable time to come the main mode of transport in the district. With the recent development projects the importance of the bullock-carts has been underlined. The road programme visualises connecting up every single village with some other village or with the main road leading to the nearest market. The popular requirement for transport in the existing circumstances could only be met by the bullock-carts which are light but strong vehicle and drawn by a pair of bullocks which are also used for ploughing. There has not been much improvement in the mechanism of bullock-carts, as a matter of fact very little improvement could probably be effected. Fitting up of rubber tyres is a distinct improvement brought in by the European planters but unfortunately the idea has not caught. There was a survey in 1945 which recorded 32,076 bullock-carts in the district. There has not been any other survey. Bullock-carts are also used for transport of passengers. The bullock-carts are usually iron-shod and they damage the roads badly. Pack ponies are going out. Horse-drawn carriages for transporting goods are unknown. *Ekkas*, two-wheeled light vehicles with a flat platform as seat, drawn by a single horse are very commonly used for the transport of passengers. An *ekka* could carry four persons besides the driver comfortably but it is usually over-loaded. *Ekkas* wheels on the average have a diameter of about 5 feet. *Ekkas* can ply practically on all kinds of tracks.

Bicycles are making a rapid headway and they are poor men's car. Almost every village has now got a number of bicycle owners. It is quite usual to see village pedlars carrying stuff for sale on their cycles.

Coming to power-propelled vehicles it has to be mentioned that in 1957 there were 69 passenger buses plying on the different routes of the district. There is no State Transport in Saran district and the permits for plying the buses had been obtained by the private individuals or companies from the North Bihar Transport Authority with headquarters at Muzaffarpur. This Authority has the Commissioner of Tirhut Division as the Chairman and several officials and non-officials as members. The Authority meets from time to time and reviews the road position and grants fresh permits, if necessary. The same Authority also grants permits to the private and public carriers for carrying goods. There were 80 private and public carriers plying in this district in 1957. The sugar mills have a number of private carrier trucks for the transport of the sugarcane. The truck traffic damages the road very badly. It is usual to find the trucks laden beyond the limit mentioned in the permit. The small number of the passenger buses and carrier trucks is due to the bad condition of the roads and particularly the bridges. Most of the bridges on the roads are incapable of taking the wear and tear of heavily laden trucks and already many of the culverts and bridges have now to be strengthened. The routes over which the passenger bus services run are as follows :—

- (1) Chapra—Muzaffarpur.
- (2) Chapra—Sonepur.
- (3) Chapra—Pahlezaghat.
- (4) Chapra—Rewaghat.
- (5) Chapra—Parsa.
- (6) Chapra—Derhi Sutihar.
- (7) Chapra—Amanaur *via* Aphar.
- (8) Chapra—Basantpur *via* Amanaur.
- (9) Chapra—Sohasighat.
- (10) Chapra—Tereiya Satjora.
- (11) Chapra—Mashrakh.
- (12) Chapra—Sahajitpur *via* Nagra and Baniapur.
- (13) Chapra—Dahagarh.
- (14) Chapra—Basantpur *via* Jalalpur.
- (15) Chapra—Goriakothi *via* Jalalpur and Basantpur.
- (16) Chapra—Darauli *via* Manjhi and Raghunathpur.
- (17) Chapra—Siwan.
- (18) Chapra—Chainpur *via* Ekma and Rasalpur.
- (19) Chapra—Dhorasthan *via* Ekma.
- (20) Chapra—Maharajanj *via* Darandha.
- (21) Chapra—Hathwa *via* Siwan and Mirganj.
- (22) Chapra—Mirganj *via* Siwan.
- (23) Siwan—Siwan *via* Hasanpura.

- (24) Siwan—Raghunathpur *via* Andar.
- (25) Siwan—Aswan *via* Andar.
- (26) Siwan—Darauli *via* Andar and Aswan.
- (27) Siwan—Darauli *via* Mairwa.
- (28) Siwan—Guthni.
- (29) Siwan—Gopalganj *via* Mirganj.
- (30) Siwan—Goriakothi *via* Jano Bazar.
- (31) Siwan—Mashrakh *via* Basantpur.
- (32) Gopalganj—Kateya *via* Mirganj and Bhorey.

The bus fair is calculated to one anna for the first class, 9 pies for second class and 6 pies for third class per mile. The seating arrangements of the buses are not good. The buses constantly ply overloaded and there are no proper resting shed or lavatory arrangements at the bus stops on the way. There are no effective Bus Consumers' Association. The overloading shows there is a scope for more buses taking to the roads. There is hardly any competition with the Railways so far as passenger traffic is concerned.

Recently inter-district and inter-State trucks are running carrying goods. The fair is cheap and the service is good.

#### REST HOUSES.

The District Board maintains three dak bungalows at each of the 3 subdivisional headquarters and 16 inspection bungalows at the following places :—

Sonepur, Dighwara, Parsa, Basantpur, Mashrakh, Maharajganj, Baniapur, Ekma, Siwan, Darauli, Mairwa, Bhorey, Mirganj, Gopalganj, Siswan and Baragaon.

The Public Works Department maintains an inspection bungalow at Siwan. There is a Circuit House at Chapra which is meant only for the high Government officials and dignitaries. At Gopalganj there is a *sarai* also. Primarily these bungalows were meant for the Government and the District Board's officials and members, but now non-officials could also stay there on payment of certain charge.

*Dharmashalas* which are old institutions are generally built by the munificence of the rich men. The number of *dharmashalas* is not big in the district. There are five *dharmashalas* at Chapra and one at Sonepur.

#### RAILWAYS.

##### *North-Eastern Railway (Main Line).*

The main line of the North-Eastern Railway, which was formerly called the Bengal and North-Western Railway and was the property of a private company, was constructed between November, 1881 and January, 1884. It runs through Saran district for 85 miles from a little beyond Mairwa in the north-west to Sonepur in the south-east.

Beyond Mairwa the line passes into the Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh and runs on for another 61 miles to Gorakhpur; and at Sonapur the Gandak bridge links it with the whole of the Tirhut Division. It has developed a large goods traffic, both local and from points beyond the Saran district, and at certain seasons of the year, especially at the time of the Sonapur fair, its passenger traffic is very heavy. "The opening of this line and the construction of feeder roads by the District Board" mentions the last District Gazetteer, 1930, "have been of very great benefit to the district, for besides the usual advantages of improved communication and the development of trade, they have done much to mitigate the severity of famine". The following 19 stations of the main line of the North-Eastern Railway fall within the district :—

Sonapur, Parmanandpur, Nayagaon, Sitalpur, Dighwara, Awatarnagar, Baragopal, Goldenganj, Chapra Katchery, Chapra, Kopasamhoata, Daudpur, Ekma, Chainwa, Dharaundha, Pachrukhi, Siwan, Jiradai and Mairwa.

*Sonapur—Pahleza (Branch Section).*

From Banwar Chak to Sonapur there is a short loop line passing Pahleza Ghat on the Ganga, where a steam ferry of the North-Eastern Railway plies to and from Digha and Mahendru Ghat in the Patna district. The total length of this section is 6 miles when Pahleza Ghat is stationed at Banwar Chak. But the length is subject to fluctuation with the change in the course of the river Ganga. The passenger traffic of this section is very heavy, for it is the main feeder which connects North Bihar with South Bihar and its capital Patna. The Sonapur-Pahleza section was opened to traffic from the 15th January 1885.

*Chapra-Manjhi Section (Varanasi Branch).*

A branch line, the Revelganj-Balia branch runs for 10 miles from Chapra *via* Revelganj to Manjhi where a bridge across the Gogra maintains connection with Varanasi. The Chapra-Manjhi section commenced working from the 15th April 1891. After the opening of the line the distance between Daraundha and Maharajanj was also linked by rail on 1st April 1907. Three railway stations, namely, Revelganj, Revelganj Ghat and Manjhi are within this section.

*Mashrakh Branch.*

The Chapra-Mashrakh section was opened for traffic from the 20th March 1910. The total length of the section is 65 miles and the following 11 railway stations fall within the district excluding Chapra and Chapra Katchery :—

Khaira, Paterhi, Marhowrah, Shamkuria Halt, Mashrakh, Rajapatti, Dighwa Dubauli, Sidhwalia, Ratan Sarai, Manjhagarh and Harkhua.

*Siwan Loop.*

The Gorakhpur-Sonepur section *via* Siwan was opened for traffic from the 1st April, 1907 and extended up to Captainganj from the 26th April, 1913. The total length of the section within the district is 29 miles and the following 6 railway stations are within the district :—

Sewan Katchery, Almorisarsar, Hathua, Thawe, Sasamusa and Jalalpur.

*Inward and Outward Traffic.*

The inward and outward traffic of goods and passengers of the important railway stations of the district is given below :—

*Chapra Railway Station.*

This is a big junction of the North-Eastern Railway. The average monthly traffic dealt with at the station is as follows\* :—

|                          |    |    |                  |
|--------------------------|----|----|------------------|
| Outward passengers       | .. | .. | 43,893           |
| Inward, parcels          | .. | .. | 800 maunds.      |
| Outward parcels          | .. | .. | 3,000 maunds.    |
| Inward goods             | .. | .. | 4,500 maunds.    |
| Outward goods            | .. | .. | 18,000 maunds.   |
| Average monthly earnings | .. | .. | 3,11,718 rupees. |

Main export traffic goods of this station are potatoes, cauliflower and onions and of import, grains.

*Siwan Railway Station.*

Siwan is an important railway station of the North-Eastern Railway. Main traffic dealt with at this station are sugar and vegetables. Details of the average monthly traffic of this station are given below :—

|                          |    |    |                  |
|--------------------------|----|----|------------------|
| Outward passengers       | .. | .. | 49,832           |
| Inward parcels           | .. | .. | 4,958 maunds.    |
| Outward parcels          | .. | .. | 806 maunds.      |
| Inward goods             | .. | .. | 1,10,778 maunds. |
| Outward goods            | .. | .. | 28,401 maunds.   |
| Average monthly earnings | .. | .. | 1,52,225 rupees. |

*Sonepur Railway Station.*

Sonepur is the headquarters of the traffic and mechanical district of the railway. Up till 1950 the Sonepur platform was the longest in the world, but now its place is taken by Storvick in Sweden and it is now the second longest platform in the world. The length of

\* The figures were collected in 1958 (P. C. R. C.)

this platform is 2,415 feet. Details of inward and outward passengers from 1948 to 1955 are given below :—

| Year. | Inward passengers. | Outward passengers. |
|-------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1948  | 1,45,440           | 1,30,426            |
| 1949  | 2,03,346           | 1,50,986            |
| 1950  | 1,42,195           | 1,31,622            |
| 1951  | 1,33,803           | 1,23,370            |
| 1952  | 1,27,899           | 1,17,336            |
| 1953  | 92,925             | 95,068              |
| 1954  | 1,13,022           | 1,13,863            |
| 1955  | 1,33,181           | 1,25,849*           |

#### *Marhowrah Railway Station.*

Three factories, namely, C. E. Morton and Company, Begg Sutherland and Company and Saran Engineering Company are within the precincts of Marhowrah which produce sugar, spirit and machineries, respectively. Details of the average monthly traffic dealt at this station are given below :—

|                    |       |                |
|--------------------|-------|----------------|
| Outward passengers | .. .. | 17,655         |
| Inward parcels     | .. .. | 710 maunds.    |
| Outward parcels    | .. .. | 820 maunds.    |
| Inward goods       | .. .. | 44,440 maunds. |
| Outward goods      | .. .. | 49,265 maunds. |

Other traffic dealt with at this station are potatoes and cattle.

#### *Mashrak Railway Station.*

Cattle and potatoes are mainly exported from this station. Details of the average monthly traffic dealt with are given below :—

|                     |       |                |
|---------------------|-------|----------------|
| Outward passengers. | .. .. | 1,360          |
| Inward parcels      | .. .. | 108 maunds.    |
| Outward parcels     | .. .. | 105 maunds.    |
| Inward goods        | .. .. | 17,695 maunds. |
| Outward goods       | .. .. | 2,585 maunds.  |

#### *Khairah Railway Station.*

Main traffic dealt with at this station are cattle, hides and potatoes which are exported. Details of average monthly traffic are given below :—

|                    |       |               |
|--------------------|-------|---------------|
| Outward passengers | .. .. | 9,536         |
| Inward parcels     | .. .. | 40 maunds.    |
| Outward parcels    | .. .. | 40 maunds.    |
| Inward goods       | .. .. | 3,632 maunds. |
| Outward goods      | .. .. | 1,334 maunds. |

\* The heavy passenger traffic is due to Sonepur fair which is held once a year. (P. C. R. C.)



*Chapra Katchery Railway Station.*

Details of the average monthly traffic of this station are as follows :—

|                    |       |               |
|--------------------|-------|---------------|
| Outward passengers | .. .. | 44,133        |
| Inward parcels     | .. .. | 4,095 maunds. |
| Outward parcels    | .. .. | 831 maunds.   |

(Goods booking is not allowed here.)

*Hathua Railway Station.*

Main traffic of export from this station are sugar, spirit, timber, oilseed and molasses. Details of the average monthly traffic are given below :—

|                    |       |                  |
|--------------------|-------|------------------|
| Outward passengers | .. .. | 21,822           |
| Inward parcels     | .. .. | 290 maunds.      |
| Outward parcels    | .. .. | 80 maunds.       |
| Inward goods       | .. .. | 1,13,056 maunds. |
| Outward goods      | .. .. | 1,04,373 maunds. |

## ROLE OF RAIL AND ROADS IN ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE PEOPLE.

Both railways and roads have played a very important role in the economic life of the district. It cannot be said that there is any competition between the railways and the roads. As a matter of fact some of the important roads run parallel to the railway lines and in spite of a fleet of buses and carrier trucks plying over long distance, the trains are always overcrowded. In the recent decades the roadways in Saran district have vastly improved. One decade back it would have taken several hours to cover the distance of about 60 miles between Chapra, the district headquarters, and Gopalganj, a subdivisional headquarters. One can now go right from Pahlezaghat on the other side of Patna and motor up to almost the end of the district on the border of Uttar Pradesh at an average speed of 40 miles per hour.

The railways have been separately described. There has not been any expansion of the railways in recent years. There is no present scheme to make expansion in any section where there are no railways. There is no doubt that there have been improvements for railway travelling and more passenger and goods trains are moving on the lines.\* But in spite of increased facilities it cannot be said that the railways are quite adequate for the demand. The overcrowding of the passenger trains, the very frequent complaint of late running of the trains,† the delay in the transshipment of goods by

\* Covered sheds at the main stations, rest-rooms, catering facilities, more trains are some of the amenities recently introduced. There is, however, still scope for improvement. (P. C. R. C.)

† The N. E. Railway was previously known as Oudh and Tirhut Railway and O T. R. had earned the joke of being the Old and Tired Railway by her late runnings. (P. C. R. C.)

goods trains could indicate that there cannot be any competition between the railways, waterways and roadways. As a matter of fact we could have more of vehicles on waterways, railways and roadways. Incidentally it may be mentioned that the development of roads has followed much later than the introduction of the railways. The Public Works Department came into existence in the district so far as roads are concerned only about a decade back. This is one of the reasons why the condition of the roads which was in the hands of the District Board was rather deplorable.

The district is deficit so far as rice production is concerned. Saran is also liable to frequent floods and there are pockets of scarcity which are invariably affected in droughts or floods. For all these reasons it is very necessary to have proper facilities for quick movement of foodgrains and this is not possible without more of good communication.

#### WATER TRANSPORT.

Saran being a riverine district, water transport plays an important role in the means of transport. In the past when the railways and other steam services were not developed, boats were the chief means for transport of goods and passengers. Previously river-borne traffic was heavy in Saran due to the perennial navigation in its great rivers the Ganga, Gogra and the Gandak. W. W. Hunter in the *Statistical Account of Bengal*, Volume XI, published in 1877, mentions that "Revelganj, in the district of Saran, appears as the second largest river mart with a Ganges-borne trade in Bengal. In exports it stands first of all, but in imports it is headed by Patna; and the average of both exports and imports added together exceeds ten lakhs of maunds per annum". The importance of Revelganj is on decline due to the diminution in the river-borne traffic. From the old correspondence volumes it appears that boat making as an industry was once flourishing in Saran. Now this industry has practically declined and only small size boats called *dingis* are still manufactured at village Sonaut, police-station Baikunthpur and some of the villages of Govindganj and Dumaria police-stations. These boats are used for ferry for small goods and passengers.

Though inland water transport has declined still its possibility in Saran is very great. Saran district is surrounded with its great rivers the Ganga, Gogra and Gandak. The Gandak enters the district near Gopalganj and joins the Ganga at Sonapur. It has a total of 72 miles of river course in Saran. The important *ghats* in the district are Dumarian, Dipan, Sattar, Bangra, Swanshi, Sohagpur, Dumari, Rewaghat, Barve and Sonapur.

It is navigable by boats up to 400 maunds capacity during the rainy season. The water level near the confluence of the Ganga and Gandak in Sonapur is shallow and uncertain. At times due to the sharp current of the Gandak boats of 300 to 400 maunds

capacity take a week to cover the distance of 3 miles, i.e., from the railway bridge to the confluence. In flood time, the Gandak is turbulent and notorious for eroding its banks and changing its course. Absence of big towns, the turbulent nature of the river during rains, lack of metalled roads connected with *ghats* and uncertain depth at and near the confluence, have rendered the river to be of little commercial importance.

At present grains, wood and baskets manufactured from bamboo are transported down the river Ganga and from there to Bihar, Bengal and Assam. From Patna only coal is imported through the Gandak. It takes about five days to reach Patna from Swanshigat and 20 to 25 days are required to reach back Swanshi from Patna. The freight rates for 200 maunds capacity of boat is Rs. 45 to Rs. 50 which cannot be called cheap. For going down the stream from Swanshigat to Patna and return, the freight is usually charged Rs. 50 per 100 maunds.

Of all the *ghats* mentioned above Govindganj, Rewa and Sonapur are important. Govindganj provides direct link between Gopalganj and Bettiah; the two subdivisional headquarters of Saran and Champaran respectively. The roads connecting Govindganj with Gopalganj and Bettiah are not metalled otherwise it would have gained more importance. The shortest distance between Chapra and Muzaffarpur is through Rewaghat and the road is all along metalled. The construction of pontoon bridge over the Gandak has made Sonapur Ghat more important. *Kirana* goods (groceries) are mostly sent through boats from Marufganj (Patna City) to Bhairampur Ghat in the Muzaffarpur district and from there to Chapra and Muzaffarpur by road.

*The Gogra.*—It touches Saran about four miles north-west of Darauli and joins near Chapra with the river Ganga. It forms the natural boundary and separates Ballia district of Uttar Pradesh from Saran. The Gogra travels a distance of 28 miles along the boundary of Saran. Though the area through which it flows has lesser rainfall than the basin of the Gandak yet the discharge of water flown through it is generally greater than that of the Gandak. The reason is that the Gogra basin is much bigger in area than that of the Gandak. The important *ghats* along its bank are Darauli, Siswan and Manjhi.

It is navigable throughout the year. The Gogra is deeper than the Gandak. Though there are important towns (like Ayodhya) situated along the bank in Uttar Pradesh yet in Saran no big towns could be established along its bank. The reason is that the lower part of the Gogra is more turbulent than its upper part. The river is approachable by roads at three places, viz., Darauli, Siswan and Chapra. Darauli Ghat has some importance as a sub-station of the Indian General Navigation Company. But the suspension of the Indian General Navigation Company in 1958 has affected the trade

and commerce of the place adversely. The nearest railway station of Darauli is Mairwa at a distance of 12 miles.

- Prior to partition of India in 1947 about 15 to 20 steamers of this Company used to ply daily on the Gogra-Gandak waters. But after that the number was reduced to three. It takes about 12 hours to reach Patna from Darauli by a steamer whereas by road and rail, it takes about 20 hours to cover the distance. This shows distinctly that there is great need for water transport between some stations at least. Big boats generally do not ply between Darauli and Manjhi, but boats up to two thousand maunds of capacity regularly ply in river in Uttar Pradesh. There is also a potentiality of the inland water transport between the places of commercial importance lying in Uttar Pradesh and North Bihar.

The small ferry service at Darauli has double control. In the Bihar side the District Board, Saran, allots the *ghat* to a contractor by auction while in opposite side it is done by the District Board of Ballia. There is mutual understanding between the contractor of both sides. A passenger crossing the Gogra from north to south has to pay toll to the contractor of Uttar Pradesh.

*Ganga.*—The Ganga flows for a very short distance in the southern part of Saran. But commercial importance of the river-borne traffic of the Ganga is comparatively greater than the other rivers. The reason is that bulk of the commodities consumed in Saran are imported from Patna, viz., grains, groceries, fuel, oil and coal. Wheat and vegetable oil are generally brought by rail from the western part of India. Salt is imported from Rajasthan *via* Patna. Some commodities of the Western India are also brought *via* Buxar. The important *ghats* of the Ganga in Saran are Maharajganj, Sherpur, Doriganj, Dumari, Dighwara, Pahleza and Sonapur.

Boats carrying goods of Western India anchor at Maharajganj or Sherpur and coming from the eastern side at Dighwara. A few years back Doriganj was an important place for river-borne traffic but due to change in the river course of the Ganga it is now replaced by Dighwara. Sand of Sone river is in great demand for construction of houses. Though Doriganj is just opposite to the river Sone yet owing to change in the river course and want of the facility for transport by rail, boats carrying sand generally anchor at Dighwara *ghat* and from there it is transported by rail. Two miles upstream from Doriganj is Sherpur *ghat* where passengers cross the Ganga for Arrah. But boats loaded with sand, grain, kerosene oil, coal and grocery anchor at Dighwara. The freight charge of a boat from Patna to Dighwara for coal, grain and kerosene oil and sand is Rs. 5, Rs. 2-8-0 and Rs. 2, respectively.

Pahleza Ghat is under the administration of the North-Eastern Railway. Passengers as well as goods to and from Patna cross the river generally by the steamer. Due to the variation in the water

level of the Ganga the *ghat* has to be shifted from place to place. During rains the *ghat* is shifted to Banwar Chak which is connected with Chapra by a metalled road and the regular bus service run between Chapra and Pahleza Ghat. Boat traffic of the *ghat* is also heavy specially during the Sonepur fair. Regular boats ply to and from Pahlezaghat, Mahendrughat, Ranighat and Antaghat in Patna.

But with the suspension of the Indian General Steam Navigation Company from January, 1958, which had regular steamer service up and down in the Ganga and Gogra throughout their course along the district, starting from Digha Ghat with a terminus at Burhraj in Gorakhpur district, the river-borne traffic of the district had suffered a lot. Before the extension of the Bengal and North-Western Railway now the North-Eastern Railway from Hajipur to Katihar the passengers traffic by steamers from Saran to Bengal and Assam was considerable. A casual steamer service managed by the Ganga Brahmaputra Water Transport now plies to and from Patna and Chapra *ghat* but without a large number of regular steamer service the situation could not improve.

The Daha and Mahi rivers are also navigable to a certain extent by country boats during the rainy season. The former river was about three decades before navigable by large boats as far as Siswan all the year round except in very dry years; but the damming up of the stream for purposes of irrigation and the increase of cultivation of *boro* rice in its bed had led to the silting up of the river.

#### FERRIES.

Numerous important ferries cross the Ganga, Gandak and Gogra rivers, and maintain communication with the neighbouring districts. The principal ferries on the Ganga are from Pahleza to Kurji in Patna, from Panapur to Nasriganj in the same district, from Doriganj to Bingawan in Shahabad, and from Telpa to Emawana. On the Gogra those most used are from Revelganj to Chaku Tola, from Manjhi to Chak Diara, from Domaigarh to Gopalnagar in Ballia, and from Darauli to Gosainpur in the same district. On the Gandak there are four important ferries leading to places in Muzaffarpur, viz., from Tharah Harinbandha to Rewa, from Barway and Darihara to Basant, from Hasanpur Bania to Sohagpur, and from Sarangpur-Saguni to Sohansi Ghat; and there are three principal ferries leading to places in Champaran, viz., from Dumaria to Rampurwa, from Salimpur to Gobindganj, and from Sattar Ghat to Dhekaha.

#### Boats.

There are several kinds of boats in general use on the Saran rivers. The larger boats are the *ulank*, which has a long narrow bow overhanging the water, the *melni*, which has a broad bluff bow and the *pataili* (also called in Saran *kalra*) a broad-beamed boat drawing but little water, the sides of which are formed of planks.

overlapping each other, in other words, it is clinker built. Among smaller boats may be mentioned the ordinary *dingi*, and *pansuhi*, which has a round bottom but can ply in shallow water.

#### CIVIL AVIATION.

The district is not connected by the regular air route. There are two landing grounds, one at Chapra and the other at Hathwa, where small aeroplane lands.

#### POSTAL COMMUNICATION.

##### *Post Offices.*

All the post offices of the district are under the jurisdiction of the Saran Postal Division with its headquarters at Chapra. For administrative purpose, the Superintendent of the Saran Postal Division is the head authority and is assisted by three Inspectors. Chapra and Siwan are the chief receiving and disbursing post offices which control all the sub-post offices of the district. Besides, Chapra and Siwan, there are 51 sub-offices and 404 branch offices in the district. The branch post offices serve the nearby villages besides those in which they are located. The mails are delivered daily or periodically in the villages by postmen employed in these post offices. At all post offices, including branch post offices, postage stamps, postcards and envelopes are sold and money-orders received and issued. At sub-offices postal savings banks and national savings certificates booths are run. The mails are carried by various railway lines, buses and in some cases by postal runners. The volumes of letters handled during 1956-57 were 6,34,273 as against 4,09,112 in 1955-56. The figures of the amount of savings banks deposits were Rs. 94,82,592-5-9 and withdrawals Rs. 77,40,946-6-1 in 1956-57 as against Rs. 90,18,493-14-3 and Rs. 70,16,781-2-6, respectively, in 1955-56. The figures under national savings certificates issued and discharged in 1956-57 are Rs. 6,65,905 and Rs. 1,98,687, respectively, as against Rs. 2,36,695 and Rs. 1,24,327, respectively in 1955-56. The amount of money-order received and issued during 1956-57 was Rs. 3,00,29,231 and Rs. 66,96,144, respectively, as against Rs. 2,98,082 and Rs. 64,83,684, respectively, in 1955-56.

##### TELEGRAPHS.

There are 42 combined post and telegraph offices including Chapra and Siwan. These telegraph offices are at Amnaur, Andar, Baniapur, Barauli, Barharia, Basantpur, Bhoire, Chairpoire, Darauli, Daraunda, Dighwara, Ekma, Daudpur, Gangpur, Siwan, Garh Manjhi Garha, Guthni, Gopalganj, Hathwa, Hussainganj, Kateya, Kujhwa, Maharajganj, Mairwa, Bheldo, Manjhi, Marhowrah, Mashrakh, Mirganj, Mustafabad, Nagrah, Nayagaon, Pachrukhi, Parsa, Revelganj, Sasamusa, Zeradai, Sonepur, Taraya and Dighwa Dubauli. Telegraph offices are also located at the various stations of the North Eastern Railways.

## TELEPHONES.

All the abovementioned 42 combined post and telegraph offices have telephone facilities. There are 7 public call offices at Chapra, Siwan, Gopalganj, Maharajganj, Mirganj and Zeradai. The Chapra telephone exchange office is the main exchange office and all the calls of the other six stations are being put through by it. It has a direct link with Muzaffarpur and Patna. The Chapra telephone exchange office is also connected with the rest of India by inland trunk exchanges. The average daily trunk call at Chapra is 60 and at Siwan 12. The calls of the other offices are negligible.

*Radio and Wireless.*

The district has altogether 1,042 radio sets in 1956-57 as against 961 in 1955-56. Of these, 934 are owned by domestic uses, 47 by various educational institutions. Public Relations Department of the Government of Bihar has distributed 200 radio sets in the district for the benefit of rural population and special rural programmes in the regional language are broadcast from the Patna station of All-India Radio. The licenses for the use of radio sets are issued by the local post office on behalf of the Government of India. The yearly license fee is Rs. 15 per set.

There are three wireless stations in the district, each at the subdivisional headquarters of Sadar, Siwan and Gopalganj. But they have been set up exclusively for administrative purpose since 1946.

## ORGANISATION OF OWNERS AND EMPLOYEES.

The organisations of owners and employees in the field of transport and communication do exist in the district but on a very limited scale. There are associations of bus owners and employees in the district. The Bus and Truck Owners' Association, Chapra, is run by a Board of 7 members out of which 4 are its executive members and the rest 3 are Secretary, President and Joint Secretary. The Bus and Truck Employees' Association of Chapra consists of 10 members out of which 6 are its executive members and 4 as President, Vice-President, Secretary and Assistant Secretary. The associations are not very active.

The rickshaw-pullers have an association of their own in Chapra. In this association there are 16 members including the President and Secretary. There is also an association of the employees of *tamtam* in which there are 13 members including the President and Secretary. All these associations are unregistered.

## A REVIEW.

There has been a great improvement in the communications of the district in the last decade and particularly for roadways and railways. There has, however, been a decline in water-borne traffic and the closure in 1958 of the Steam Navigation Company which had

been plying cargo and passenger boats for over a century has not yet been replaced. The Steam Navigation Company gave out that they could not run the line economically and the partition of the country in 1947 and the creation of East Pakistan created special problems for them. The matter has been under investigation of both the State and Central Governments. There is no apparent move to fill up the vacuum in the private sector. Water transport by power gives a quicker connection with the neighbouring districts of Shahabad and Patna.

In spite of the improvement of the roadways there will be further provision for more and better roads in the Second and Third Five-Year Plans. The present mileage, distribution and condition of the roads cannot be said to be adequate. At the present there is practically only agricultural economy in a district and there are hundreds of villages which do not have a road connecting to the nearest main artery. The agricultural produce cannot be reached quickly to the nearest primary markets. The wastage of man-power for reaching the agricultural commodities to the nearest primary market is colossal. A pair of bullocks and on the average a couple of men have to wait several days if a cart-load of grains or sugarcane has to be taken to the market or the sugar mills. Unless and until every village is connected with the nearest main artery, the agricultural economy of the district cannot improve. We have to visualise a mixed economy for the district to stop her lop-sided development. No industrialisation can thrive without proper roads. The difficulty of getting the basic materials like stone-chips, bitumen, etc., would be partially solved by the quicker connecting link with South Bihar.

The problem of a competition between the three ways of communication, water, road and railways has not risen so far. The railways have not opened up new lines and the chronic over-crowding of the railways with passenger and goods traffic go against the theory of any competition. It is difficult to visualise in the near future any large increase in the number of passenger and goods train. The solution of the problem of reaching increased output to the markets and the growing passenger traffic to their destination will have to be found more in the roadways and waterways. This district with an extensive area, the highest density of population within the State and a very close land use, needs more facilities for communication and any large-scale development programme will have to substantially depend on the development of communications.