

Development of Backward Regions:

Regional planning is a framework to bring out a plan for maximum utilization of resources without causing any wastage. Basically, regional planning is a spatial development planning, which on the one hand, is the process of formulating and clarifying social objective in the ordering of activities in supra-urban space, and on the other hand, it is concerned with the human activities for socio-economic transformation in supra-local space in an agriculture - based backward rural economy. In spatial context, the orderly development of the region and its finer articulation with other regions is the task of regional planning. Therefore regional planning is suggested for the all round socio-economic development of the backward countries against the single national-level sectoral planning because the space in which human beings live and work is real, and to ignore the space and its community is to ignore the basic reality. Regional planning is such a strategy which deals simultaneously with the problems of multi-levels spatial units directly or indirectly. However regional planning would seem to require a bunch of complementary economic activities and a set of rules be formulated for the purpose setting of each of these activities. In an area for regional planning, the different regional factors interact and operate in mutual actions and reactions and any change in one normally leads to changes in other, thus setting up a chain reaction. In fact, there is a two-way chain reaction. One internal within the region, and the other external with the neighbouring or farther regions, through the different hierarchical levels of regions. The basic aim of regional planning is outlined for smooth development of the entire economy by making an even rate of economic development, optimum resource utilisation and preventing of wealth-and power-concentration of few hands, and leading equitable distribution of employment opportunities. Further, an objective of regional planning is to anticipate and provide for future reciprocal adjustments of culture and region in different ecological areas. The purpose of regional planning is not the physical development alone of a particular area or region, but it is to attain certain social objectives eliminating inter-regional tension and socioeconomic imbalances. Regional planning is an attempt to plan a rational dispersal of industries ensuring better securities and defence and to ensure optimum pattern of resource allocation leading towards balanced and integrated regional development of the country. Before going to formulate or implement a regional plan, a planner essentially should have complete knowledge pertaining to the conditions required for a successful regional planning. For regional planning three prime considerations become important for its successful performance such as (i) identification of the specific needs of the region within the overall context of the needs of the entire country (ii) an accurate assessment of the limits and opportunities imposed on natural resources of the region, and (iii) selection of a suitable strategy for development. Since the nature and causes of backwardness are not the same in all the regions within a country, a single macrolevel approach will not be an ideal solution. The strategy that is

required is one of promoting that sector which is backward and whose backwardness is hindering the overall progress of the region. Such assessment is possible only at the regional level. Development of backward area and reduction in regional disparities depend upon the micro-level plans formulated on the basis of the assessment of the local needs, potential priorities and realised level of development. The micro level plans can be effectively implemented and can be made to realise the desired objectives only when the constituent regions are systematically identified according to their levels of developments, the extent of disparities among the regions and the various regional characteristics like typology, physiography, demographic and socio-economic dimensions and so on. The Government of India has made some efforts for the development of backward areas of the country, since 1951, when efforts at planned development were intensified. The problems of regional development and disparities attracted the attention of policy makers and economists. The third five year plan and the subsequent plans have increasingly emphasised this objective. However, in spite of the increasing awareness, very little has been done in this direction. A systematic attempt at the identification of backward areas and a study of the regional characteristics has not been done on a scale that could be of some operational significance. Any attempt in this field is confined only to the state or district level. However, Indian planners have become increasingly concerned with the problems of regional disparities since the formulation of fourth five year plan. Some steps were taken in the direction of regional development. During the fourth plan, the problem of regional disparities was attempted at three angles. First reduction of inter-regional difference through fiscal policies. Second, development of resource frontier region and third, local planning. However, as stated earlier, the performance of the policies was not very encouraging. Therefore in 1968 the National Development Council decided to give some weightage to backward areas in transferring the resources from the centre to the respective states. For this, by the decision of the National Development Council, two working groups - the Pande Committee and the Wanchoo Committee were set up by the Planning Commission in 1968. The Pande Committee was to recommend the criteria for identification of backward regions and the Wanchoo Committee was to recommend the fiscal and financial incentives for starting industries in backward areas. Thus in order to simplify the work of transferring resources from centre to the states, it was decided to identify backward regions of the country. Initially the criteria, to identify the backward regions, the level of per capita income was considered. This was found to be quite inadequate. Therefore, in 1969 the Planning Commission appointed a study group to suggest some specific criteria for identifying backward regions. This group suggested 45 many indicators such as agriculture, Industry, education, health, power and so on for the identification of backward regions. However these criteria were too diffused and it was, therefore quite essential to select more precise criteria for the identification of backward region. The Pande Committee in 1969 did this work. The

criteria were : 1. Districts 011 uSId-G a radius of 50 miles from large cities or large industrial projects. 2. Poverty of the people as indicated by low per capita income starting from the lowest to 25 percent below the state average. 3. High density of population in relation to utilisation of productive resources and employment opportunities as indicated by a. Low percentage of population engaged in secondary and tertiary activities. b. Low percentage of factory employment. c. Non and or under-utilisation of economic and natural resources like minerals, forests etc. 4. Inadequate availability of electric power or likelihood of its availability with' 1 or 2 years. 46 5. Inadequate transport and communication facilities. 6. Inadequate availability of workers

The study group appointed by the Planning Commission (Fourth plan 1966-1971) suggested 15 indicators covering (1) Density of population (2) Percentage of population engaged in agriculture (including agricultural labourers as percentage to total M^orker) (3) cultivable area per agricultural worker (4) Net area sown per agricultural worker (5) Percentage of gross irrigated area to net sown area (6) Percentage of area sown more than once to net sovm area (7) Per capita gross value of agricultural output (8) Percentage of literate population, men and women (9) Percentage of school going children both boys and girls in the age group of (i) 6 to 11 years and (ii) 11 to 14 years (10) Number of seats per million population for technical training (11) Hospital beds per lakh of population and some of the criteria used by Pande Committee. Similarly^ in seventies, a number of area-specific schemes like Drought Prone Area Programme, Small Farmer Development Agencies, Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labour Programmes, Rural Industrial Development Schemes etc. were taken up. 47 Then in sixth plan period, some concrete steps were taken in the direction of preparing block level plan'. Of the total 5004 blocks in the country, 2000 blocks were selected for Integrated Rural Development Programmes and it was proposed to cover 300 blocks every years as to introduce block plan in all the blocks of the country over a period of 10 years. The main emphasis was On macro-level plans to eradicate the poverty in rural areas. The objective of development of backward regions, now forms an integral part of the national development strategy. The draft of sixth-five year plan lays down a clear cut poUcy and presents an outline of programmes for the development of the backward areas. It is a heartening feature of this draft that the uneven levels of development in different parts of the country is partly responsible for the problem of poverty. Therefore it envisages an approach of integrated rural development for the backward areas and has ear marked an outlay of Rs. 28,000 crores for area development schemes including hiUs and tribal area plans. The approach in this plan to a great extent is on the development of agriculture, village and small industries, subsidiary occupations and related services through hill area, tribal area, revised minimum needs and area development programmes. The most important 48 aspect of t±iis strategy is that the planner; are now keen to adopt a selective approach with regard to the choice of industries. It has been rightly observed in this context that the promotion of industry as a

tool for the development of backward areas requires a degree of selectivity about the type of industries promoted and the areas chosen for such promotion. However this plan document fails to spell out precisely the type of industries which suit different backward areas of the country. Removal of poverty was the foremost objective of the sixth plan (1980-85). The strategy adopted in this plan was to move simultaneously towards strengthening infrastructure for both agriculture and industry. Stress was laid on tackling inter-related problems through a systematic approach with greater management efficiency and intensive monitoring in all sectors and active involvement of people in formulating specific schemes of development at the local level and securing their speedy and effective implementation. The seventh plan (1985-90) emphasised policies and programmes, which aimed at rapid growth in food-grains production, increased employment opportunities and productivity. Food grains production during the seventh plan grew by 3.23 percent as compared to 2.68 percent in 1967-68, and 2.55 percent in early eighties, due to overall favourable weather conditions, implementation of various thrust programme and combined efforts of the government and the farmers. Some of the salient features of economic performance during the eight five year plan indicate, among other things,

(a) Faster economic growth

(b) Faster growth of manufacturing, agriculture and allied sectors

(c) Significant growth rates in exports and imports, improvement in trade and current account deficit. In the plan, besides the other objectives, Government also incorporated the Prime Minister Special Action Plan (PSAP) in the following areas

(d) Doubling of food production and making India hunger-free in 10 years

(e) Rapid improvement in physical infrastructure

(f) National water policy

(g) Social infrastructure, rural housing, urban housing, health care services, education, urban water supply and sanitation, rural water supply and sanitation and

(h) Information technology. The specific objectives of the ninth plan as endorsed by the National Development Council in its meeting are

(i) Priority to agriculture and rural development with a view to generate adequate productive employment and, eradication of poverty

(j) Accelerating the growth rate of the economy with stable prices. Ensuring food and nutritional security for all, particularly the vulnerable sections of society.