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INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AS A KEY ELEMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

ABSTRACT ::

A nation's infrastructure development plays a significant role in its sustained economic growth. A fast growing economy warrants an even faster development of infrastructure. Infrastructure development not only include the development of transportation, irrigation and power projects but also directly related to human development such as housing, health facilities, education and drinking water facilities. It is 61 years after Independence. Today, the rural population accounts for nearly 60 percent and vast majority of them still facing abject poverty and illiteracy. The importance of infrastructure for sustained economic development is well recognized. High transactions costs arising from inadequate and inefficient infrastructure can prevent the economy from realizing its full growth potential regardless of the progress on other fronts. Physical infrastructure covering transportation, power and communication through its backward and forward linkages facilitates growth; social infrastructure including water supply, sanitation, sewage disposal, education and health, which are in the nature of primary services, has a direct impact on the quality of life.

This study synthesizes the knowledge between the basic infrastructure development and sustainable development via housing, health facilities and education. Study also tries to find out the importance of good infrastructure management to provide basic amenities to people. Finally, study expresses the knowledge that how basic infrastructure development works as a key to unlocking the door towards sustainable development. This study will be based on the secondary data.

INTRODUCTION ::

Infrastructure development is at a crucial juncture in India today. A nation's infrastructure development plays a significant role in its economic growth. A fast growing economy warrants an even faster development of infrastructure. Infrastructures are basic essential services that should be put in place to enable development to occur. Socio-economic development can be facilitated and accelerated by the presence of social and economic infrastructures. If these facilities and services are not in place, development will be very difficult and in fact can be likened to a very scarce commodity that can only be secured at a very high price and cost. Human development and improvement in the quality of life is the ultimate objective of all planning programmes leading to higher economic and social development. There exists a very strong linkage between attaining economic prosperity and enriching the quality of life, which is reflected in the social indicators of health, longevity, literacy and environmental sustainability. These indicators serve as valuable inputs for developing suitable policy initiatives. Social infrastructure includes facilities and measures for providing education, health care, community development, equitable income distribution, employment and social welfare. The concept of social infrastructure is very broad and covers various aspects of Government service delivery. The cost of delivering social benefits is very high and constitutes a major proportion of the State budget. Major social policy concerns of the Government include the provision of infrastructure services, fostering Government and community partnerships, community capacity building, integrated service delivery and social justice. The aim of social and economic development in a State is to improve the quality of living standards of the people. The State Government plays a pivotal role in providing the basic minimum requirements of the people. This is also a sector where involvement of the private sector has been limited. Social development is generally measured by three groups of factor i.e. demography, literacy and level of economic development. The economy cannot be looked at in isolation without considering the basic needs of the people. Higher levels of social development enhance the productivity of people in the economy leading to greater economic development. This increases the resources available with the State to further improve social services like health and education. While growth rates achieved in the economic sectors are more conspicuous in the short term, the social sector deals with endogenous factors and takes a longer time to achieve. However, once the process of social development is institutionalised, it provides sustenance to the overall

process of economic development.

CONCEPT OF INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Infrastructure is generally defined as the physical framework of facilities through which goods and services are provided to the public. Its linkages to the economy are multiple and complex, because it affects production and consumption directly, creates positive and negative spill over effects and involves large inflow of expenditure.

Infrastructure that makes more sense from an economics standpoint consists of large capital intensive natural monopolies such as highways, other transportation facilities, and water and sewer lines and communications system. An alternative version that focuses on ownership defines infrastructure, as the tangible capital stock owned by the public sector.

World Development Report (1994) divides infrastructure stock into economic or physical infrastructure and social infrastructure. Former includes services such as electricity, transport, roads, water system, communications, irrigation etc, while latter includes education and health facilities. Other forms of infrastructure may be identified as institutional infrastructure as banking and civil administration.

MEANING OF SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Economic infrastructure is essential for improving the productive capacity of nation like this for improving the human resources development there is need for improving the social infrastructure. This consists of services like education, medical facilities, sanitation, housing, drinking water supply etc. All these together constitute the social infrastructure of an economy, which help in the development of human capability in an economy.

“Social infrastructure refers to the community facilities, services and networks that help individuals, families, groups and communities meet their social needs, maximise their potential for development, and enhance community wellbeing”.

Social infrastructure includes

Universal facilities and services such as education, training, health, welfare, social services, open space, recreation and sport, safety and emergency services, learning, religious, arts and cultural facilities, civic and democratic institutions, and community meeting places.

Lifecycle-targeted facilities and services, such as those for children, young people and older people e.g. early childhood centres and retirement villages.

HOUSING

House is one of the important necessary products for the human. It provides shelter. A good shelter is very necessary for comfortable and stress free living. It helps an individual to indulge in family life, social life. It promotes peace of mind and happiness of an individual that leads to an increase in productivity. The physical ability to work of an individual is adversely affected if he has no proper place to live. Proper housing includes provision of basic services like water, sanitation, drainage and electricity. Quality of housing has a direct bearing on the efficiency of human resources. For the majority of households housing has been primarily a self a self help activity. But increasing pressure of population has made it difficult for the poorer segments of the population to acquire proper housing facilities. It has made it difficult for the poorer segments of the population to acquire proper housing facilities. It has made it necessary for the state to launch housing schemes for weaker sections of population.

In India the formulation and implementation of the housing programme is the responsibility of the state governments. The central government however supplements the efforts of the state governments.

CAUSES OF HOUSING PROBLEMS

There are two main reasons which cause housing problem

(1) Increasing population: The population of the country is increasing at a very fast rate which causes the increase in demand for housing. (2) Urbanisation: The movement of people from rural to urban areas leads to increase in demand for houses in urban areas.

EDUCATION AND HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE IN INDIA

EDUCATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Education is generally regarded as a public good and as a merit good which produces a variety of externalities. Contribution of education to economic growth, distribution, reduction in fertility rates, etc. is the different ways in which education generates public good. Education not only increases the income levels of those who receive it, but also of others. Better educated generation is likely to contribute to the higher earnings of future generations. Education also benefits each individual in the society, improves occupational flexibility and social mobility, improves occupational flexibility and social mobility, promotes voluntary responsibility for welfare activities, creates healthy environment for national development and helps to redistribute income and well being. There is a strong relationship between education and economic growth. That education and economic growth in a great way has been revealed by the study of McClelland. He found that the better educated countries in 1950 developed faster in 1952-58 period compared with the less educated countries. Harbison and Myer's study of the 75 nations shows that the correlation between GNP and per capita and primary school enrolment is .67, between GNP per capita and secondary school enrolment of .82 and between GNP per capita and t third level enrolment of .74. Curle has found a correlation of .64 between per capita income and post primary enrolment. Investment in education has tangible effects on equity and alleviation of poverty. In the country, labour earning increases with educational attainments. Universal primary education has important egalitarian effects. It elevates tends to reduces people from the illiterate and low income class into a higher income class. Similarly, higher education tends to reduce the existing income differences between the university graduates and other types of labour by increasing the level of the former. The level of education development also influences poverty reduction as well as economic growth. Higher literacy level is one of the factors responsible for poverty reduction. The 1987-88 National Sample Survey (NSS) results show that the relation between poverty and educational attainment is very strong in Maharashtra. (Dash, L.N, 2008)

HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

It is an old saying that "Health is Wealth". This aptly summarises the importance of health for an individual. Health represents a state of physical and mental wellbeing. Without good health, we will not be able to enjoy the good things of life. It is also not possible to earn a good living one is not healthy. In general it can be said if we have healthy people in a society; it will contribute greatly to its efficiency and productivity. There is direct relationship between good health and economic growth. In over fifty years since independence, India has developed an extensive public delivery system for the provision of health care. This was preceded in 1946 by the Bhore Commission that recommended basic health services are provided for all through Primary Health Centres (PHCs). In line with the recommendations, PHCs were set up all across the country, each serving about 30,000 inhabitants in its vicinity. At the time, the urban population of India was less than 18 per cent. Since then, the urban population has grown over fourfold to 285 million of over the 1 billion people living in India. 22.6 per cent of this 285 million live in slums (GOI 2001).

PUBLIC EXPENDITURE ON SOCIAL SECTOR

The proportion of expenditure (revenue and capital outlay) on education (including sports, art and culture) as a per cent of total expenditure in 2000-01 was 17.4 per cent, in 2003-04 it was 12.6 per cent that was estimated to rise to 14.4 per cent in 2006-07. The proportion of expenditure (revenue and capital outlay) on health (medical, public health and family welfare) as per cent of total expenditure in 2000-01 was 4.7 per cent, in 2003-04 it was 3.5 per cent and it was estimated to grow to 4.4 per cent in 2006-07 (The Economic Times, January 5, 2007). In fact, combined social sector expenditure to total expenditure ratio (commonly known as fiscal priority to social sectors) for major states has declined to 33 per cent during the period 2000-05 from an average 37 per cent during 1990-95. However, for the 2005-07 periods, the combined ratio improved to 35 per cent. The Twelfth Finance Commission has also underscored the need for greater social sector allocations by states and recommended grants-in-aid for several deficient areas which need investments (The Economic Times, January 5, 2007).

PUBLIC EXPENDITURE ON SOCIAL SECTOR (Rs. In lakhs)

MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Brundtland Commission's brief definition of sustainable development as the "ability to make development sustainable—to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"

The concept of sustainable development does imply limits—not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities.

Sustainable development can be viewed as a social movement—"a group of people with a common ideology who try together to achieve certain general goals." In an effort to encourage the creation of a broadly based social movement in support of sustainable development, UNCED was the first international, intergovernmental conference to provide full access to a wide range of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and to encourage an independent Earth Summit at a nearby venue. More than 1,400 NGOs and 8,000 journalists participated. One social movement launched from UNCED was the effort described above to create an Earth Charter, to ratify it, and to act upon its principles.

Sustainable development is also becoming a scientific and technological endeavour that, according to the Initiative on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development, "seeks to enhance the contribution of knowledge to environmentally sustainable human development around the world."

CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development has certain challenges; it requires the participation of diverse stakeholders and perspectives, with the ideal of reconciling different and sometimes opposing values and goals toward a new synthesis and subsequent coordination of mutual action to achieve multiple values simultaneously and even synergistically. As real-world experience has shown, however, achieving agreement on sustainability values, goals, and actions is often difficult and painful work, as different stakeholder values are forced to the surface, compared and contrasted, criticized and debated.

The concrete challenges of sustainable development are at least as heterogeneous and complex as the diversity of human societies and natural ecosystems around the world.

ROLE OF INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Development of social infrastructure comprising education, health and medical care, nutrition, housing and water supply which is instrumental in contributing to substantial improvements in human resources development which, in turn, initiate and accelerate economic development. Physical quality of life and human well being are pivotal on the enhanced availability of these social services. These services are key to overall increased productivity. Investment in human development programmes, enable the poor to help themselves and try to give a fair chance of getting those rewards. Human development and improvement in the quality of life is the ultimate objective of all planning programmes leading to higher economic and social development. There exists a very strong linkage between attaining economic prosperity and enriching the quality of life, which is reflected in the social indicators of health, longevity, literacy and environmental sustainability. These indicators serve as valuable inputs for developing suitable policy initiatives. Social infrastructure includes facilities and measures for providing education, health care, community development, equitable income distribution, employment and social welfare. The concept of social infrastructure is very broad and covers various aspects of Government service delivery. The cost of delivering social benefits is very high and constitutes a major proportion of the State budget. Major social policy concerns of the Government include the provision of infrastructure services, fostering Government and community partnerships, community capacity building, integrated service delivery and social justice. The aim of social and economic development in a State is to improve the quality of living standards of the people. The State Government plays a pivotal role in providing the basic minimum requirements of the people. This is also a sector where involvement of the private sector has been limited. A higher level of social development enhances the productivity of people in the economy leading to greater economic development. This increases the resources available with the State to further improve social

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POLICY SUGGESTION

To ensure substantial progress in the Government's efforts in promoting equality for all, the Government needs to focus on the following aspects:

- Providing basic human needs (including primary health care, basic education, family planning, nutrition, water and sanitation, and shelter)
- Promoting participation of women in development and ensuring gender equality
- Improved delivery of infrastructure services with emphasis on the poor and building their capacity for sustenance
- Safe-guarding human rights and providing good governance
- Seeking private sector participation in development of areas like tertiary education
- Building a clean and healthy environment

CONCLUSION

Just as economic infrastructure, such as roads, energy and ports supports the economy; social infrastructure supports the wellbeing of families and communities. Social and economic benefits are two most important aspects in any development project. These aspects are also essential for consideration in infrastructure development projects. It is common to include many factors in infrastructure development for best performance of the infrastructure and more positive impacts created but less negative impacts. This can be achieved by accomplishing economically feasible, socially adaptable, financially affordable, environmentally neutral, technically viable, and politically acceptable infrastructure development. One of the tools to assess development impacts on social aspects, and therefore integrate social aspects into infrastructure development is social impact assessment. From infrastructure development viewpoint, social impact assessment has the objective to ensure that any infrastructure development would be able to maximize its benefits and minimize its costs, particularly in terms of social aspects.

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