

Special Economic Zones and their Sustainability and Scope in Jharkhand

Nivedita Verma

Geography, Surendranath Centenary School, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

Abstract

The establishment of SEZs and their opposition by the local people, environmentalists, local leaders to gain cheap popularity on the basis of their logic that SEZs are environment foe and it exploits locally available resources without benefiting the local people and above all they do not take us to achieve our ultimate goal that is sustainability development as they themselves are short lived and do not prolong for pretty long span of time. The article will be of remedial nature and take us to the very new concept of SEZs and how they can achieve sustainability and widespread acceptance.

KEYWORD : Environmental foe, sustainable development, widespread acceptance

Introduction :

A Special Economic Zone is a geographical region that has economic and other laws that are more free-market Oriented than a country's typical or national laws. " Nationwide "Laws may be suspended inside a SEZ Considering the need to enhance foreign investment and promote exports from the country and realizing the need that a level playing field must be made available to the domestic enterprises and manufacturers to be competitive globally, the government of India had in April 2000 announced the introduction of SEZ's policy in the country.

Now Special Economic Zones have become integral part of our economy in today's world. They were very much in demand because of the benefits brought by them, most importantly due to huge number of employment opportunities generated by them. Secondly, infrastructure development is also ensured by them. Like construction of good quality road, incessant supply of electricity, good quality habitation colonies, well equipped with all the basis facilities etc. It is mentionable that such facilities are created directly, but indirectly also it enhances accelerated growth of health and education facilities. Simultaneously. In this context, with the help of this article and later on with this research work, it is introduced by the research scholar for the first time that SEZs will be more long lasting if they are fabricated meticulously with the objective of their sustainability (Jagdish Singh, 2003).

Study Area

The study area is almost each and every economic activity including all the sectors like primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary economic activities. For, example, agro-based SEZs will cover primary economic activities like crop-production of food and cash crops, horticulture, truck-farming, sericulture, floriculture, apiary etc. Cottage industries like carpet-weaving, shawl, making beautiful artifacts making etc, will cover secondary economic activities. Establishing research centers, educational hubs, promoting medical

tourism, regular tourism will cover tertiary and quaternary economic activities, catering to different types of work force.

Methodology

Creating general awareness and persuading local people, government, policy makers, environmentalists will be the real mechanism, As the suggested SEZs will be environment friendly, it will not be difficult to instill the idea of sustainable SEZs in the mass. Let us have a comparative study of usual, stereotyped SEZs in China and with that of our sustainable SEZs.

As more arable land is taken over for urbanization and industrialization issue related to changes in land use has become a major source of dispute between the Public and government. Protest against land acquisition and deprivation have become a common feature of rural life in China, especially in the provinces of Guangdong (South), Sichuan, Hubei (north), and Henan provinces. Guangdong has been worst affected. Social instability has become an issue of concern. In 2004, the government admitted to 74000 riots in the country side, a seven fold jump in ten years, whereas a few years ago, excessive and arbitrary taxation was the peasants foremost complaint, resentment over the loss of farmland, corruption, worsening pollution and arbitrary evictions by property developers are the main reasons for farmers unrest now.

While rural China is up in arms against acquisition of land, SEZs like Shenzhen in Guangdong showcasing the economic miracle of China are beset with problems, After growing at a phenomenal growth rate of 28% for the last 25 years, Shenzhen is now paying a huge cost in terms of environment destruction, soaring crime rate and exploitation of its working class, mainly, migrants, Foreign investors were lured to Shenzhen by cheap land, lax labor laws and lax or inefficient environmental rules, In 2006, the United Nations Environment Program designated Shenzhen as a “Global environmental hotspot”, meaning the region that had suffered rapid environmental destruction.

There is more, According to Howard French, The New York Times bureau chief, most of the year, the Shenzhen sky is thick with choking smoke, while the crime rate is almost nine fold higher than Shanghai. The working class earns US\$80 PER MONTH IN THE SWEEP SHOPS. Real state sharks have stock piled houses which have caused prices to spiral and have created a new generation of people French calls “Mortgage slaves” in an article in the International Herald Tribune on 17 Dec. 2006.

It is in this backdrop that India’s SEZs thrust must be seen. Following China, India is replicating a similar model where vast tracts of agricultural land are being acquired for creating SEZs and other industries. The Sept. 2005 notification on Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) is lax for industrial estates, including SEZs and apprehensions of dirty industries coming up in these zones, are quite real. Furthermore, with drastic changes in labor laws favoring industries being considered, the plight of workers in these SEZs will be similar to those in China. Such a mode of development is environmentally unsustainable and socially undesirable.

Above mentioned detailed study will be proved an eye-opener, and in this backdrop proposed sustainable SEZs covering all the sectors of economy will be the real remedy and most viable way to improve the overall socio-economic condition of our country.

Hypothesis

Let us have a look on the general perception of common people regarding the Special Economic zones. It is seen that it has become a trend, now-a-days that most of the people are against the setting up of SEZs. The reason behind such feelings is some misconception. Such misconceptions have taken place due to the environmental degradation, forced migration and displacement, exploitation of poor people and laborers, division of society into very exploitation of scarce and non-renewable natural resources and many more. In reality, some or maximum of the above mentioned misconceptions are true.

So, the real remedy is to pre-plan the establishment of each and every SEZ, meticulously. While fabricating sustainable SEZs, their “Specialty” is immensely important. What is this? It is such a new and innovative concept brought forward so that our economy could be benefitted by this. While establishing SEZs, importance should be given to the development of every part of the country uniformly. It becomes more important in the present day scenario of rural/urban status. Let us have a look ---

Today, the rural population accounts for nearly 70% of the total population and nearly half of them live in poverty and illiteracy. How good is the rural infrastructure? The latest report of NSSO on village facilities is a revelation in itself. To quote from the report, one fourth of our villages do not have electricity, only 18% of them get tap water, 54% of them are more than 5 Kms. Away from the nearest health centers, one third of them do not have pre-primary schools and 78% do not have post offices. When India still lives in villages eye-opener information.

The cities shelter around 30% of the population who contribute to the economic growth. However, the most vital part of the economic growth, which is infrastructure, hardly matched the demands of even this 30% of urban dwellers, spreading chaos at the slightest provocation with the danger of turning the clock backwards. This mismatch has been seen in the Mumbai deluge in Sept. 2005 and a little later in Bangalore, shattering the Shanghai dreams” that so many harbor.

Replicating other nations with Present day Indian work culture will be useless. Let us compare Chinese commitment with that of ours. Let us have a look at their endeavors in making the expressways. According to a recent newspaper report, when India completed 6000km of her expressway in six years China had done 40,000km within that time. Even today the Indian government endlessly debates the privatization of airports. As least some of the analysis’s perceive a “damaging drag” on the economy due to the problems connected to infrastructure.

Growth potential is dependent on the quality of performance of infrastructure to a great extent-a fact that the Chinese realized earlier than us. The fast growth of this socialist country is extremely relevant. How to ensure this? It can be achieved by following the already mentioned sustainable and specialized SEZs.

Findings

Before we will discuss about the terms regarding “sustainability” and “specially” of SEZs let us find out about the general perception about SEZs in the imagination of common layman. The person instantly will start thinking of smoke emitting chimneys, gigantic sized vehicles bringing raw materials to the factory site, once again carriers, carrying finished products to the market place etc. But as-far-as we were talking about their specialty, is not it possible that we develop pure agro-based SEZs in highly fertile regions, where with the help of eco-friendly farming methods and aids crops would be grown? With the help of this farming method we can keep aside all the ill-aspects and ill impacts of Green Revolution which has not only degraded the fertility of soil, but also has depleted our precious underground water resource, our only reliable source of water to fulfill several requirement. Above mentioned eco-friendly farming methods will include use of indigenous seeds, which can survive and flourish in less amount of water conditions and can resist insects, pests, weeds attack also.

Means double benefit as it will be dejecting the use of chemical fertilizers, indigenous methods will help in providing health friendly products in this context let me continue to say that this agro-based SEZ could pave the way for food processing industry to utilize over whelming products.

In plateau and mountainous regions, small scale hydel power plants could be established harnessing the benefits of local relief without exerting and disturbing our surrounding.

In the outskirts of major cities and towns, education hub could be established catering to the local people in the form’s of educational zones, where quality education would be provided at affordable charges keeping in mind the different strata’s of our society.

Similarly, the places having natural beauty could be developed as the places of tourist attraction where hospitality business could flourish keeping in mind different economic and financial backgrounds of the people.

In places with rich cultural background and lived by craftsman, such types of SEZs could be established which would be producing beautiful artifacts helping craftsmen and local people to earn handsome amount of foreign exchange and generating huge number of employment opportunities.

Conclusion :

Many more such examples could be explored which will certainly not be smoke emitting chimneys and environment foe, instead such type of perception will be unparallel example of employment generation uniformly all over the country, bringing a complete stop to force migration and displacement, social unrest and imbalanced development of the nation.

In stereo-typed SEZs a special of skilled workforce is usually required, but in above mentioned vivid types of SEZs would not only generate employment oportunity to cater to different types of skilled and un-skilled work-force, they will also be eco-friendly and as they will be fabricated to be developed over barren and agriculturally unfit land, so

they will not earn the ire of the local people regarding complains like snatching their arable and forested land and large scale displacement etc.

Above all, such very new concept will be a real tribute to our globally accepted father of the nation's famous slogan that earth has enough to fulfill the need of every person but no to fulfill the greed of even only one person.

Reference :

Singh, Jagdish, (2003) Elements of Economic Geography, Gyanodaya Prakashan, Gorakhpur.