

STRATEGIES OF REGIONAL PLANNING IN MIZORAM

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Abstract

The term 'planning' means taking decisions and implement them in order to attain economic development. Planning in one form or the other has become imperative for the development of a country or a region and Mizoram is no exception in this regard. Planning is done for a variety of purpose ranging from socio-economic growth to power politics. However, most planning concerns with socio-economic development of a country, society or a region. Regional planning as a technique has become to be recognized all over the world and this has been applied in order to wipe out the existing regional economic disparity. Planning can be of various types, depending upon the purpose. Planning can be economic or developmental. Planning can be sectoral or spatial also. Sectoral planning is the most commonly adopted form of planning these days. Developmental or active spatial planning, on the other hand, sets itself a more ambitious task. Planning region is a segment of territory over which economic decisions is applied.

Key Words: Planning, Sectoral planning, Spatial Planning, Mizoram.

Introduction

Planning in one form or the other has become imperative for the development of a country or a region and Mizoram is no exception in this regard. The current economic and social conditions necessitate development in a planned manner. The unplanned growth leads not only to regional differences in

levels of development but also host of other problems. Inadequate infrastructure and civic amenities in the rapidly growing population provide a clear example of problems one may have to face as a result of uncontrolled and unplanned growth. Planning provides an efficient tool to steer the process of growth in a desired direction.

Planning is done for a variety of purpose ranging from socio-economic growth to power politics. However, most planning concerns with socio-economic development of a country, society or a region. Planning is taken up to solve the problems being faced today and to overcome the problems that are likely to be faced in future. Planning thus can be thought of as a means to so organize human society, that it can adjust itself to the changing socio-technical environment; and can utilize this environment to maximize the welfare of its members.

Regional planning as a technique has become to be recognized all over the world, and this has been applied in order to wipe out the existing regional economic disparity. It should however, be noted that that the initial problem is how to demarcate the units or regions of lower level. This requires an intensive study of micro-geomorphology, micro-climatology and other factors of natural environment, in context of existing population and economic conditions. In order to develop strategies of planning, it is extremely necessary to study its general geographical conditions and then suitably divide it into planning regions. This can be done by intensive study of each region. This might be a method to show the prospect and problems of a region. The region may hold industries

or may have agricultural, lumbering, horticultural prospects.

Necessary plans then should be chalked out in order to develop the area in the required direction. It is at this stage the major problems like irrigation, drainage, afforestation, growing pastures and developing transport and communication lines will arise. In order to match the potential resources with the needs of the people, these have to be done. It is also, necessary that at times, surplus labour force from one area is required to be withdrawn to other areas, in order to facilitate optimum utilization of natural resources and man power.

Types of Planning

Planning can be of various types, depending upon the purpose. Firstly, from the temporal point of view one can distinguish between short term and long term planning. Planning can be economic or developmental. From the organizational point of view, it can be regarded as imperative or indicative. The planning process can be considered to be normative or systems. Normative planning enjoins upon the planners to search for the best possible results in relation to the established goals and there is less emphasis upon the social and institutional dimensions of planning. The systems approach looks at planning from social – technical viewpoint.

Planning can be sectoral or spatial also. Sectoral planning is the most commonly adopted form of planning these days. It is essentially a special purpose planning, designed to develop the various sectors of economy, such as agriculture or industrial etc. either individually or collectively. Spatial planning, on the other hand, aims at the development in a spatial frame work. This planning itself can be of two types, adaptive and developmental. Adaptive spatial planning is based on recognition of the impact of general trends of development in spatial systems. The evolution of the latter is conceived as a response to the pressures and requirements of national economic development.

Developmental or active spatial planning, on the other hand, sets itself a more ambitious task. Based on recognition of the interplay and feedback relations between economic development and spatial evolution, it seeks to identify and achieve a pattern of evolution of the spatial structure that at any point of time, is considered to be the most efficient from the point of view of promoting sustained rapid economic development.

Planning process can also be differentiated on the basis of the territorial levels at which planning is

done. In many countries, plan formulation is done at the national level. On the other hand, planning can be attempted at several territorial levels; this may be called multi level planning. Indian planning has been essentially normative single level economic planning, with a greater reliance on sectoral approach. Sectoral plans, integrated into a single whole and fitted into the framework of national goals and objectives, have been prepared and implemented. The multi level and regional or spatial dimensions are being increasingly emphasized these days.

Planning Region:

Planning region is a segment of territory over which economic decisions is applied. The term planning, means taking decisions to implement them in order to attain economic development. The regions for planning purposes may be administrative or political regions such as districts, block or village. Since planning is based on statistical data which are generally collected at the level of administrative divisions, planning regions, as a matter of fact, coincide with administrative regions. Thus, the whole country is a planning region for national plans, state is the planning region for state plan and district or blocks are the planning regions for micro regional plans.

For proper implementation and realization of plan objectives, a planning region should have fairly homogeneous economic structure as well as topographical and socio-economic homogeneity. Therefore, a balance has to be struck between homogeneity, nodality and administrative convenience, while delineating the planning regions. A planning region should be large enough to contain a range of resources to provide it economic viability. It should be internally cohesive. Its resource endowment should be such that, a satisfactory level of product combination and exchange is feasible. It should also have a few nodal points to regulate the flows. Geographically, it should be contiguous areal unit.

The basic objective of economic planning in India has been, to bring about a structural transformation of the economy so as to achieve a high and sustained rate of growth, a progressive improvement in the standard of living of masses leading to the eradication of poverty and unemployment and provide the material base for self reliance socialist economy.

With the above stated national objective, planning and development over a period of several decades, it is generally observed that the whole planning process in the context of

Mizoram has been failure, and has not registered any significant growth. It has not taken into account into consideration local needs and resource potentialities. Furthermore, there is no evidence of any fundamental change in the traditional socio-economic structure of the state, in occupational distribution, cropping pattern, industrial composition, productivity trends etc.

Strategies of Planning in Mizoram

Absence of theoretical framework for economic planning has been the fundamental weakness of the planning process in Mizoram. Thus, the State Five Year Plans have been exercises in simple computations, without proper formulation of any scientific growth strategy. In contrast, the National Five Year Plans were based on sophisticated strategies of growth and were highly theory based, often though actual performance does not match the projected goal. In case of Mizoram, successive plans lacked the much needed local and regional objective orientations, keeping in mind the link between the regional economy with the national economy. The Lack of theoretical framework of planning, hindered to have long term projections on population growth, population control, growth of macro economic variables, input-output relationship, sectoral demand and growth etc.

Planning in Mizoram lacks a proper strategy, neglect of strategy variables along with lack of analysis, and study of constraints impeded meaningful economic growth of the state. While attempting the strategies of planning in Mizoram, it is presumed that the analysis itself will unfold the dimensions for future projections.

Agriculture

Agriculture is a predominant sector in the economy of Mizoram, and the growth in other sectors to a large extent depends upon the growth in the agricultural sector. Therefore, a significant measure of prosperity in the agricultural sector is, essential for creating the requisite conditions of growth in the economy as a whole. In view of the strategic importance of agriculture in the state's economy, top most priority should be given to this sector in the future plans of Mizoram till a satisfactory growth rate in agriculture production is achieved.

To meet the internal requirements, huge amount of rice was imported from outside; therefore, increase in foodgrains production is necessary, first to meet the internal requirements and also the requirements of the neighbouring states. The programme of boosting up agricultural production should relate to both foodgrains and commercial crops. The

production of commercial crops and also some food crops, has to be increased in order to provide adequate raw materials for the agro-based industries.

In Mizoram, paddy cultivation accounted for about 85% of the total cropped area. The Economic Survey of Mizoram 2007 conducted by the Directorate of Economic and Statistic, Government of Mizoram reveals that foodgrain production in the state during 2007-08 was 1.25 MT per hectare. In order to increase the production of foodgrains, there should be balanced utilization of the cropped area. For this balanced utilization of cropped area, two things may be suggested. First is the double cropping of rice and crop planning. If double cropping of rice is practiced, then reduction in area under rice will not affect its production.

Moreover, by suitable crop planning, some land can be used for more than one crop in different seasons, e.g. rice and pulses with the help of irrigation during the dry season. This will help the use of cropped land. The increase in production should be affected not by area extension alone, but also by increasing the productivity by means of new agricultural strategy. The fertilizer consumption rate in the state is 25 kg per hectare as against 49 kg in India.

The programme of boosting up agricultural production, jhumming

should be abandoned as far as practicable. In this regard, it may be suggested that farmers should be given financial assistance and technical guidance to take up terrace cultivation on lower slopes. Extension of irrigation facilities is also necessary to increase the area under HYV and other improved varieties of crops. Efforts should also be continued to promote the cultivation of cash crops and fruits.

Another important measure to be taken is boosting up afforestation programmes. Due to large scale practice of shifting cultivation, virgin forests are destroyed and converted into barren land every year. Necessary steps should be taken to regenerate the forest area either naturally or artificially through plantation or both. Proper resource survey of the forest will be helpful in tapping the resources efficiently and in a planned manner.

The goal of raising agricultural productivity should also aim at creating employment opportunities on a large scale. In order to solve the problem of poverty in the region, purchasing capacity of the people needs to be increased and this is possible only by providing gainful employment on a required scale. Therefore, suitable employment intensive schemes in the rural areas like minor irrigation, land reclamation, soil conservation, storage facilities etc should be launched and

enlarged. Besides, the lower cost of labour in the rural area can be profitably used for animal husbandry, forestry, fisheries and construction of roads and public buildings etc.

Irrigation

The location of Mizoram falls within the direct influence of South West monsoon. As such the region receives an adequate amount of rainfall. The climate is humid tropical, characterized by short winter and long summer with heavy rainfall. The average rainfall is 230 cm annually. The area experiences very heavy rainfall from the last week of May to the end of July. The rainfall decreases steadily up to September. During winter months the area receives very less rainfall, as a result of which the winter season is very cold and dry. But, the sporadic and erratic nature of rainfall makes the state's agricultural development vulnerable to nature, thus necessitating the provision of irrigation facilities very essential.

Adequate water supply through irrigation facilities is very important for the application of required fertilizer and high yielding varieties of seeds, which depend upon the assured water supply for their effectiveness. Irrigation is also vital for better crop planning and crop rotation, by the introduction of early maturing varieties. Moreover, double cropping and multiple cropping system

would be possible with the help of better irrigation facilities. Since, the soil of Mizoram is porous with less retentive capacity, crops and plants suffer from lack of moisture even in *kharif* season. Therefore, it is almost impossible to practice cultivation of crop in *rabi* season without irrigation.

Considering the importance of irrigation for the development of agriculture in the region, immediate thrust should be given to:

- a) setting up of a separate organization for development of irrigation,
- b) Higher priority needs to be given to surveys, investigation and planning and design of new medium and minor irrigation facilities,
- c) Since the areas to be benefitted by small surface water scheme are invariably in the valleys and foot hills, and likely to be out of command by gravity flow, it will be desirable to install mini hydro power plants wherever feasible. This will provide power to lift water for irrigation to higher elevation.

Industries:

In spite of the vast potentialities of industrial development in Mizoram,

based on her rich and varied resources, industrial growth rate proved to be very slow during the plan period. This is therefore, indicative of the persistence of some missing links or constraints in the process of industrial growth of the state. One such missing link was the entrepreneurship, which remained scarce input throughout the plan period in Mizoram. The nature of the problem of entrepreneurship and finance varies according to the size of the industrial unit to be set up in the state. As a whole, the focus of industrial development should be on upgradation of technology, better utilization of assets, promotion of efficiency and removal off the infrastructural constraints effecting the growth of industries.

Mizoram has the advantage of setting up of agro-based industries such as banana figs processing, pineapple fibre, baking products, manufacture of cattle food, fruits and vegetables processing and preservation, ginger and ginger product, cold storage plants for fruits, meat and vegetables, mushroom cultivation and processing of spices etc.

After the announcement of Industrial Policy in 1989, Government of Mizoram took various steps to promote industrial development in the state. As per the resolution in the industrial policy statement, top priority has been given to the development of Food and Allied

industries followed by Handloom&Handicraft. Agro and Allied Food industries required top priority, due to their known advantages over other sectors of industry. The main objectives should be directed to develop, promote and improve processing and preservation of food, milk, fish, fruits, vegetables and food materials of animal, poultry, agriculture or pisciculture, apart from these it will also include sell, stock, import and export of such processed foods.

To mention a few, during 1990-91, MIFCO took over all the departmental projects like Ginger oil & Oleoresin, Fruit Preservation and Maize Processing for their commercial operation. A new area which is identified by the department is Comprehensive Tea Development in Mizoram. The department made utmost efforts for the development of this sector, with active support and guidance of the Tea Board.

For a developing state like Mizoram, the growth of small scale industries is of significance for several reasons. Apart from increased production, the growth of small scale industries helps to serve as an important pillar in the state march towards industrial growth. This movement has to be further foster by all round efforts, so that a new

class of entrepreneurs, based on talent and enterprise come to the force in Mizoram. In case of medium and heavy industries, which would involve a huge amount of investment, it is mainly the central government and also to some extent the state government which have to play a dominant role. The prospects of such industries will therefore, depend largely upon the favourable policy decision of the central government and their effective implementation. Considering the state's low relative level of industrial development, Mizoram can reasonably claim a better deal at the hands of the central government.

Besides, there are possibilities of collaboration between the central or the state government and the big companies of the country and even foreign enterprises in the promotion of industries in Mizoram. Whenever private enterprise is not forth coming to start either big or small industries, the state government should come forward and play the role of entrepreneur. The educated unemployed could be the potential source of entrepreneurs in the state, provided effective measures are taken for proper guidance and training, finance and other forms of assistance. In this respect, the government and commercial banks in the state have significant role to play.

Power:

Power is one of the most important and critical inputs for development of people and area. It has two important functions, such as providing modern amenities to the people which includes domestic, hospitals, schools, rural electrification etc, and use of power for productive purposes including power for small and cottage industries, irrigation, transport and communication and construction sectors. Thus, power consumption provides a measure for socio-economic as well as industrial development in a region or state.

Considering the importance of power for the development of a region, the pace of power development needs an accelerated thrust, to provide the required infrastructure for the removal of the backlog of economic backwardness of the state. Hydro electricity potential in the state has remained largely untapped, such projects are important due to difficult terrain for reaching electricity to the interior and remote corner of the state. Organizations and corporations, in this respect should be encouraged to undertake research in the field. And it is the responsibility of the state to identify and undertake preparation and implementation of those projects.

For generation of hydro-electricity, planning has to be done well in advance because of the fact that, it takes a few years to conduct investigation works to determine the feasibility of a project and will take another few years to construct a major hydel project. A careful planning is required, keeping in view the fact that, development of power is a continuous process. The economic feasibility of large hydel projects and its corresponding match with thermal project, for balancing it would need to be studied along with the technical feasibility of impounding large quantities of water within limitation of rocks and soil characteristics of the region and its seismicity.

Stress should also be given to rural electrification. The programme of rural electrification should primarily address itself, as an avenue of lift irrigation as enough surface water resource are available in the region, for raising of multiple crops besides, setting up of small industries with locally available raw material. Apart from this, power should be treated as industry in the region, as bulk of transmission outside the state can become substantial revenue for the state. So, further planning for power sector will have to keep this possibility, in view of the mountainous terrain of the state with large number of rivers and streams,

which are ideally suited for taking several hydel projects.

Transport and Communication:

Railways, roads and shipping are the important modes of surface and water transport. The importance of road in Mizoram is greater than the rest of the country. In the absence railways and other means of transport, the region has to depend chiefly on the roads network for the movement of goods and passengers within and outside the region. Till today, railway and water transport do not play significant role in the economic life of the people of Mizoram. Though there is airport at Lengpui, which is inadequate for the movement of goods and people. Due to this fact, road transport can be said as the life line of the region. A dependable and low cost road transport system is very important for the economy of Mizoram, as it imports practically all the requirement of consumer goods, machineries and equipments etc. Road not only provide important link between the rural and towns within the state, but also with the rest of the country.

A master plan for the whole region may be prepared within the framework, of which new schemes could be taken up for consideration and sanction, depending on priority and resources. Due to difficult terrain of the region, construction, improvement and maintenance of the roads are quite

difficult. Considering the present set up of PWD, it is desirable to expand and strengthen this department. Moreover, the state PWD in the region is suffering from lack of road making equipment, timely supply of such machinery may be ensured. For the improvement of the quality of life and economic conditions in rural areas, availability of a good all weather road connecting all villages is urgently needed. The availability of these types of roads should be regarded as the prerequisite of economic development. An interstate highway that connects the state of Manipur and Tripura is all the more urgently required, this is particularly due to road blockade NH 54 via Silchar time and again, due to unexpected and unforeseen which caused lots of hardships to the people of Mizoram.

The rail head that connects Bairabi with the rest of the country needs lots of improvement, as of now, the service is still insufficient for the region. The line needs proper maintenance and the service needs to be regulated. The approach road from Aizawl to the rail head also is still very poor. As such immediate requirement is the improvement of good and permanent road, connecting the only rail head which would facilitates the movement of incoming goods from outside the state. State government should also give due importance for the ongoing construction

of rail head, which would connect Bairabi with Sairang.

Apart from road, railways and airways, there is a scope for development of waterways. Before Independence the south Lushai Hills had waterways which connects Karnaphuli River from Demagiri to Rangamati and Chittagong. In the north, Dhaleswari and Sonai Rivers are navigable. With proper planning, Koladyne River which passes through the southern part of Mizoram can be made navigable. Proper study and investigation of the major rivers of the state should be done to see the possibility of inland water transport, which would connect the rest of the country including Myanmar. Investment should be made in this

respect, so that heavy reliance on road can be reduced considerably.

Considering the inadequate air service in the state, the state government may also consider introduction of helicopter services for transportation of medical, supply and also for passenger service which would connect administrative headquarter, districts remote and inaccessible areas. Another means of transport which be developed in Mizoram is ropeways for carrying goods and passenger to some remote and inaccessible areas. Considering the need of the region for mobility, particularly in the rainy season where several weather roads are blocked by landslides, the introduction of ropeways should be included in the future.

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