

An Overview of Statutory Development Boards (SDBs) in Maharashtra

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INTRODUCTION:

Development and change is a continuous process in all its forms in different parts of the world. However, due to intrinsic, historical and geographical conditions certain regions/areas and communities remain at the farther end of the development spectrum compared to other regions. In Maharashtra State also, development problems, regional imbalances and subsequently setting-up of the three Statutory Development Boards can be traced to geo-historical and political reasons that prevailed during the last few centuries.

The genesis for establishment of Development Boards goes back to Maha Vidarbha movement in 1905, which continued for a separate State for Vidarbha region even after independence due to its backwardness. This unrest arising out of backwardness of socio-economic development, language of the region, coupled with the glaring regional imbalances culminated in the Nagpur Agreement in 1953. As Government of India had appointed States Reorganisation Commission in December 1953 deliberations took place among eminent social and political leaders of Maharashtra on the formation of a separate State of Marathi speaking areas of the then Bombay, Madhya Pradesh and Hyderabad states, and they signed an agreement at Nagpur on 28-09-1953 which is known as Nagpur Agreement. This agreement, among other things, refers to three regions of the State: Vidarbha, Marathwada and Rest of Maharashtra and deliberates on the procedure to be adopted for allocation of funds, composition and recruitment to the Government services, admissions to all educational institutions, setting up of a High Court Bench at Nagpur and shifting of at least one session of State Legislature to Nagpur in a year.

On 26th July, 1984 both the houses of Maharashtra State Legislature passed a unanimous resolution requesting the President to make an order in exercise of his powers under article 371(2) of the Constitution for the establishment of three Development Boards: Vidarbha, Marathwada and the Rest of Maharashtra to remove the regional imbalances. The President accepted the resolution passed by the Legislature and issued an order on 9th March 1994 assigning the Governor of Maharashtra the responsibility for the establishment of the three Boards for a period of five years. On 30th April 1994, the Governor of Maharashtra issued the orders constituting separate Development Boards for Vidarbha, Marathwada and Rest of Maharashtra. On 5th August 1994, rules and guidelines were issued for the composition, the terms of office of the Chairman and members of the Boards, functions of the Boards, allocation of funds for development expenditure and equitable arrangement for education, training and employment in services under the control of the State Government. The Governor's orders implicitly take care of the spirit and points raised in the Nagpur Agreement.

After the appointment of the Chairman and Members in June 1994 the three Statutory Development Boards: Vidarbha, Marathwada and Rest of Maharashtra started functioning with their headquarters at Nagpur, Aurangabad and Mumbai respectively. Initially, there were handicaps and the pace of work to the Boards was slow due to various reasons, including the State elections and lack of infrastructure facilities. The Boards were reconstituted many times later due to changes in party positions in Government. The Governor constituted three Committees in exercise of his powers to strengthen the activities of the Development Boards. A Joint Committee

of the three Development Boards called the Indicators and Backlog Committee (IBC) was set-up for assessing the relative levels of development and computing the backlog of different regions of Maharashtra in 1994, which submitted its report in July, 1997. The first report of Indicators and Backlog Committee indicated a backlog of Rs. 15335.77 crores in the three regions as on 31st March 1994 for the same 9 sectors dealt earlier by FFC. The physical backlog calculated by the Indicators and Backlog Committee was not acceptable to the Irrigation, Health, and Water supply & Technical Education departments of the State. The Governor reconstituted the Indicators and Backlog Committee with the additional terms of reference and this Committee submitted the report in September, 2000. As per this Committee's report, a backlog of Rs. 14006.77 crores were reported as on 31st March 1994 for the same 9 sectors considered by earlier Committee. The reconstituted Indicators and Backlog Committee submitted its second report in 2000 for additional 15 indicators and a detailed mechanism for the removal of backlog. The Governor also constituted a joint committee on equitable arrangements for Technical education and Vocational training and another joint committee on representation of three regions in Government services. These Committees submitted their reports in September 1996 and October 98 respectively. Based on the former report, and the Governor's directive the State Government framed the rules of admission for professional courses, which was, however, challenged in the Court for its Constitutional validity. The Governor issued elaborate directives on 15th December 2001 for the allocation of funds, removal of backlog and implementation mechanism based on the IBC report.

Statutory Development Boards

Due to the persistence of the Socio- economic imbalances in the three regions (which is evident even at present) for a long time, this was highlighted by the social activists, politicians and intellectuals in different platforms. Even after the formation of the separate Maharashtra State, the regional imbalances increased so, the Maharashtra State Legislature passed an unanimous resolution requesting the Central Government to set-up three Development Boards so that decentralisation and all round regional development can be brought out. The three Statutory Development Boards: Vidarbha, Marathwada and Rest of Maharashtra were set-up by a Presidential order under article 371 (2) of the constitution on 9th March 1994. The Governor of Maharashtra was assigned the special responsibilities for the constitution of the Boards, framing rules and guidelines, allocation of funds for development expenditure and equitable arrangement for education, training and employment in services under the control of the State Government. After constituting the three Boards on 30th April 1994 with their Head Quarters at Nagpur for Vidarbha, Aurangabad for Marathwada and Mumbai for Rest of Maharashtra, the Governor issued detailed orders and guidelines for the proper functioning of the three Statutory Development. The Governor's order and the guidelines implicitly take care of the spirit and points raised in the Nagpur agreement of 1953.

Composition and Working Mechanism

Each Development Board had initially seven members on it, out of which one member was a member of Maharashtra State Legislature from the area of respective Development Board. One member was from a local authority, and three expert members having special knowledge or experience are appointed from the field of Planning, Finance, Administration, Irrigation, and Public Health etc. One Commissioner of the Revenue Division from the area of respective Development Board was also appointed to the Board and an officer of the State Government of the rank of Additional Commissioner of a Revenue Division from the respective Development Board, was appointed as Member Secretary of the development Board. Recently two more expert members, one more member of the State Legislature and Chairman of the State Planning

Board as an ex- officio member have been included in the Board. In addition, Divisional Commissioners of the Revenue Divisions in each board area have also been taken as members of the respective Development Board. The list indicating the names of the Chairmen and members of the three Statutory Development Boards for the year 2002-2004.

Statutory Development Boards:

Physical Features and Working Mechanism

Statutory Development Boards and their districts in Maharashtra State

Vidarbha Board	Marathwada Board	Rest of Maharashtra Board
1. Buldhana	1. Aurangabad	1. Greater Mumbai**
2. Akola	2. Jalna	2. Mumbai sub-urban *
3. Amravati	3. Parbhani **	3. Thane
4. Yavatmal	4. Beed	4. Raigad
5. Wardha	5. Nanded	5. Ratnagiri
6. Nagpur	6. Osmanabad	6. Sindhudurg
7. Bhandara**	7. Latur	7. Nashik**
8. Chandrapur	8. Hingoli *	8. Dhule
9. Gadchiroli		9. Jalgaon
10. Washim*		10. Ahmednagar
11. Gondia*		11. Nandurbar **
		12. Pune
		13. Satara
		14. Sangli
		15. Solapur
		16. Kolhapur

Term of Office

- i. The term of office of the Chairman and members is as the Governor may specify while appointing them. The Governor may terminate the appointment of any member, including the chairman or reconstitute the Board before the expiry of the term of the member or as the case may be of the Board. The term of the Boards is normally for three years.
- ii. Any member, including the Chairman other than the Government functionary members may at any time resign his office by writing under his hand, addressed to the Governor and the date on which the Governor accepts his resignation he shall be deemed to have vacated the office.
- iii. The Chairman and members are entitled to such fees and allowances for attending the meetings of the Development Boards.
- iv. The Chairman of the Board is appointed from the expert members and is given the status of State Cabinet Minister rank with requisite facilities.

The Development Boards completed the term of 5 years on April 30, 1999 and the President of India vide Amendment Order dated 15 December 1999 extended the term of the three Development Boards by another 5 years up to April 30, 2004.

Functions of the Development Board

Development Board functions as laid down in the Governor's order are:

1. To ascertain relative levels of development in different sectors in relation to its area on the basis of appropriate indicators, having regard to the levels of development in the state as a whole.
2. To assess the impact of various development efforts in removing backlog and achieving overall development within its area.
3. To suggest levels of development expenditure over the area of Development Board during a plan period including annual plan, and
4. To prepare an annual report on its working and to send it as far as possible within three months after the end of every financial year to the Governor for placing it before the Maharashtra State Legislature Assembly.

Staffing Position

The offices of the Chairman and Member Secretary have a support of administrative/technical staff to help the Chairman/ Member Secretary for carrying out day-to-day functions concerning the activities of each Development Board. The staff strength at Chairman's office comprises of Private Secretary, Personal Assistant, Stenographer, Clerk/Typist, Driver, Peon/Messenger. At Member Secretary's office, Joint Director, Research Assistant, Stenographer, Assistant Accounts Officer, Clerk/Typist and Peon are the normal staff.

Role of Development Boards in the Identification of Regional Backlog

Regional imbalances were in existence before the Development Boards were set up in 1994. The State Government was clearing the regional imbalances identified by the FFC since 1985. The greatest contribution of Development Boards was to identify their regions' backwardness in specific sectors and highlighting the need for a fresh look of their regions position vis-a vis to the state which has resulted in the setting – up three Joint Committees of the Development Boards.

- (1) Indicator and Backlog committee for identifying the three regions development position in 30 sectors/sub-sectors.
- (2) Joint Committee for higher/ technical education and training education for equitable arrangement and
- (3) Joint Committee on opportunities for employment in Government services in the three regions.

The Chairman and expert members of the three Development Boards actively contributed by highlighting their regions development and backwardness in these Committee reports which was accepted by the Governor and the State Government and are at various stages of implementation. Some of the important region specific suggestions/ resolutions submitted by the three Development Boards for the identification and clearance of backlog are highlighted below.

1. Rest of Maharashtra region had demanded that taluka may be taken as a unit in DPAP areas for calculation of backlog in irrigation sector. RoM region Board had also demanded that the indicator based on the ratio of developed potential to ultimate potential should be used for working out the backlog in irrigation sector. RoM region had been bringing to the notice of the Governor of the bigger geographical area, higher population size and more tribal and SC population in their region so the need for higher allocation for development.

2. Vidarbha and Marathwada Development Boards had brought to the notice of the Governor that the irremovable backlog in Irrigation sector of 181.07 thousand hectares in Vidarbha and 78.66 thousand hectares in Marathwada as identified by the irrigation department was untenable. They had pointed to the irrigation potentiality in these regions and the need for speedier administrative clearance of irrigation projects, provision of requisite resources, electricity and application of lift irrigation facilities for clearance of backlog.
3. Marathwada Development Board had pointed to the need for equitable distribution of water resources from Tapi valley project (9.135 TMC against the present 2 TMC of water) Marathwada Krishna project (60 TMC against the allotted 24 TMC of water) and upper Godavari river basin water by augmenting the surplus water from Nar, Par and Damanganga rivers. Marathwada and Vidarbha Development Boards had also brought to the notice of the Governor on the lack of progress in clearing the backlog of energisation of pump sets and the present policy of MSEB in the electrification of agricultural pump sets which had allocated 71% of the work in the RoM region and 17% to Marathwada and 12% towards Vidarbha region under non-backlog targets which will create fresh backlogs in the three regions. Vidarbha Development Board had been demanding the revision of Forest clearance act for the clearance of irrigation projects and to the increasing backlog position in road sector under village connectivity, road length/ 100 Sq. Km and Built Operate and Transfer Programme of major roads.
4. Development Boards were also actively involved in assessing the physical and financial backlog position periodically and gave feed back to the Governor and Planning Department. Vidarbha and Marathwada Development boards had brought to the notice of the escalating backlog in their regions. The remaining physical and financial backlog as on 1st April, 2000 was finalized by the Governor after taking the views of the three Statutory Development Boards.
5. Besides highlighting the existing backlog position in higher education/vocational training sector and in employment opportunities in Government services, the Development Boards of Vidarbha and Marathwada had resolved in their meetings to update and undertake fresh backlog created after 1st April 1994. They have requested the Government and the Governor to give proper directives to the concerned departments to furnish the necessary information to the Development Boards for the preparation of report.

Conclusion:

Marathwada Statutory Development Board (MSDB) is a constitutional body created by Presidential Order in to develop Marathwada region of Maharashtra and to decrease regional imbalance in development within the state. MSDB releases annual report assessing problems within various districts of Marathwada, also monitors development work and expenditure.

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