

It's time all Vidarbha districts got equal attention

NAGPUR: For decades, Vidarbha as a whole has suffered political neglect as politicians from other regions who held the reins of the state found it very convenient to ignore the claims of docile people of this region. The Vijay Kelkar committee in its recently tabled report on balanced development of the state has also acknowledged this fact and has come out with a fresh approach to remove development deficit of every district.

As circumstances would have it, I have recently joined a political party that is wedded to the cause of speedy development of Vidarbha and fortunately the party is ruling the state. So, as soon as I was elected as MLA from Amravati, I wasted no time to meet senior leaders like union transport and shipping minister Nitin Gadkari as well as our beloved chief minister Devendra Fadnavis to convey my feelings about need for uniform development of the region.

There is a perception that within the region, the Western Vidarbha or Amravati revenue division has never got due. Of late, Nagpur district and areas around it are getting so much importance. Whatever development efforts are being taken, the concentration is on Nagpur city and its surroundings. Be it prestigious educational institutions like AIIMS or IIM or industrial investment, other districts of the region are being excluded.

This does not auger well for the unity and prosperity of the region. Amravati division is a major cotton producing centre but processing units like textile mills are required in numbers to boost cotton economy and may go a long way in addressing the farmers' suicide problem that is seen in its worst form in Yavatmal, Amravati, Washim, Buldhana and Akola districts of this division.

Luckily, chief minister Fadnavis has paid attention to this issue and during the winter session of the legislature announced a package for region's growth. Nandgaonpeth industrial area in Amravati has been earmarked as textile zone. Three large textile units are in construction stage already and four more are in the pipeline. These include Shyam IndoFab being set up with investment of Rs273 crore providing over 500 jobs, VHM Industry with similar numbers in investment and jobs, Suryalaxmi Cotton Mills that will invest Rs160 crore and generate over 400 jobs.

A defence sector unit of Bharat Dynamics is also proposed at Nandgaonpeth and has acquired 230 hectares with potential of generating 1,700 jobs. All these new investment are likely to create 10,000 jobs to the youth of this area in the next five years. The Indiabulls (RattanIndia) power project in Amravati has created 1,200 jobs.

I am also making efforts to see if four more National Textile Corporation units like Indu Mills, Potdar Mills and Tata Textile unit from Mumbai and one from Barsi in Solapur can be relocated here as earlier such project of Finlay Mills that was shifted to Achalpur has paid off rich dividends.

Sadly, irrigation has been much neglected sector. As much as Rs2000 crore were lying

unused in this area as all planned projects are either awaiting revised administrative approval or are into controversies regarding corruption facing inquiries.

While CIDCO's plan to develop Chikhaldara, the sole hill resort in Vidarbha, has been approved at a cost of Rs700 crore, I would also try to push for developing a tourism circuit of Chikhaldara, Lonar, Shegaon and Narnala (Akola fort) to boost the sector which has vast untapped potential.

(The author, Dr Sunil Deshmukh, is MLA from Amravati)

The Times Of India (Online)