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INFRASTRUCTURE

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever thought of why some states in India are performing much better than others in certain areas? Why do Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh prosper in agriculture and horticulture? Why are Maharashtra and Gujarat industrially more advanced than others? How come Kerala, popularly known as 'God's own country', has excelled in literacy, health care and sanitation and also attracts tourists in such large numbers? Why does Karnataka's information technology industry attracts world attention? It is all because these states have better infrastructure in the areas they excel than other states of India. Some have better irrigation facilities. Others have better transportation facilities, or are located near ports which makes raw materials required for various manufacturing industries easily accessible. Cities like Bengaluru in Karnataka attract many multinational companies because they provide world-class communication facilities. All these support structures, which facilitate development of a country, constitute its infrastructure. How then does infrastructure facilitate development?

WHAT IS INFRASTRUCTURE?

Infrastructure provides supporting services in the main areas of industrial and agricultural production, domestic and foreign trade and commerce. These services include roads, railways, ports, airports, dams, power stations, oil and gas pipelines, telecommunication facilities, the country's educational system including schools and colleges, health system including hospitals, sanitary system including clean drinking water facilities and the monetary system including banks, insurance and other financial institutions. Some of these facilities have a direct impact on production of goods and services while others give indirect support by building the social sector of the economy. Some divide infrastructure into two categories — economic and social. Infrastructure associated with energy, transportation and communication are included in the former category whereas those related to education, health and housing are included in the latter.



Fig. 8.1 *Roads are the missing link with growth*



Fig. 8.2 *Schools: an important infrastructure for a nation*

RELEVANCE OF INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure is the support system on which depends the efficient working of a modern industrial economy. Modern agriculture also largely depends on it for speedy and large-scale transport of seeds, pesticides, fertilisers and the produce using modern roadways, railways and shipping facilities. In recent times, agriculture also depends on insurance and banking facilities because of its need to operate on a very large scale.

Infrastructure contributes to economic development of a country both by increasing the productivity of the factors of production and improving the quality of life of its people. Inadequate infrastructure can have multiple adverse effects on health. Improvements in water supply and sanitation have a large impact by reducing morbidity (meaning proneness to fall ill) from major waterborne diseases and reducing the severity of disease when it occurs. In addition to the obvious linkage between water and sanitation and health, the quality of transport and communication infrastructure can affect access to health care. Air pollution and safety hazards connected to transportation also affect morbidity, particularly in densely populated areas.