

## SEZ (Special Economic Zones) in India: A Review of Macro Environment variables

Tarun Dhingra\* Tripti Singh\*\* Ambalika Sinha\*\*\*

### ABSTRACT

This paper evaluates the concept of SEZ (Special Economic Zones), its classification, competitiveness in terms of exports and employment generated and also analyse the macro environment like Economic, legal, political and social issues of SEZ. The paper found from the analysis that success factors associated with SEZ are location decision of SEZ, linkages with domestic economy, Government and its institution support and ability of zones to attract factors of production (men, machine, money and materials) and macro environment issues dominate the SEZ policy formulation and execution.

**KEYWORDS:** Special Economic Zones, Macro Environment Variables

**JEL CLASSIFICATION:** R3, F13

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:** Dr. Tarun Dhingra is Assistant Professor of strategy at University of Petroleum & Energy Studies, Dehradun. He has published research papers in various international journals like Competitiveness Review & Foreigntrade review on the issues of competitiveness and special economic zones. He can be reached at replytarun@gmail.com.

Dr. Tripti Singh is Assistant Professor in School of Management Studies at Motilal Nehru National Institute of Technology, Allahabad. She has published research papers in various national and international journals in the area of Competitiveness, SHRM. She can be reached at tripti@mnnit.ac.in

Dr. Ambalika Sinha is Assistant Professor at Department of Humanities and Social Science, Motilal Nehru National Institute of Technology, Allahabad. She has published research papers in various national and international journals in the area of Stress Management & HRM. She can be reached at ambalika.mnnit@gmail.com

### INTRODUCTION

Progressive Governments have been able to develop and adopt policies and instruments which not only give economic benefits but also, provide certain social benefits to its citizens. During the initial phase, after World War II some Asian economies pursued restrictive trade policies to ensure protection and stability. However by 1980s many developing countries began to recognise that, restrictive policies can constrain growth. The early policy of inward growth of economy could not achieve its objective and many countries in the last three decades started experimenting with free trade concepts by providing external or outward orientation to their economies. To increase exports countries needed to have

trade policies, which required massive reforms at various levels viz; macro and micro level for conducting business in the globalised economies.

In this process concept of Free Economic Zone has been widely accepted and pursued by different countries. The establishment of special geographic areas to reach economic aims is not a new idea. Since the 18th century, large areas were transformed into free trade zones for example Gibraltar was established as a free trade zone in 1704, Singapore in 1819 and Hong Kong in 1842. The picture of benefits derived for the economy from Special Economic Zones (SEZ) are not uniform for different countries, some have reaped substantial gains while other

haven't Mexico, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Republic of South Korea, Taiwan and China are examples of successful countries which have received substantial gains from SEZ.

After pursuing an inward looking development strategy, India also decided to take a historic step of changing tracks in 1991 (Kumar, 2000), from import-substitution strategy with export orientation. Still the fundamental aim of the reforms has been to accelerate the development process through improved international competitiveness, increased efficiency in the allocation of resources, stimulating domestic savings and investment, and strengthening of endogenous technological capabilities to reap the benefits of technologies and of dynamic comparative advantage (Kaundal, 2005).

### CONCEPT OF SEZ

Economic Processing Zones (EPZ) are clearly delineated industrial estates which constitute a free trade enclave in the customs and trade regime of a country, and where manufacturing firms producing mainly for export, benefit

from a certain number of fiscal and financial incentives (ILO/UNCTC, 1988). According to UNIDO (1980), "EPZs are relatively small, geographically separated areas within a country, the purpose of which is to attract export-oriented industries by offering them favourable investment and trade conditions as compared to other parts of the host country". Another acceptable definition is, "Special Economic Zone (SEZ) as specifically delineated duty free enclave and shall be deemed to be foreign territory for the purposes of trade operations and duties and tariffs" (Ministry of commerce, Government of India, 2008). These Zones are self-contained and integrated with their own infrastructure and support services. The infrastructure would include roads, airports, ports, transport system, generation and distribution of power, telecom, hospitals, hotels, educational institutions, leisure and entertainment units, residential/industrial/commercial complexes, water supply sanitation and sewerage system and any other facility required for development of the Zones (www.sezindia.nic.in).SEZ works as a conduit for international trade and it assumes

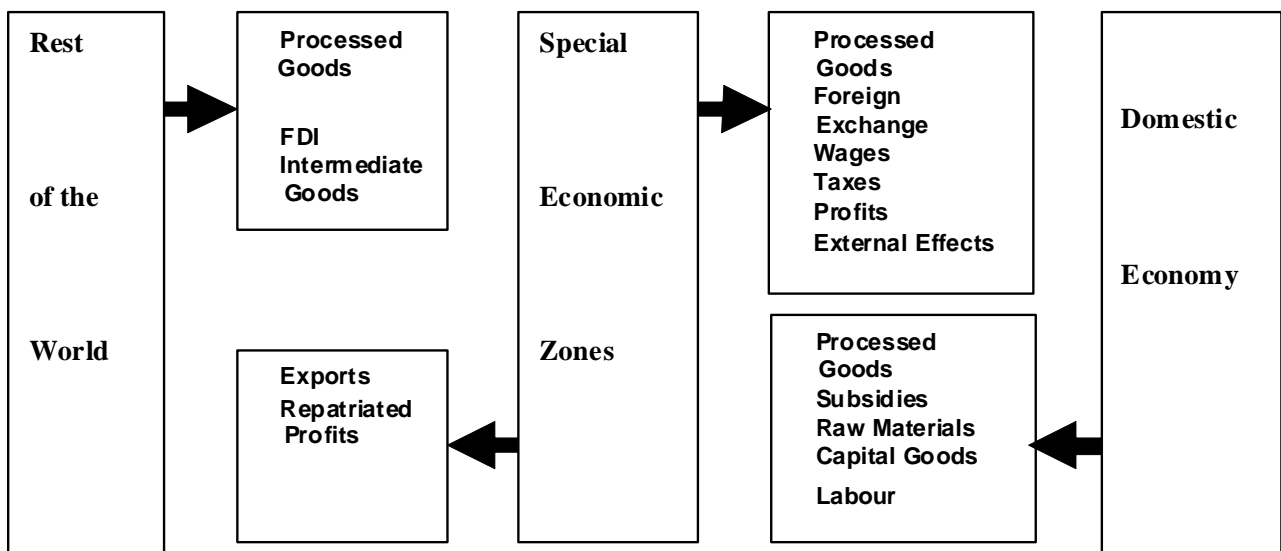


Figure 1.1: SEZ as conduit for International trade

(Adapted from Knoth, 2000)

the role of a window for the economy with the rest of the world. This conduit has a two way process with the home country as well as with the world. Figure 1.1 displays the two ways process which includes interaction of SEZ with the home country on the one hand and SEZ and the world on the other hand.

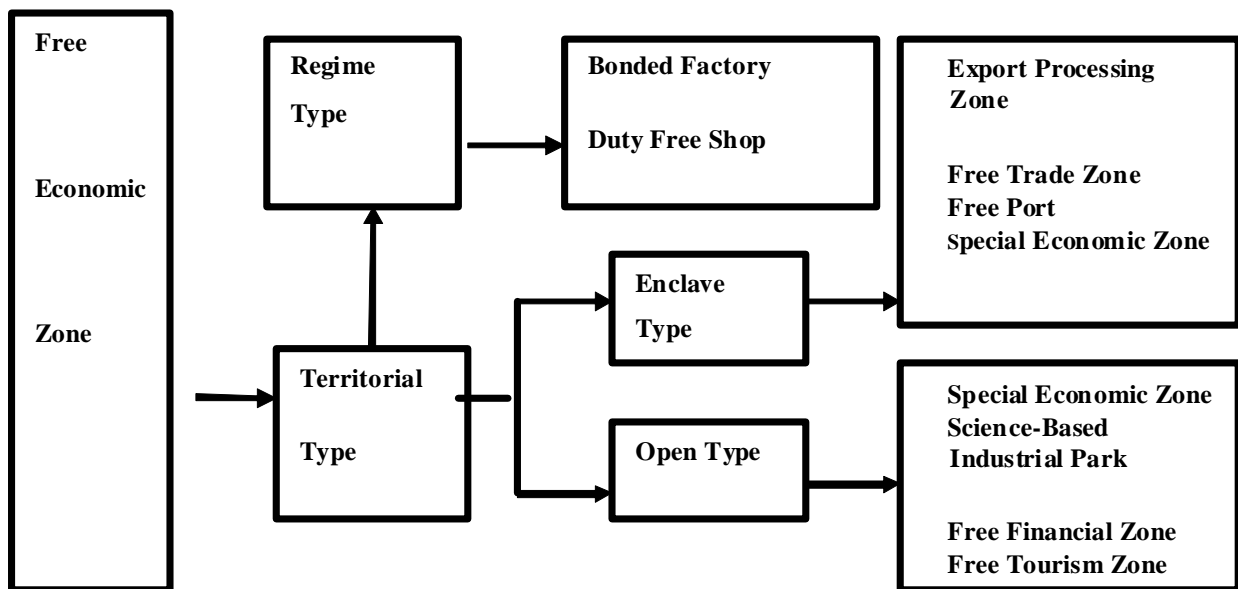
**CLASSIFICATION OF ECONOMIC ZONES**

The growth of Economic Zones in the last three decades has spread in different parts of the world. These economic zones have been set up with different objectives and are at various stages of development since all zones have different economical and political backgrounds. This is the reason that a terminology of economic zones is often confused. There are 66 different terms which are used for free economic zones and it creates a classificatory problem for the academic scholars to understand. It is very difficult to equate two zones situated in different parts of the world but still are called with the same name. It also suggests that this age old concept has grown tremendously and with the passage of time when new features were added to the previous existing concept a

new terminology appeared on the horizon of economic zones of the world.

There are numerous criteria for classifying the economic zones; one of them is spatial structure based classification. In this classification economic zones have been largely categorised in territorial and regime type. There are two sub-types of this kind of zone (a) Depending on the linkages with the domestic economy (b) The policy of customs supervision. On this basis one can distinguish between “open” and an “enclave type”. The enclave type Free ports (FP), Free trade zones (FTZ) and Export processing zones (EPZ) is a strictly defined zone in which a policy of closed customs supervision is carried out so that it has less direct linkages with the domestic economy than the open type (SEZ, SIP, FFZ, and FTZ). The open type carries out a special policy of customs supervision (not closed customs supervision) and is not strictly defined or separated from the domestic economy. That is why it has more direct linkages with the domestic economy than the enclave type. Some types of FEZ, such as SEZ, have the feature of both open and enclave type of FEZ

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**Figure 1.2: Territorial and Regime Types of Economic Zones**  
(Adapted from Guangwen, 2003)

## COMPETITIVENESS OF SEZ IN INDIA

India was the first country in Asia to establish Free trade zone as early as 1965 and followed by setting up of Santa Cruz Export processing Zone (EPZ) in 1973 and later on five EPZ were established in late 1980s in Noida(Uttar Pradesh), Falta (West Bengal), Cochin (Kerala), Chennai (TamilNadu) and Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh). Although India was the first country to jump into the bandwagon of economic zones but its policy of setting up of zones didn't provide much success because of the prevailing regime of heavy control and inward looking approach at that time. After historic steps of economic reforms in the country, Special Economic Zones (SEZ) as a recipe was proposed to stimulate economic growth. This policy was introduced in the Indian Parliament in April 2000 by commerce minister late Mr. Murasoli Maran.

The central theme behind this move was to replicate the export led growth model of china based upon creation of SEZ (*Dhingra et. al., 2006*). In this phase of new policy initiatives, wide-ranging measures were initiated by the government for revamping and restructuring EPZ (*Kundra, 2000*). In the year 2000 the concept of SEZ with the additional benefits/features as compared to EPZ arrived on the Indian horizon of the trade policy and all the existing EPZ were converted into special economic zones. It was aimed to overcome the shortcomings experienced on account of the multiplicity of controls and clearances; absence of world-class infrastructure, and an unstable fiscal regime and with a view to attract large foreign investments in India. At present 58 SEZ are functioning in India at different locations and there are 462 principally approved SEZ by the Government of India (GOI) in which Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Haryana and Gujarat lead the initiatives in this direction. These notified SEZ will be fully functional in the following locations like Andhra Pradesh (56), Gujarat (22), Haryana (20), Karnataka (23), Kerala (8), Madhya Pradesh (4), Maharashtra (35), Orissa (4), Punjab (2), Rajasthan (5), Tamil Nadu (42), Uttar Pradesh (12), Utrkhand (2), West Bengal (8), Jharkhand (1), Goa (3) Chandigarh (2) and Delhi (1). Total 1122 units are operational (as on March 2008) in central government SEZ employing 1,

93,474 people and 44,768 people are working in 403 operational units in state owned or private SEZ. Government of India (GOI) allows FDI (Foreign direct investment) in most of the industries and Nokia SEZ in Chennai is one of its most successful examples (*Ministry of Commerce, 2008*).

The main objectives of our SEZ policy are generation of additional economic activity, promotion of exports of goods and services, promotion of investment from domestic and foreign sources, creation of employment opportunities and development of infrastructure facilities. There are 462 SEZ granted principally approved status by the GOI in which Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Haryana and Gujarat lead the rest of the country. Out of all the SEZ established in India the most successful SEZ are in Mumbai, Noida and Chennai, which are prominent cities having existing industrial and infrastructure base. Although size of a SEZ has not been empirically found as its success factor but most of the successful SEZ in the world are of huge size. In India the maximum numbers of proposals are in the category of specific sector/industry, which have the least requirement of land, and only two large multi-products SEZ (Reliance in Jhajjar and Maha Mumbai) have been cleared.

## EXPORTS

In India, special economic zones have been established with the aim of providing internationally competitive and hassle free environment for promotion of exports. There are at present 58 functioning SEZ in India operating in different parts of the country. Out of these functioning SEZ in India; 7 were established by the central government and 12 were established by state/private sector. Prior to the SEZ Act, 2005, 39 SEZ were functional which were notified under SEZ Act, 2005. Together they contribute around 6-7% of national exports. Exports from SEZ in India were Rs. 34787 Crore in 2006-7 which is around 6% of the national export of India i.e. Rs.571780 Crore. The annual growth rate of SEZ in India is higher than the growth rate of overall exports from India (*Ministry of Commerce, 2007*).

**Table 1.1: Exports from India and SEZ (in Rs. Crores)**

Year	Total Exports from India	Growth over last year	Exports from SEZ in India	Growth over last year from SEZ in India
2003-04	293370	14.98%	13,854	37.80%
2004-05	375340	27.94%	18,309	32.15%
2005-06	456418	21.60%	22839.53	24.74%
2006-07	571780	25.28%	34615	52%
2007-08(P)	448377	21.20%	66337	92%

Source: Ministry of commerce, [www.commerce.nic.in](http://www.commerce.nic.in)  
P-provisional, April – December 2007-08

Exports from central government grew by 55% from the year 2007 to 2008 and exports from state/private SEZ grew by 31%. Though, exports from SEZ notified under SEZ Act, 2005 grew by an astounding 2849% this can be

attributed to low base of year 2006-07. It clearly shows that in the coming future contribution of SEZ notified under SEZ act, 2005 will be high.

**Table 1.2: Exports from different functional SEZ in India (In Rs. Crore)**

No.	Type	2006-07	2007-08	Growth from last year
1.	Central govt. (prior to SEZ act)	26,526	41,170	55%
2.	State/private (prior to SEZ act)	22,167	29,175	31%
3.	Notified under SEZ act, 2005	285	8,406	2849%
	Total	48,978	78,751	61%

Source: Ministry of commerce, 2008, [www.sezindia.nic.in](http://www.sezindia.nic.in)

## SEZ (Special Economic Zones) in India: A Review of Macro Environment variables

By analysing the sector wise break-up of physical exports from SEZ in India from the period of 2006-07 to 2007-08, four major sectors have cornered major share out of total exports from SEZ in India. These sectors are Electronic hardware which witnessed growth rate of whopping 189 % from last year, computer/electronic

software grew by astounding 686%, gems & jewellery grew by 43 % and trading & services grew by 780 %. Although this growth over last year can also be attributed to low base effect of the year 2006-07 but it promises good growth in future.

**Table1.3: Sector wise break up of Exports from SEZ in India (In Rs. Crore)**

No.	Sector	2006-07	2007-08	Growth from last year
1.	Electronic hardware	3846	11,121	189%
2.	Computer/Electronic hardware	507	3985	686%
3.	Gems & Jewellery	16,068	23,006	43%
4.	Trading & Services	2370	20,866	780%
5.	Textile and garments	1333	1316	-1%

Source: Ministry of commerce, 2008, www.sezindia.nic.in

Gems & jewellery, electronic goods and softwares are the common sector found by comparing major exports of SEZ in India to total exports from India. The major export items from India are manufactured goods which include gems & jewellery, electronic goods, drugs, engineering goods and textile products. This gives a clue that direction of exports from SEZ in India, product wise / services and the sector wise would be driving the total exports from India. Special economic zones in future will emerge as a robust tool for enhancing Indian exports.

### Employment

Agriculture, industry and services constitute 17%, 27% and 56% respectively of the Indian GDP. The share of agriculture in Indian GDP has declined from 46% in 1970-71 to 17% in the present scenario (2009). The fall of share of agriculture in our GDP has almost been absorbed by the rise in services but the share of industry has been constant at 27% of GDP. We need to equip our country to increase industry share so that any fall in agricultural activity now can be absorbed by it since a

new fall of agriculture now will not be absorbed by services (*Mitra, 2008* Industrialisation- without land alienation?). Estimates on employment and unemployment on CDS (Current daily status) basis (Table 1.4) indicate that employment growth during 1999-2000 to 2004-05 increased significantly as compared to the growth witnessed during 1993-94 to 1999-2000. During 1999-2000 to 2004-05, about 47 million work opportunities were created compared to only 24 million in the period between 1993-94 and 1999-00. Employment growth rate accelerated from 1.25 per cent per annum to 2.62 per cent per annum. But unemployment rate rose because of growth of labour force at a faster rate of 2.84 per cent than the workforce (*Economic survey, 2007-08*). The policy of SEZ can help in increasing job opportunity for the farm workers (which accounted for 58.5% in 2001) and can help in its part to absorb migration from agricultural activities to others.



**Table 1.4: Employment and Unemployment in million person years (by CDS basis)**

	Millions 1999-2000	Millions 2004-2005	Growth rate per annum	
			From 1993- 2000	From 2000-05
Population	1005.05	1092.83	1.98	1.69
Labour force	364.88	419.65	1.47	2.84
Work force	338.19	384.91	1.25	2.62

Source: Economic survey, 2008, www.indiabudget.nic.in

SEZ have also contributed its mite to employment in the national employment figures. There are 1122 units operational in March, 2008 under the central government.

SEZ is employing 1, 93,474 people and 44,768 people are working in 403 operational units in state/private SEZ.

**Table 1.5: Employment in SEZ (March, 2008)**

	Employment	No. of Units
Central Govt. SEZ	193474	1122
State Govt./private SEZ	44768	403
Total	238242	1525

Source: www.sezindia.nic.in

Seeing the number of SEZ notified and approved contribution of SEZ to total employment in the form of both direct and indirect means will increase in future.

#### **LAND REQUIREMENTS FOR APPROVED SEZ**

The total land requirement for the formal approvals granted for SEZ, till date is approximately 62590 hectares out of which about 107 approvals comprising of 20673 hectares, is for State Industrial Development Corporations/State Government Ventures. The land for the 250 notified SEZ, where operations have started, is

approximately 29399 hectares. India has total land area of 2973190 sq km out of which, agricultural land is of the order of 16,20388 sq km (54.5%). The land in possession of the 250 SEZ notified is approximately 293 sq km and land for formal approval granted is around 625 sq km (www.sezindia.nic.in). The area acquired for building SEZ is a fraction of total area possessed by India and it simply substantiates the necessity of promoting SEZ in order to spur industrial activities.

## IDENTIFYING MACRO ISSUES OF SEZ FOR REVIEW

### Success Factors of SEZ

Empirical studies find that there are some success factors involved with the planning and execution of SEZ as a policy. These success factors are *location decision of SEZ, linkages with domestic economy, government and its institution support and ability of zones to attract factors of production (men, machine, money and materials)* (Dhingra et al., 2009). SEZ which are located in relatively developed areas (in terms of infrastructure), are found to be more successful as compared to those which are located in semi or undeveloped areas. So a location decision is one of the determinants of the SEZ success. Attempt to locate SEZ in backward regions have not brought success and most of the successful SEZ of the world are found in relatively developed areas.

SEZ are established to form *linkages* with the domestic economy so outsourcing to local vendors in DTA (Duty tariff area), situated outside SEZ are encouraged and transition of goods from SEZ to DTA and vice versa, is given deemed imports and exports status. This is done to

exploit the beneficial impact of international trade for the formation of agglomeration in that region, so that the area can be developed. *Government and institutional support* like encouraging government policy for attracting investment (Domestic or Foreign Direct Investment), simplification of export-import procedures, better infrastructure in SEZ in terms of road, electricity, water, telecom, internet etc. are also important for its success. *Export market assistance* from government to units located in SEZ, single window clearance for setting up and running units and decentralisation of the administrative powers to concerned authorities in SEZ are conducive to planning and implementation of SEZ policy. Ability to attract factors of production like economical labour, import of technology or capital goods from abroad or sourcing it from DTA at no customs, excise, sales tax, procurement of materials from abroad or DTA with minimum central and state levies, availability of economical long and short term cost of capital for units in SEZ have impact on its success. These factors acting as important determinants for the success of SEZ have been found in empirical studies conducted in different context of China, Bangladesh, Philippines, Sri Lanka, China, South Korea and Indonesia.

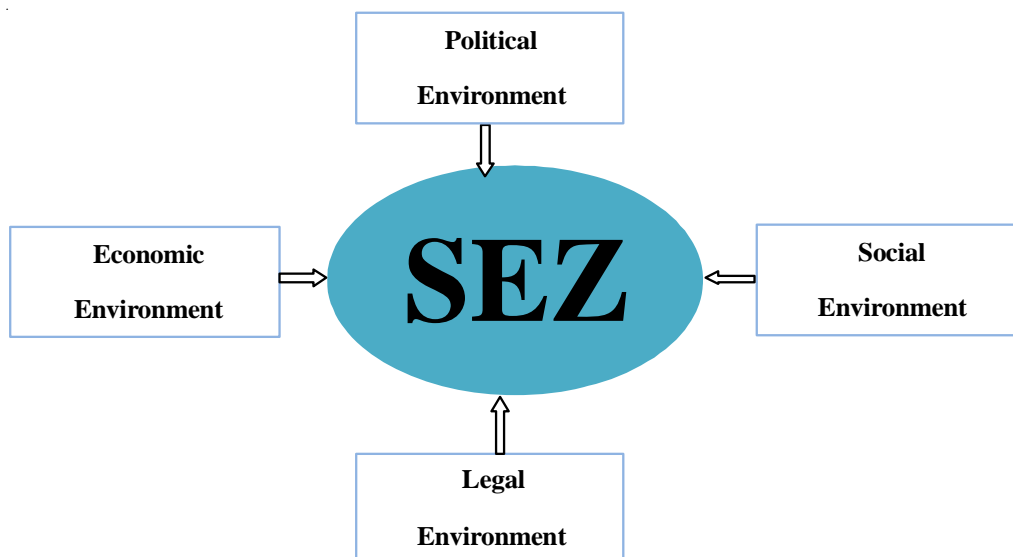


Figure 1.3: Macro Environment variables of SEZ



### Macro Environment Issues Of SEZ

The relevant broad variables of macro issues of SEZ in India are can be summarised in figure 1.3.

SEZ have emerged as one of the most relevant debates in recent times with various social, economical and political dimensions (*Dhingra & Singh, 2009*). Since Indian model of SEZ is quite different as compared to the rest of the world in terms of engagement and participation of private capital on such a big scale although in world where most of the successful SEZ are established and run by government capital and state investment in infrastructure. Some of the common issues related to SEZ are:

### Economic Issues

The incentive structure of SEZ policy attracts real estate players in the business of setting up and running SEZ due to earmark of non-processing area to 35% of the total area (*SEZ Act, 2005*).

The presence of large scale incentives and subsidy for doing exports from SEZ may induce other players to relocate their operations from non - SEZ area to SEZ. Ministry of Finance estimated that revenue loss arising from existing units is in the range of 70, 000 crores. (*The Economic Times, 28 March, 2007*).

Severe over capacity is being planned and most of the approved SEZ are in IT area which requires minimum 10 hectares of land only (SEZ Act, 2005). It will choke the existing infrastructure rather than a creating new one (*The Economic Times, 11 April, 2007*).

Incentive being provided by GOI to developers and unit holders do not match with the provision of WTO and come under direct subsidy from state to firms thus it is not WTO compatible (*IDFC,2001*).

Since one of the differentiating features of Indian SEZ is private financing of SEZ therefore financial viability is the top most concern. Complete withdrawal of government from utilising public capital for setting up new SEZ has lead to non- bank ability of the project. RBI has put SEZ financing from bank to developers in

risk and non essential category. Thus, SEZ are economically feasible but possess financial viability challenges. This can be pruned down if GOI starts taking some share of SEZ to improve bankability of large projects.

6. The tune of investment being talked about is massive and land requirement of proposed SEZ is around 300,000 hectares. It will be a huge investment as compared to investment in last 5 years. Thus, a lot of SEZ may not really see the light of the day (*Business World, 2006*).
7. Every zone being set up by private capital may not be successful and very likely the successful one will be in infrastructure rich and highly agglomerated area which will further accentuate the disparity between developed and not so developed states of India. Most of the approved SEZ are in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamilnadu and these states are relatively more developed, have high industrial capacity and are highly urbanised. The same problem of unbalanced development of states is also being faced by Chinese government because of SEZ (*Karnik, 2006*).
8. If all SEZ don't bring envisaged result then large area can be locked in non performing SEZ and policy framework regarding SEZ does not cover it.
9. The massive rush of SEZ seems to grossly undermine under-served domestic market with a fact that exports still do not cover more than 10% of Indian GDP. Rest of the proportion in GDP comes from domestic consumption story.
10. SEZ policy may alter fate of EOU (Export Oriented Units) and STP (Software Technology Park) in the year March, 2010 which may then see massive relocation of these units to SEZ (*CII,2008*).
11. A cap of above 5000 hectares in size of SEZ seems to be a stumbling block since small SEZ of captive and IT origin will not create new infrastructure. It defeats one of the principal objectives i.e. infrastructure creation of SEZ.

## Legal Issues

The SEZ act and policy framework have thrown some important issues to be addressed. These are:

1. Large SEZ will privatise the local government since as per Industrial Act there will no municipal administration in an Industrial Township and a big SEZ will be a virtual town encompassing large population. It violates section 243Q of constitution of India which guarantees local government to its citizens.

2. The absence of democratic process in large zones will even deny gram panchayat elections and will form private monopolies responsible for providing wide range of services like water, power, sanitation etc. These services will not fall under any regulator of either sector or tariff type and provides enormous powers to private monopolies. The creation of private administration will lead to sovereignities as per SEZ Act, 2005 and it clearly violates constitution of India, Panchayati Raj Act and Tribal Act. This could be the most litigated area of SEZ act in coming future (CII, 2008).

3. There is no clearly defined exit route of the units operating inside SEZ and pose uncertainty of fixed asset. Thus, less capital intensive industry is coming to set up shops in SEZ rather than high capital intensive industry (CII, 2008).

4. State SEZ policy does not talk about decentralisation of authorities to DC of SEZ which leads to administrative complexity and acts as a hindrance to the success of SEZ (The Economic Times, 28 April, 2007).

5. India doesn't have digitilised land records and peasants have inherited the land from their forefather without valid documents. This create serious hurdle for land acquisition and make it tardy and time consuming.

6. SEZ Act has not provisioned flexible labour laws and has simply put the ball in the court of states to pursue. Out of all the states Gujarat is the only one which provides labour flexibility in their SEZ state Act (The Economic Times, 20 April, 2007).

## Political Issues

1. Displacement of population and payment to peasants has emerged as a highly debatable political issue (The Economic Times, 15 April, 2007).

2. The onus of land acquisition has been transferred to private parties after making necessary changes in Land Acquisition Act. Now GOI comes into the picture only after 75% of the land has already been acquired by the developer Act (The Economic Times, 6 April, 2007).

3. A cap of more than 5000 hectares has been placed on the size of SEZ (The Economic times, 18 March, 2008) to avoid political mobilisation since large area of SEZ may work as a cause for mobilising people and can be used a political tool.

4. Setting up SEZ in one place requires displacement of people and land acquisition by the developer. Recently the proposal of setting up SEZ by Reliance industries Ltd. in Maharashtra region was decided by conducting referendum in that area and majority of the people living there have voted against it (The Economic times, 27 March, 2008).

## Social Issues

Social issues which are being debated regarding SEZ are discussed as follows:

1. Industrialisation requires land acquisition in different parts of the country and converting agricultural land into industrial plot especially multi crop land create a stir among the peasants. Thus, it deprives the farmers of their basic and traditional source of income which leads to social discontent and brings about social problems.

2. The Government has certain role in the land acquisitions undertaken by developer for setting up SEZ in one region and one of the role that it plays is that of providing proper payment of the land value to the owner. Now Govt. has deliberately got out of the land acquisition process and has put the onus on the developer to buy the land. Improper payment to peasants as compared to

prevailing market prices either in nexus with Govt. officials or deliberately offering less is stirring the people to agitate (*The Economic times*, 25 April, 2008).

3. Rush of setting up SEZ in different parts of the country seems to be disincentive to peasants for agriculture which is already losing sheen.

4. Since most of the approved SEZ are in relatively developed region, it will create unbalanced development. Thus, pattern of development creates pockets of affluence and it aggravates the divide between the haves and have not's. The planned pattern of development of region should not have that much disparity otherwise this inequity will lead to more social discontent among people.

## CONCLUSION

SEZ have emerged as a conduit for promoting outward orientation to the economy and have grown in literature with numerous classifications. Numerous SEZ are functioning in different locations in India and contributing their mite to national exports and employment. Primary factors attached with the success of SEZ are location, linkages with domestic economy, Government and its institution support and ability of zones to attract factors of production (men, machine, money and aterials). SEZ are contributing their mite in exports of country and employment generation. The policy of SEZ is encompassed by prominent macro environment issue like economic, political, social and legal which dominates the SEZ policy formulation and execution.

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