



ISED to Shape the First Social Enterprise Policy in the Country

The Cochin Social Enterprise Policy, envisaged by the Corporation's Budget 2017-18, is a unique experiment in the country. The Project, on behalf of the City Corporation, will be implemented by the Institute of Small Enterprises and Development.

Kerala, unlike many other States of the country has achieved a very high quality of life of its people. This has both positive and negative implications. On the positive side, the high levels of education health, infrastructure etc makes possible for the state to easily adapt many of the best practices of the developed countries. On the negative side , there are a number of adversities attached to economic growth, such as environmental degradation, poor maintenance of infrastructure, increasing health hazards etc. The present practice is that, these social problems are directly attended by the government or the Municipality. There is possibility of an alternative approach, where, entrepreneurs come in to the picture, with close monitoring by the Government or the Municipality.

In the traditional framework of Urban Planning, city space is much less meant for economic activities. Moreover, existing industries are often shifted to new and far away locations. These locations, in due course of time become urbanised! This, therefore , indicates the need for a local economic development policy for Local Governments. Such a policy need to integrate the elements of social equity and employment considerations, along with the need for provision of urban amenities. Here lies the importance of social enterprises.

The City Administrations need to check unauthorised sprawlings. But, at the same time, economic activities that provide a number of basic needs,, especially to the poor people, have to be promoted with private participation.

A social enterprise is a enterprise with a social purpose. The major social purpose is to find immediate solutions to the pressing social problems. The entrepreneur will identify such a solution through his imagination, rather than the municipality, within its constraints, finding out a relatively short term solution.

Today, there are a number of activities undertaken by entrepreneurs with a social purpose. But, they are not known as social enterprises. There is no policy by which these enterprises can be treated with special preference by the Government departments and the Municipalities . This is because, there is no data base or knowledge base on such activities. This gap need to be bridged.

In the developed countries, the Municipalities operate under some national level Social Enterprise Policy. For example in UK, the country having one of the best social enterprise policy, has developed a large number of social enterprises around their municipalities . There is a high potential of the city of Cochin, developing a model social enterprise policy, prepare an action plan , and brand it in the context of the 'Smart Cities' project.