

A. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS IN INDIA

1. The foundation of the statistical system in India was laid down by the British administration. The Provincial Governments were required to publish the relevant statistics in their annual administration reports. They, in turn, depended upon the district offices. These statistics covered a wide range of subjects. The forms for this information were later made uniform, and the first Statistical Abstract of British India (1840-1865) was based on such information provided by the Provinces. One of the notable contributions was the publication, in the first half of the nineteenth century, of District Gazetteers. Several Commissions and Committees appointed by the Government of India for studies of specific fields also recommended that the Provinces should create institutions to collect statistics in the relevant fields. Thus, the Indian Industrial Commission (1916-1918) recommended that a Department of Industries should be created in the Provinces, with representatives throughout the Province to collect information on industries. Later the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India (1924-1925) pointed out that not only should the Provinces be self-sufficient in the field of statistics, but also that there should be a large Central Organisation. Later, the Famine Enquiry Commission (1945) suggested the appointment of qualified Statistical Officers at Provincial Headquarters to assist the Director of Agriculture.

2. Statistics in India thus developed in the Provinces expanding in scope to cover the fields of agriculture, industries, civil supplies (during the World War II), education, forestry, labour, cooperation, health and vital statistics. The organisational arrangement for collecting and publishing statistics, logically consistent with the organisation of Government administration and with the consequent delegated responsibilities and functions, has remained the same up to the present.

3. The first significant development in the pre-independence era was the constitution of a Statistical Committee (1862) for the preparation of forms to collect statistical information on different subject areas. This led to the publication entitled *Statistical Abstract of British India* in 1868. This publication was based on the returns of the local administrations and contained useful statistical information for all the British Provinces, and became an annual feature till 1923.

4. Following the recommendations of the Indian Famine Commission, Agriculture Departments were opened in 1881 in various provinces *inter alia* for collection of Agricultural Statistics, while the work of coordination in the collection of Agricultural Statistics by the Provinces was vested in the Department of Agriculture. The first publication on the subject, *Agricultural Statistics of British India*, was brought out in 1886.

5. A Statistical Branch was established in 1862 in the then Finance Department of the Government of India. In 1895, the Statistical Branch was converted into a full-fledged Statistical Bureau embracing subsequently, within its function the task of dissemination of commercial

intelligence in 1905. Functions and activities of the Bureau were carried out through two well-defined wings namely, Commercial Intelligence and Statistics putting both under an organisation entitled Department of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics headed by the Director General. The Director General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics until 1914 was responsible for the compilation and publication of almost all the principal statistical information on demography, crop production and prices, rainfall, industrial production, education, health and hygiene, mining, roads and communications, and other subject matters. In April 1914, a separate Directorate of Statistics came into being. Subsequently, the Directorate of Statistics and the Commercial Intelligence Department were merged into a single organisation, which was renamed as the Directorate of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics in January 1925.

6. The first complete Population Census was conducted in 1881 on a uniform basis throughout the country. Since then the census is being conducted regularly after every ten years. For this purpose, a Census Commissioner was appointed by the Government before each census assisted by Provincial Superintendents and District Census Officers. Only in 1948 following a Census Act, a permanent Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner was created.

7. In 1925, the Economic Enquiry Committee was set-up to enquire into 'the question of adequacy of the statistical data available and the desirability and possibility of supplementing it, and of undertaking an economic enquiry'. The Committee recommended that the Central and Provincial Governments should come under the supervision of one central authority that would act as the adviser to the Government in all statistical matters. The Committee supported the placing of the entire statistical organisation on a statutory basis by enacting a Census and Statistics Act.

8. The development of statistics as an essential part of Government administration compartmentalised the content of statistics in many sectors and fields according to the various Government departments, which dealt with them individually. However, the administrators were fully aware that if all these statistics were viewed as a single body of information, they would create greater and better knowledge about the conditions of life of the Indian people than what they could convey when viewed in isolation. The Indian Economic Enquiry Committee (1925) recommended the establishment of a Central Statistical Bureau, along with similar Provincial Statistical Bureaux, whose "aim was to provide a common purpose and a central thinking office on the subject of Statistics". It also recommended legislation to place the whole Statistical Organisation on a legal basis and thus to ensure or facilitate the collection of current economic data from individuals and firms. The Government of India did not accept these recommendations.

9. The Committee appointed by the Government of India in 1934 under Messrs. Bowley and Robertson, for facilitating a further study of economic problems in India, was required, by one of its terms of reference, to make recommendation about the organisation of a Central Statistical Department. The two experts were clear that there should be in each major Province a whole time Statistician who would cooperate with the Central Director of Statistics and who

would be as nearly independent of departmental control as administrative requirements permitted. The creation of the Central Economic Intelligence Organisation, under the Economic Adviser, and the emergence of the Department of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics were the results of these recommendations. Similar developments followed in the Provinces and the United Provinces Government was the first to set up a Department of Economics and Statistics in 1942. The Government of Bombay followed by the establishment of its Bureau of Economics and Statistics in 1946. Only after India became independent did the Government of India establish a Central Statistical Unit (1949), which was later (1951) converted into the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) and the Department of Statistics, which constitute presently the National Statistical Organisation (NSO) of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

10. The outbreak of the War in 1939 gave a fillip to the development of statistics to meet the requirements of the Government. In 1945, the Government of India set up an Inter-Departmental Committee with the Economic Adviser to the Government of India as Chairman to consider the statistical material available and to make recommendations for filling up of the gaps, and for improvement in the existing organisations. Among the organisational recommendations was a scheme coupled with the formation of a Central Statistical Office for coordination, the institution of a statistical cadre, establishment of Statistical Bureaus at the Headquarters of State Governments and the preparation of overall statistics for the entire country.

11. Professor P.C. Mahalanobis, who is regarded as a pioneer in both theoretical and professional statistics, was appointed as the first statistical adviser to the Cabinet, Government of India in January 1949. He was the architect of the statistical system of independent India. Professor P. V. Sukhatme, as Statistical Adviser to the Ministry of Agriculture, was responsible for the development of Agricultural Statistics.

12. The coming of the era of developmental planning in India, gave significant impetus to the development of statistics. Important phases of this development are enumerated below:

- (a) A nucleus statistical unit was set up at the Centre in the Cabinet Secretariat in 1949. This unit was developed later on in 1951 into the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO). The main responsibility assigned to the CSO was to bring about coordination of statistical activities among various statistical agencies in the Central Government and of Statistical Bureaus of State Governments, which was set up for similar coordination of activities of statistical agencies at the State level.
- (b) A National Income Committee was appointed in 1949 to work out a system for reliable estimation of national income.
- (c) The National Sample Survey (NSS) came into being in 1950 to collect information through sample surveys on a variety of socio-economic aspects.

- (d) In 1954, the National Income Unit was transferred from the Ministry of Finance to the CSO and a new Unit for Planning Statistics was set up.
- (e) In 1957, the subject of Industrial Statistics was transferred from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to the CSO.
- (f) In April 1961, the Department of Statistics was set up in the Cabinet Secretariat and the CSO became a part of it.
- (g) In 1972, a Computer Centre in the then Department of Statistics was set up.
- (h) In 1973, the Department of Statistics became a part of the Ministry of Planning.
- (i) In February 1999, the Department of Statistics and the Department of Programme Implementation were merged and named as the Department of Statistics and Programme Implementation under Ministry of Planning and Programme Implementation.
- (j) In October 1999, the Department of Statistics and Programme Implementation was declared as the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoS&PI).

13. The Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) was registered on 28 April 1932 at Calcutta as a non-profit-distributing learned society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, with Professor P.C. Mahalanobis as its founder Director. This was set up to carry out research, teaching, training and project activities, and it gradually became an important part of the statistical system of India, through its pioneering work on large-scale sample surveys, design of agricultural experiments, statistical quality control, planning for national development and use of electronic computers in statistical work. By an Act of Parliament, the Institute was declared as an "Institute of National Importance" in 1959 and the right to hold examinations and award degrees and diplomas in Statistics was conferred on it.

B. AN OVERVIEW OF PRESENT INDIAN STATISTICAL SYSTEM

1. The Indian Statistical System functions within the overall administrative set up of the country. India has a federal structure of Government. The division of responsibility for administration between the Union Government and the State Governments is on the basis of three-fold classification of all subjects, namely, the Union List, the State List, and the Concurrent List. The last category represents the areas where both the Union and State Governments can operate. The subject Statistics is in this list. There is a further division of

responsibility, by subjects or groups of subjects, among the different Ministries/Departments of the Union Government and among the Departments of State Governments, on the basis of their administrative functions.

2. In accordance with this structure, the Indian Statistical System is largely decentralised with elements of central supervision. All-India large-scale statistical operations, such as Population Census, Economic Census, Agricultural Census and Livestock Census, and nation-wide sample surveys, including the Annual Survey of Industries and the Socio-Economic Surveys, as well as compilation of macro-economic aggregates like national accounts, All-India Price Indices and industrial production, are mainly Central activities, with substantial involvement of State agencies in data collection. The State Governments and statistical organisations of the States also collect and generate data on a number of variables.

3. The Central Government acts as the coordinating agency for presentation of statistics on an all-India basis even in fields where the States have the primary authority and responsibility for collection of statistics. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation is the nodal agency for all statistical activities at all-India level. The State Directorates of Economics and Statistics (DESS) carry out the responsibility of coordination of all statistical activities at the State level and keeping liaison with the MOSPI for the purpose of coordination at all-India level, and for maintaining norms and standards in the field of official statistics.

Statistical System at the Centre

4. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation is the nodal agency for planning and facilitating the integrated development of the statistical system in the country, and to lay down norms & standards in the field of official statistics, evolving concepts, definitions, classification and methodologies of data collection, processing and release of results. The Ministry has two wings, one relating to Statistics and the other is Programme Implementation. The Statistics Wing called National Statistical Organisation (NSO) consists of the Central Statistics Office (CSO), the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), the Computer Centre and Coordination & Publication Division. The Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), which is a premier statistical institute, receives budgetary support from the MOSPI.

5. **CSO** : The CSO, headed by a Director General, consists of five Divisions, namely, the National Accounts Division (NAD), the Economic Statistics Division (ESD), the Social Statistics Division (SSD), the Training Division and the Coordination & Publication Division (CAP). The CSO has an Industrial Statistics Wing, namely, the CSO-IS Wing, which is located at Kolkata.

6. The Central Statistical Office is responsible for coordination of statistical activities in the country, and for evolving and maintaining statistical standards. Its activities include National Income Accounting; conduct of Annual Survey of Industries, Economic Censuses and its follow up surveys, compilation of Index of Industrial Production, as well as Consumer Price Indices, Gender Statistics, imparting training on Official Statistics, Five Year Plan work relating to Development of Statistics in the States and Union Territories; dissemination of statistical

information, work relating to trade, energy, construction, and environment statistics, revision of National Industrial Classification, etc.

7. **NSSO:** The NSSO functions under the overall direction of a Steering Committee with requisite independence and autonomy in the matter of collection, processing and publication of NSS data. In addition to the non-official Chairman, the Steering Committee is composed of academicians, data users from Central and State Government departments and senior officers of the Ministry. The NSSO is headed by the Director General and Chief Executive Officer (DG&CEO), who is also the Member-Secretary of the Steering Committee.

8. The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) carries out socio-economic surveys, undertakes field work for the Annual Survey of Industries and follow-up surveys of Economic Census, sample checks on area enumeration and crop estimation surveys and prepares the urban frames useful in drawing of urban samples, besides collection of price data from rural and urban sectors. The major activities of the NSSO pertain to Survey Design, Field Operations, Processing of data collected and releasing of the results based on surveys.

9. **Computer Centre:** The Computer Centre handles the data processing jobs of the MOSPI, provides training to statistical personnel on software, maintain the MOSPI's website and the National Data Warehouse of Official Statistics.

10. **Coordination and Publication Division(CAP):** This Division is responsible for coordination for the National Statistical Organisation with its two attached offices viz. the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) as also with Central Ministries/Departments of Government of India. It is also responsible for coordination with State Governments/ State statistical agencies.

11. **National Statistical Commission(NSC):** Through the Government of India Resolution of 1st June 2005, Government has set up a Commission, namely, the National Statistical Commission (NSC) consisting of a part-time Chairperson, and four part-time Members, one each from the fields of economic statistics, social and environment statistics, censuses and surveys, and national accounts and state statistical systems. The Secretary, Planning Commission is also a Member in ex-officio capacity. The Chief Statistician of India serves as the Secretary to the NSC. The mandate of the NSC is to serve as a nodal and empowered body for all core statistical activities of the country, to evolve, monitor and enforce statistical priorities and standards and to ensure statistical coordination.

12. **Legal Support for Collection of Data:** The Central Government's Allocation of Business Rules, 1961 (as amended from time to time) provides for the roles and responsibilities of the MOSPI. The main Statistics Act under which data is collected by the MOSPI is the 'Collection of Statistics Act, 2008'. The other most important Act for collection of statistics on demographic aspects of population is the 'Population Census Act 1948', which is administered by the Office of the Registrar General of India, functioning under the Ministry of Home Affairs. Besides these two important Acts, there are a number of Acts, Rules and Procedures being administered by

various administrative agencies on their subjects, through which statutory returns are collected by these Ministries/Departments.

13. Central Ministries / Departments: Besides the NSO at the Centre, most of the Ministries / Departments of the Government of India have either statistical divisions or statistical cells for all the statistical activities of the Ministry / Department. These Divisions/Cells are mostly manned by officers belonging to two organised Central Services- the Indian Statistical Service (ISS) and the Subordinate Statistical Service (SSS). The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation is the Cadre Controlling Authority for both these Services, which provides another layer of coordination. Furthermore, these Statistical Divisions/Cells are headed by senior level statistical functionaries of the ISS at the JAG / SAG level for effective coordination with NSO.

14. Statistical System in the States / UTs

The Directorates of Economics and Statistics (DESS) in the States / UTs act as the nodal agencies for coordination of all statistical activities in the States/UTs. While most of the States / UTs have been formally declared by the State Governments as the Nodal Agencies on all statistical activities, a few though not yet formally declared, act as coordinating agency on statistical matters in the State/UT. Most of the States / UTs have District Statistical Offices (DSOs) which act as the field offices of the DESS for collection / compilation of statistical data in the districts. The DESS perform almost the same functions in the States / UTs as the NSO at the Centre viz. bringing out some key statistics, coordination with the Central and State statistical agencies, dissemination of statistics, etc.