

# A new look at national security

Increased outlay on the social sector is the best antidote against the rising trend of violence, says Uttam Gupta

**T**HE Human Development Report (HDR) for 1994 has ranked India 134 from amongst 173 nations in respect of the human development index (HDI). HDI is a composite index of human welfare and measures besides the level of income, the life expectancy and the educational attainment. Interestingly, Pakistan is a shade better with a ranking of 132. China has done much better, being placed 93rd in the list.

The HDR assumes special significance in the context of the agenda that it sets for the World Summit on Social Development to be held in March, 1995, in Copenhagen. The agenda enjoins upon the developed countries certain responsibilities when it commends that 20 per cent of donor aid be allocated for providing basic education, primary health care, safe drinking water and essential family planning services in the developing countries. It also seeks to promote the cause of improving human development through a globally administered tax on "speculative movement of international funds" aimed at raising resources for a global human security fund.

Additionally, the HDR has called upon countries of the South Asia region to launch an initiative for arms reduction, specifically urging India and Pakistan to pledge a cut in their defence spending and divert resources for human development. But, a more generic issue was raised by the report when it observed that "those countries which ignore security of their people, were unable to protect security of their nations."

The issue that we must face here is not only development per se, but, development that leads to improvement in the quality of life. Although, the successive five year plans may have religiously emphasised on the latter as the primary goal, the actual working of the economy has reflected a thrust on the former only. How else, one would explain the increasing inequalities of income, failure to meet the targets of removing poverty and unemployment and provisioning for basic social services even during the decade of 80s when overall GDP growth has been fairly satisfactory at well above 5 per cent.

In the emerging dispensation in the 90s, we are being told, and with greater thrust than ever before, that unless there is development and

additional wealth is created, there will not be enough to distribute. Consequently, it would be impossible to improve the lot of the poor and raise their standard of living. In this context, Dr Manmohan Singh has opined that an overall GDP growth of above 6 per cent would automatically help in alleviating poverty and unemployment by the turn of the century.

Further unfolding its intentions in the context of implementing the economic reforms programme, the government has decided to withdraw from all areas of development activity except the social services. But before we

In fact, during the 80s the World Bank's lending programme had already changed drastically from financing industrial projects to supporting development of social services.

The key problem has been one of ineffective and improper use of funds, large scale misappropriation and disproportionately high expenditure on the carriers of the services rather than on the latter itself.

That being the ground reality, it would be unrealistic to expect a qualitative improvement in the state of affairs, in case the state were to concentrate only on providing the

have high levels of income and wealth, too, exists. The increasing acts of violence, terrorism and, of late, even abduction of the big wigs and their dear ones is not an isolated phenomenon. It would be a serious mistake not to perceive this in the context of widening economic disparities on the one hand and absolute impoverishment of an increasingly large number of people on the other.

Most governments in the developing countries, India being no exception, are spending huge sums on police and military for dealing with the consequences of such social discontent manifesting as endless agitations, strikes and even civil strife. So much so, even the private businessmen and industrialists in India are now spending big amounts on maintaining their personal security. It is certainly not an insurmountable task to attack the root cause of the problem by making the contemporary targets of law and order enforcement agencies partners in the process of development. A positive approach has to involve less spending on battle weapons and the police/army, and more on human development.

A three-fold strategy would be necessary to improve our records in regard to human development. First, the budget allocation for social services, to begin with, should be raised to 10 per cent, if not 20 per cent as recommended by the UNDP.

Second, instead of assigning to itself the task of spending the money, the voluntary agencies/NGOs should be roped in for carrying out the job in a professional manner. The government's role should be confined to selecting the best implementing agencies and exercising overall monitoring and surveillance to prevent the possible misuse of funds. If the job is undertaken with devotion and sincerity of purpose, there is no reason why the government-funded NGOs/VOs cannot run educational institutions or hospitals for the common man as efficiently and effectively as the private-run bodies.

Thirdly, through suitable change of rules including legislative enactments, it should be possible for the government to facilitate flow of international funding directly to the agencies implementing the projects. Apart from increasing/broadening the fund base, this would also solve the present problem of non-utilisation of international assistance.

delve this mindset, an introspection is necessary as to why the present state of education, health services or drinking water facilities or even housing have reached a point of degradation where the common man, for whom these are meant, are made to feel that they better go to the private provider of services, if they could afford it.

A cursory glance through plan documents, including the state plans and the election manifestoes of political parties, would show that funding has never been a major problem. Similarly, an analysis of lending, including outright grants by donors and multilateral funding institutions, would reveal that bulk of it has been in the social

basic services. In such a scenario, it is more likely that the administration of these services will only deteriorate further as more of hurdles would come in the way. All this will necessarily follow unless the attitude of the bureaucracy is transformed from one of exercising authority to selflessly serving the common man.

The disadvantaged or those belonging to the backward class suffer in a fundamental way from human insecurity. This is so because unlike the developed countries, access to basic services in India i.e., education, shelter, health care, etc are all dependent on the income level.

Indeed, if this number is large, which is the case in India, a looming threat to the security of those who

