Imbalance in Social Indicators

Generally, a higher percentage of educated population is viewed as a powerful indicator of economic development. Literacy is taken as the common indicator of achievement of a country in meeting the challenge of socio-economic deprivation.

Two variables, *viz.*, quantity of education and quality of education, are useful for measuring the socio-economic status of a country/region. While the quantity of education is measured in terms of a minimum of ten years of schooling, the quality of education is measured with the help of two indicators, *viz.*, teacher-pupil ratio and literacy rate. Developed economies show a higher percentage in terms of quantity as well as quality.

The quality of health care services and access to such facilities by common citizens strongly suggest the levels of economic development attained by a region or country. Developed economies are in a better position to spend money for providing safe drinking water, a pollution-free atmosphere, and education for enhancing social awareness *vis-a-vis* common practices of hygiene. The developing or backward regions, on the other hand, experience more morbidity as well as mortality due to lack of health awareness among people and the absence of basic public health care facilities.

Health and public services indicators include data on intake of calorie per person, number of hospital-bed per person, number of doctors per 1000 population and the average life expectancy of people.

The term 'epidemiology' refers to the occurrence, distribution and control of disease. Developing countries, mostly passing through the first and second stages of demographic transition, experience infectious diseases. On the contrary, people of developed countries mostly suffer from circulatory and degenerative diseases like cardiovascular diseases, cancer, obesity etc. The transition from infectious to degenerative diseases experienced by a country during its journey of economic advancement is called epidemiological transition.

A high incidence of infectious diseases like malaria, cholera, typhoid and plague suggests low level of sanitation and health awareness coupled with poor health care infrastructure. On the other hand, degenerative diseases, heart disease for example, suggest a lifestyle with emphasis on material achievement and hard work and

associated stress. This is typical of the developed countries of Western Europe and North America.

Although different indicators may highlight the levels of development in different countries or regions of the world, it would be a folly to consider any one indicator for measuring the stages of development; a country may easily perform well in the field of education and health care but lag behind in gross domestic production, e.g., the state of Kerala in India, or countries like Cuba and Sri Lanka. So, various indicators need to be considered to get a complete picture of development.