

Hospital care is also provided free of charge to people needing it in these countries. Patients may be required to pay for their medicines as in Canada and Britain but there too the charges are waived for children and the elderly.

Those who have argued against the state providing social services in Pakistan have pointed out that the developed states of the West introduced their social security net only after they had reached a respectable level of economic development and could effect a redistribution of wealth without impeding economic growth. The champions of the marketplace in Pakistan have also pointed to the existence of a private sector in education and health in all these countries mentioned above.

But such comparisons are misleading, given the contrast in their conditions. The aid-giving agencies which have been insisting on the withdrawal of subsidies for various services are trapping us permanently in a bog of poverty and underdevelopment. Since the process of structural readjustment was undertaken, the country has been retreating in the social sector.

Poverty has been on the rise. The number of illiterates has increased and the standards of education in public sector institutions have fallen. The mortality rate has also gone up, as a number of diseases have been visibly on the increase. In these circumstances when the 'enabling factors' are on the decline can economic growth ever take place?

It is a pity that the crunch has come at a time when many other factors have added up to create a crisis in the social sector. The high birth rate has left the country with a massive population of 150 million of whom 46 millions subsist on less than one dollar a day.

Apart from the population size, which is a testimony to the failure of our family planning programme, there are other factors which have cumulatively created the present crisis. They are the aging of the population, the increase in the incidence of many diseases, the change in people's lifestyles, the state's failure to attend to public hygiene and sanitation, environmental pollution and other ecological factors. All these have added to the burden of disease in the country.

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private sector schools and hospitals. But they should at least provide reasonably good services. It may be pointed out that in Germany and Britain the ratio of children in state-funded and private schools is 99:01 and 93:07 respectively, when in Pakistan it is 85:15. Although it is widely admitted that private institutions have a higher standard state-funded schools and hospitals. But they should at least provide reasonably good services. It may be pointed out that in Germany and Britain the ratio of children in state-funded and private schools is 99:01 and 93:07 respectively, when in Pakistan it is 85:15. Although it is widely admitted that private institutions have a higher standard

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The next step would be to mobilize additional funds. There are two sources which could be tapped. One, the government should cut down its defence spending — especially on its nuclear programme which is a white elephant for a country with people as uneducated and in such poor health as Pakistan — and divert these funds to the social sector. Two, resources can be raised from public donors and philanthropists as many institutions are already doing successfully.

It might appear paradoxical that a society notorious for tax evasion should donate so generously to charitable causes. But the fact is that institutions with a reputation for delivering — the Edhi Foundation, for instance — do mobilize voluntary donations without much difficulty. The key precondition is that the people should be convinced that their money is being put to good use and is not being swindled — as is the general impression about the taxes collected by the government.

Once the government has established its credibility, the private sector should be induced into the programme to provide social protection to the people. This can be in the form of trust hospitals and schools which could be encouraged by the government and provided subsidies and grants to enable them to keep their charges low and affordable. But that should not mean that their standards should be poor.

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