Every society has to strive to satisfy the needs of its members. Now, these needs may vary from person to person and from time to time. They may range from basic physiological needs to needs at a higher level of sophistication. Moreover, as one set of minimum level is attained, it will be necessary to fix a higher minimum level. With further development, the minimum standard will gradually rise. But, it is to be considered if the members of the community at the lowest hierarchy get the most essential requirements of life. Taking a general view, the minimum needs may be considered in terms of security from economic want. Still, mere survival cannot be the only goal of the process of development. The needs go beyond getting adequate food, clothing and housing. Access to education, employment and other economic and social opportunities is also necessary for a person to participate effectively as a member of the society.

In line with the above, it may be possible to indicate three broad areas of minimum needs -

(1) Personal consumption or biological needs like food, clothing and housing.

(2) Access to public goods and services like health measures, educational facilities, physical infrastructure.

(3) Access to economic opportunities like employment, income, etc.
The quality and quantity of food will determine the productivity and efficiency of the people. Clothing and shelter are, of course, essential for human existence. Health care and education are necessary for increasing the efficiency of the individual and as a measure for development of human resources. Access to employment and other economic opportunities implies physiological as well as psychological satisfaction of a minimum need. Productive employment means income for the individual to meet his personal consumption needs. At the same time, it stimulates growth in output of goods and services which are required for his consumption needs.

To be operative, the minimum needs should be expressed in concrete targets. For minimum requirement of food, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has developed a target structure based on calorie requirement in various regions. There may be refinements in the targets by introduction of protein requirement, calorie required by a particular occupation etc. Housing requirements may be measured, say, by the number of rooms per family of five. Refinements like inclusion of toilet, piped water, electricity connection etc., may be added. Targets for education and health measures are also amenable to quantification. Targets for school enrolment up to a certain age may be fixed. Other indicators like teacher-pupil ratio and percentage of passes of the students may be included. Data regarding adult literacy rate should also be available.

To set targets for minimum health needs, indicators
on ratios of inhabitants per physician, of inhabitants per hospital bed, death rate, infant mortality rate may be considered. The average distance to be covered to reach the nearest medical unit may also be a useful indicator. Target for physical infrastructure may be measured in terms of investment per person. But, it does not indicate the spatial distribution of the investment. This distribution is to be attempted in particular areas or groups depending on the status of development.

It is difficult to fix any norm for productive employment. Income from employment does not necessarily reflect the total earnings or the purchasing power of the individual unless access to land, capital and other productive assets is taken into account. A study of the land tenure system, the degree of concentration of land holdings, rural indebtedness, industrial structure is, therefore, required. In this country, familywise data on these components are not yet adequate.

Once the minimum needs of the people are known the next step is to find out those persons or families whose minimum needs have not been satisfied. An income level may be fixed for the purpose as a first measure. The work will involve household survey, which has not been attempted in this country except in a few Blocks. Even then, it is well-established that vast majority of the people with inadequate income live in the rural sector. Again, among the rural poor, the main source of income is from agriculture. They are mostly concentrated on small holdings with low productivity.
Many of them are landless labourers who earn little and, that too, in the course of seasonal employment only.

In the urban sector, the poor are generally in jobs with low productivity. Many of the poor are in individual enterprise sector like street-hawking and trading, casual work etc., or in the family enterprise sector like traditional handicrafts or small industries. Migration of skilled and unskilled workers from the rural areas tends to make the jobs of the existing workers unstable and to lower their income further.

If a familywise survey is undertaken in the sector mentioned above it will be possible to identify a large majority of the people whose minimum needs have not been met.

The measures to secure the minimum needs for the poorest section of the population will depend on the stage of development of the country, the available resources, the regional imbalances the pattern of consumption and the productivity. The strategy will have to ensure -

(i) increase in income and productivity of the poorest section for making available the minimum consumption goods;

(ii) increase in minimum public services for this segment of population;

(iii) generation of overall growth simultaneously so that the minimum standard can be achieved and improved further.

Certain norms of attainment are required to be fixed and the schemes under the minimum needs programme should correspond
to a pre-determined time-frame. Otherwise, the purpose and proper
direction will be lost at the operational level.

It is beyond the scope of any philanthropic or social organi-
sation/organisations to carry out such a programme throughout the
country. These organisations may help in a particular sector, like
distribution of food articles, and in particular areas. But, the
Government of the land has to step in to execute this countrywide
programme. It will obviously work through its officials who should
be suitably oriented for this purpose. In India, the administration
was previously used to collection of revenue and maintenance of law
and order. After independence, some efforts have been made to convert
it to a development administration. For ensuring minimum needs to the
poorest segment of society further re-orientation of outlook of the
administrators will be an essentiality. As most of the officials
of this country come from the upper and the middle classes and from
urban areas this change of outlook will be all the more necessary
if any impact on the poor, 75% of whom live in rural areas, is at
all to be made. Again, it is to be considered that anything imposed
from outside, even in form of benefits, will be looked upon with
suspicion and distrust. Hence, local participation of the population
in the execution of the programme has to be sought for. It is quite
true that in many areas of this country the villagefolk, most of
whom are illiterate, are not even aware of their minimum needs and
are too unorganised to take part in the execution of the programme.
In that case, it is the duty of the Government to organise the unorganised. These people, with their knowledge of the locality, may help the officials to a great extent. Very often, "the pressure from below", as Myrdal terms it, will ensure prompt and effective action on behalf of the officials.

A view of the evolution of the concept of minimum needs in this country and the ultimate emergence of the Minimum Needs Programme at the beginning of the Fifth Five-Year Plan may now be taken. The emphasis in the earlier Plans was on growth of the infrastructures. While there was an increase in national income, it did not have any automatic distributive effect. The per capita income of the population did not reflect the actual condition of the people in the lower strata of society as benefits from growth tended to be concentrated in the upper and middle classes, who are also the more vocal section of the population. Priorities on development of infrastructures meant gradual diminution of the percentage of total Plan outlay on social services. Planners were caught in the controversy between rapid growth irrespective of creation of imbalances among the various sections of population and growth with social justice. Outlays specially for the poorest section (like rural housing, slum clearance etc.) came to be provided in the subsequent Plans till a full-fledged Programme on minimum needs was introduced in the Fifth Plan. The following paragraphs give the saga of the Plans in the context of the Minimum Needs Programme.
The social and economic policy of our land was expected to take shape from the following Articles of the Constitution of India.

Article 38. - The State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting, as effectively as it may, a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of national life.

Article 39. - The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing -

(a) that the citizens, men and women, equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood;

(b) that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good;

(c) that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment.

Article 41. - The State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want.

Article 45. - The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.
Article 46. - The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

Two Articles, viz., Article 38 and Article 39 were even mentioned in the resolution of 15th March, 1950 setting up the Planning Commission. Seemingly with the above principles in view, the First Five Year Plan was launched as a first step, through a series of Plans, towards fulfilment of these aspirations put up before the people. The objective of the First Five-Year Plan was "to raise the standard of living of the people and to open to them opportunities for a richer and more varied life". Now, on the eve of the First Five-Year Plan the country was deficit in foodgrains, improvement of agricultural productions, therefore, received highest priority. The following table shows the pattern of sectoral allocation in the First Five-Year Plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of the total outlay as originally proposed.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Agriculture and Community Development            : 16.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Irrigation and Power                              : 28.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Industries                                       : 8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Transport and Communications                      : 24.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Social Services(including miscellaneous):         : 24.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During this Plan period allocations for certain sectors under Social Services were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Sector</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Provision (Centre &amp; States)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare of Backward Classes</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Welfare</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour and Labour Welfare</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though seven percent of total Plan outlay went to education, substantial improvement in this direction was not achieved. Compulsory education, which had been introduced in 396 urban areas before the Plan, was in force in 1955-56 in 1082 urban areas. Corresponding increase in the number of villages was from 20,261 to 38,726. The rate of advancement in elementary education will be evident from the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-11</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen that emphasis was not certainly on social services and the country was still a long way from achieving the objectives set forth in the Constitution. It was hoped by the

Planners that the implementation of Plan programmes should not result in concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. Steps like abolition of zamindary system and adoption of certain fiscal measures were thought of in this connection. Progressive expansion of public sector and control over private sector were expected to prevent concentration of the means of production within small groups.

The overall results of the First Five-Year Plan have been described in the document on the Second Five-Year Plan by the Planning Commission. It has been stated that the national income increased by about 18 percent over these five years. Foodgrains production had gone up by 20 percent. The level of industrial production was 22 percent higher in 1955 than in 1951. But, there is no indication about distribution of these benefits among the various strata of population.

The Second Five-Year Plan was to carry forward the process started by the First Plan. In the meantime, Parliament had adopted a resolution in December, 1954 containing the following clauses:


(1) The objective of economic policy should be a Socialistic Pattern of Society; and

(2) Towards this end the tempo of economic activity in general and industrial development in particular should be stepped up to the maximum possible extent.
Under this general framework the principal objectives of the Second Five-Year Plan were set out as follows:

(a) a sizeable increase in national income so as to raise the level of living in the country;
(b) rapid industrialisation with particular emphasis on the development of basic and heavy industries;
(c) a large expansion of employment opportunities; and
(d) reduction of inequalities in income and wealth and a more even distribution of economic power.

It appears that while mentioning unemployment problem the Planning Commission was really thinking in terms of increased pace of development in the country. The objective of the Planning Commission will be clear from the following:

"Basically, it has to be remembered, unemployment in an under-developed economy is only another aspect of the problem of development. The same factors which limit the scale of effort a community can make by way of increasing the rate of development limit also the advance in the direction of employment. The plan contemplates a large expansion in construction activity both in the public and private sectors, and it should be possible to vary the volume of such activity within limits in response to the changing requirements of the employment situation."

Simultaneously, it was stated that "while it is imperative that in a country with an abundant supply of manpower, labour-intensive modes of production should receive preference all along the line, it is nonetheless true that labour-saving devices in particular lines are often a necessary condition for increasing employment opportunities in the system as a whole".

The problem of inequalities in income and wealth was also discussed at the time of formulation of the Second Five Year Plan. It was assumed that reduction of inequalities was to proceed from two ends. On the one hand, measures were to be taken to reduce excessive concentration of wealth and income at higher levels through various fiscal measures, and on the other, institutional changes including control of private monopoly and expansion of public sector were to be effected for disappearance of inequalities. In the course of discussions on this aspect a particularly significant remark was made by the Planning Commission. It was stated that "It need hardly be stated that in this approach a floor to incomes, or in other words, a guarantee of a certain minimum national standard of the essentials of civilised life is no less important than a ceiling at top levels."

So, a mention about certain minimum national standard of essentials had now been made. But, where were the programmes to guarantee this standard? What was this standard after all? The document of the Planning Commission on Second Five-Year Plan does not proceed beyond just mentioning the minimum national standard. National Development Council, did, however, discuss regional imbalances in development and recommended decentralisation of industrial production, location of new enterprises in different parts of the country and even schemes of migration and settlement from more or less densely populated areas to promote greater mobility of labour.

The sectoral emphasis during the Second Five-Year Plan period may be ascertained from the following table :-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of total outlay</th>
<th>Centre &amp; States.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Agriculture and Community Development</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Irrigation &amp; Power</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Industry &amp; Mining</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Transport &amp; Communications</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Social Services</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Miscellaneous</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Allocations in respect of certain programmes under Social Services were as follows :-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of total outlay</th>
<th>Centre &amp; States.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Education</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Health</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Housing</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Welfare of Backward classes</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Social Welfare</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Labour and Labour Welfare</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Special schemes related to educated unemployment</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It has been observed that Education had 7 percent of total provision in the First Five-Year Plan. But, in the Second Five-Year Plan the allocation for Education was only 6.4 percent of the total Plan outlay. Similarly, the figure for Health came down from 5.9 percent in the First Five-Year Plan to 5.7 percent in the Second Five-Year Plan. Of course, investment in real terms had increased. Targets for elementary education were set out as follows :-

Number of pupils as percentage of number of children in corresponding age-groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age-group</th>
<th>1955-56 Estimates</th>
<th>1960-61 Targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-11</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The targets do not appear to be over-ambitious considering a five-year period.

An indication of the increase in health measures was also given in the Second Plan document. It was estimated that in 1951 there were 8600 medical institutions in the country with about 1,13,000 beds. In 1955-56, the number of such institutions was approximately 10,000 with about 1,25,000 beds. Thus, during the First Plan period there was an increase of 16 percent in institutions and 10 percent in beds. At the end of the Second Plan the number of institutions was likely to be about 12,600 and the number of beds about 1,55,000 showing an increase of 26 percent in institutions and 24 percent in hospital beds. Information regarding the particulars of population who were generally availing themselves of these facilities was not, however, forthcoming.

In the formulation of the Third Five-Year Plan the following aims were kept in view:

(1) to secure an increase in national income of over 5 percent per annum, the pattern of investment being designed also to sustain this rate of growth during subsequent Plan periods;

(2) to achieve self-sufficiency in foodgrains and increase agricultural production to meet the requirements of industry and exports;
(3) to expand basic industries like steel, chemical industries, fuel and power and establish machine-building capacity, so that the requirements of further industrialisation can be met within a period of ten years or so mainly from the country's own resources;
(4) to utilise to the fullest possible extent the manpower resources of the country and to ensure a substantial expansion in employment opportunities; and
(5) to establish progressively greater equality of opportunity and to bring about reduction in disparities in income and wealth and more even distribution of economic power.

Thus the emphasis was on industries as in the Second Five-Year Plan. Again, as in the case of Second Plan, note was taken of the inequalities in income and wealth. However, the planners were more specific in the Third Plan. They acknowledged that 
"to provide the good life to the four hundred million people of India and more is a vast undertaking, and the achievement of this goal is far off." The Planning Commission was of opinion that 
"In advanced countries the development of education and other social services has played a large part in ensuring greater equality of opportunity to different sections of the population and greater

15. Ibid, Page 11.
Social mobility. Social services have also helped to bring about a measure of redistribution of income and provide the basic necessities. In India too, the expansion of social services will exert a similar influence, specially through the extension of free and universal education at the primary level, provision of larger opportunities for vocational and higher education, grants of scholarships and other forms of aid, and improvement in conditions of health, sanitation, water supply and housing. Thus, programmes for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes and Castes and other backward classes, for the provision of minimum amenities in rural areas, for local development at the village level and for the housing of industrial workers and slum clearance and improvement, are to be viewed not merely as extensions of social services but as vital ingredients in the scheme of economic development. These and other social benefits have to be provided to a greater extent in the Third and subsequent Five-Year Plans than has been possible over the past decade.

Thus at this phase of planning the Planning Commission was not only conscious of the inequalities of income and wealth, but it also identified sectors like education, health, housing, sanitation, water-supply, slum clearance whose improvement formed the basis of provision of minimum needs to the population as well as for further economic development. What formed the targets of the respective minimum essentials still remained to be quantified. Even after a decade of planning it was felt that development programmes in various sectors would automatically provide employment to the lowest income groups to satisfy their minimum needs. This
conclusion becomes quite obvious from the following revealing statement, - "There must, therefore, be additional opportunities for work to enable the lowest income groups to earn enough through productive employment to meet their minimum needs. In the Third Plan, it is envisaged that, along with programmes of development for large and small industries, for agriculture and for economic and social services, there will also be a large-scale programme for rural works especially in densely populated regions and for periods of underemployment during the slack agricultural seasons."

It appears that the Planning Commission was caught between two alternatives. One was rapid economic development irrespective of benefits according to areas and communities. The other was balanced development throughout the country with benefits flowing to all areas and sections of population. In this connection, the following is particularly relevant. "Frequently, in the early phases of development, there is a dilemma to be faced: Whether it is better to concentrate on developing more favourably situated areas and thus securing quicker and larger returns from the investment, or to aim at more even development of the country, through greater attention to the more backward areas. Economic considerations have necessarily to be given importance, but certain social and regional aspects cannot be ignored. Indeed, as the economy develops, it becomes possible to provide for more intensive development in the less developed areas."

The above statement indicates the methodology adopted by

17. Ibid, Page 8.
The Planning Commission in formulation of successive Plans. In the Third Plan, the emphasis was, as expected, on industries and other sectors and not on social services. This will be evident from the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of total provision</th>
<th>(Centre &amp; States)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and Community Development</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major and medium irrigation</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village and small industries</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organised industry and minerals</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport and Communications</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social services and miscellaneous</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventories</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

100

Targets in respect of elementary education at the end of the Third Five Year Plan were set out as follows:

Number of pupils as percentage of number of children in corresponding age-groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age-Group</th>
<th>1965-66</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-11</td>
<td>90.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-14</td>
<td>39.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During this Plan, a provision of Rs.67 crores was made for Rural Water Supply. For slum clearance and improvement an amount of Rs.29 crores was provided. By the end of the Second Plan, 208 projects costing about Rs.19 crores and involving re-housing of 58,200 families living in slum conditions had been taken up.

19. Ibid, Page 580
20. Ibid, Page 654
21. Ibid, Page 687
It was during this Plan that an amount of Rs. 5 crores was proposed to be earmarked for securing house sites for landless agricultural workers. Thus, it was during the Third Plan that some of the minimum essentials were identified and provided for, at least with almost token amounts.

The basic aim of the Fourth Five-Year Plan was, again, "to raise the standard of living of the people, especially of the less privileged sections of society. Our planning should result not only in an integrated process of increased production, but rational distribution of the added wealth. The overriding inspiration must be a burning sense of social justice. While increased production is of the utmost importance, it is equally important to remove, or reduce, and prevent the concentration of wealth and economic power. The benefits of development should accrue in increasing measure to the common man and the weaker sections of society, so that the forces of production can be fully unleashed. A sense of involvement, of participation of the people as a whole, is vital for the success of any plan for rapid economic growth. This can only be evoked by securing social justice, by reducing disparities of income and wealth, and by redressing regional imbalances."

As regards inequality, Planning Commission admitted that, "available information does not indicate any trend towards reduction in the concentration of income and wealth. Nor is there any indication that there has been any lessening of disparity in the standards of living of various classes." While being aware of the income disparities.

and regional imbalances and the needs of the weaker sections of the society the Commission was still in a dilemma of either concentrating on growth of economic activity or earmarking a certain portion of the outlay for minimum needs of the common people at the expense of general growth. It was still of the view that "Growth and diversification of economic activity in an under-developed area can take place only if the infrastructure required for this is provided in an adequate measure and programmes for conservation and development of natural resources undertaken."

Allocation of the outlay in the public sector during the Fourth Five-Year Plan was made as follows:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage distribution.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Agriculture and allied sectors : 17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Irrigation and Flood Control : 6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Power : 15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Village and small industries : 1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Industry and minerals : 21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Transport and communications : 20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Education : 5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Scientific research : 0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Health : 2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Family Planning : 2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Water Supply and Sanitation : 2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Housing, urban and regional development : 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Welfare of backward classes : 0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Social Welfare : 0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Labour Welfare and craftsmen training : 0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Other programmes : 1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

100.00

Percentage of total outlay in the Fourth Plan for social services did not, therefore, show any increase over the Third Plan. In elementary education the targets in the Fourth Plan will be seen from the following table.

27. Ibid, Page 355.
Number of pupils as percentage of number of children in corresponding age-groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age-Group</th>
<th>1973-74 target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-11</td>
<td>99.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-14</td>
<td>54.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With increase in funds, bigger programmes on public health centres, rural water supply, slum improvement etc. were being taken though the percentage of outlay on these items did not rise.

Taking a rear view, it is found that the First and the Second Five-Year Plans were too busy building up infrastructures for rapid development to provide some minimum needs for the entire population, though the country chose to follow a socialistic pattern of society during the period. As already stated, in the First Plan the national income increased by 18 percent against a target of 12 percent. During the Second Plan the increase was 20 percent against a target of 25 percent. It was proposed to increase the national income by 34 percent (at 1960-61 prices) in the Third Plan. However, the national income actually rose by 20 percent in the first four years of the Third Plan and showed a decline of 5.6 percent in the last year. Amidst this rise in national income throughout the Plan periods the lot of the lowest strata of society did not change markedly for the better. Still, the Third Five-Year Plan made a break in this regard as some items of minimum needs were identified, as

28. Planning Commission, Third Five-Year Plan, Page 34.
29. Ibid, Page 75.
as already shown earlier. It was during this period that public interest was perhaps aroused for the first time on the extent of poverty prevalent in the country. Nehru/Lohia debate on the daily income took place at this time in Parliament. Among the important papers submitted during this period were the paper presented by the Perspective Planning Division of the Planning Commission in August, 1962 under the guidance of Pt. Ambar Pant and the paper presented by a Working Group on National Planning appointed in July, 1962. Mahalanabis Report (Part I) came out in 1964. The following came out in the recommendations of the reports of the Working Group and of the Perspective Planning Division -

1) The national minimum income for every household of five persons should be not less than Rs. 100/- per month or Rs. 20/- per capita. For urban areas, the figure should be Rs. 25/- to accommodate higher prices.

2) This national minimum excluded expenditure on health and education, both of which were expected to be provided by the State.

3) An element of subsidy on urban housing was recommended.

In the Fourth Five-Year Plan, there was still no comprehensive programme for minimum needs. Some special programmes for rural areas in the shape of Small Farmers Development Agency, Drought Prone Areas Programme, Rural Construction Works Programme etc. were, however, taken up for the benefit of landless labourers and marginal and small farmers.

Private per capita consumption of Rs.20/- per month at 1960-61 prices was deemed to be about Rs.40.6 at 1972-73 prices. Now, at the time of formulation of the draft Fifth Five-Year Plan it was observed that the bottom 30% of the population shared only 13.46% of total private consumption. If this share remained unchanged, the per capita consumption of the bottom 30% would rise from Rs.25/- per month (at 1972-73 prices) in 1973-74 to Rs.29/- in 1978-79, Rs.35/- in 1983-84 and Rs.38/- in 1985-86. Thus, even by the mid-eighties per capita consumption for the bottom 30% of the population would still be below the norm of Rs.40.6 per month. It was, therefore, clear to the planners that the level of consumption achieved by this segment of population at the end of the Fourth Five-Year Plan was incompatible with the goal of removal of poverty. By this time, the country had gone through four Five-Year Plans and another three Annual Plans between 1966-69. It was, therefore, considered that the economy of the country had then reached such a stage that emphasis on economic growth and on distribution of benefits of the Plan programmes could be given simultaneously. National Development Council at its 28th meeting on May 30 and 31, 1972 accordingly considered and decided on the following:

1) In elaborating our strategy of development in earlier Plan documents, we seem to have assumed that a faster rate of growth of national income will by itself create more and fuller employment and produce higher standards of living for the poor. We also seem to have assumed that for reduction of disparities in income and wealth the scope of redistributive policies is severely limited.

2) Available projections suggest that if one were to reply on growth alone without directly tackling the problem of unemployment and income distribution it may take another thirty or fifty years for the poorer sections of the people to reach the minimum consumption levels.

3) The economy has now reached a stage where larger availability of resources makes it possible to launch a direct attack on unemployment, under-employment and poverty and also assure adequate growth.

Even with larger employment opportunities it was felt that the poor would not be able to get within their earnings all the essential goods and services to ensure a minimum standard of living. It was, therefore, decided to supplement the measures for expanding employment with increase in social consumption up to a certain norm by making suitable investments on items like education, health, communication, housing, drinking water, nutrition and electricity.

It has been observed that concept of minimum needs came up occasionally during the formulation of the Second, Third and Fourth Five-Year Plans. But, it was not an altogether new concept in planning in this country. As early as in 1938 the National Planning Committee drew up specific norms and standards to be obtained for an individual.

These were:

1) Adequate food consumption for every individual amounting in calorie-intake to not less than 2400 calories.

2) Clothing consumption to be increased from 15 yards to 30 yards per person.

3) Minimum housing space per individual to be not less than 100 sq.ft. Adequate water supply, sanitation etc. were included along with housing.

4) Minimum education facilities for all, education being compulsory for children upto age of 14 years.

5) Distributive agencies to supply essential goods and services at subsidized rates.

6) Postal and allied facilities for communication, the norms being set at one telephone exchange for every 100 sq.miles of territory or every 100,000 of population, telephone facilities at the rate of 1 call per day per person at the prices suited to the common man and availability of postal communication so that every person can send or receive 10 letters a year.

7) Insurance to be provided as a Public Utility Service for all the normal contingencies of a working life. Individual life insurance should be redundant in a properly functioned planned economy.

8) Banking facilities, one for every 25,000 population or every 50 sq.miles.

9) Places providing food and lodging, as well as work, similarly organized and distributed all over the land at the ratio of 1 for every 1000 people.

10) Similar norms were to be laid out for medical and nursing attendance.

A notable feature of the above recommendations is that the National Planning Committee had been able to quantify certain minimum standard of requirements. After a gap of more than three decades, it was at the beginning of the Fifth Five-Year Plan that
The minimum needs were again quantified for the first time since the formulation of the Five-Year Plans. The distinguishing feature on this occasion is that the programmes were taken up in a comprehensive manner under the title of National Programme of Minimum Needs to be implemented during the Fifth Five-Year Plan period. It is not that some of these programmes were not implemented during the previous Plan periods. But, these programmes had been taken up in a sporadic manner without formulation of a comprehensive programme. The outlays for these programmes during the previous Plan periods were also too meagre to have any impact on the lower strata of the population. As already stated before, the previous plans attempted an indirect attack on poverty presuming that economic growth would automatically lead to raising of standards of living of the entire population. During the Fifth Plan period, a direct attack on poverty was made through this comprehensive programme of Minimum Needs which was to be executed along with the implementation of other sectoral programmes.

The first step in the formulation of the Minimum Needs Programme was to identify the areas of social consumption and to fix for these areas a certain norm of attainment by the end of the Fifth Five-Year Plan. Taking into consideration a minimum standard of living and the role played by the various facilities in sustaining and accelerating the process of development it was decided that attention should at first be focussed on the programmes relating to elementary education, rural roads, rural electrification, rural health, water supply, nutrition, provision of house sites and
improvement of slums. Now, the standard of the quality of life in a vast country like India varies from place to place and from people to people. The acceptability of a minimum standard in respect of health and education to a tribal people in a remote area in Bastar district may not be the same as in Kerala or West Bengal. Similarly, the requirements of facility in terms of roads in a hilly region may vary from those in the plains. It was impracticable for the Planning Commission to set different norms of minimum needs for different places. The Commission took into account these disparities between the places and decided on the targets which could be attained within the period of five years of the Fifth Plan.

The Planning Commission in the approach paper to the Fifth Plan published in January, 1973 proposed to make a provision of about Rs.3,300 crores in the Fifth Plan for the Minimum Needs Programme. The programmes envisaged were as follows:

1. Elementary Education:

The Planning Commission estimated that the likely enrolment at the end of the Fourth Plan would be 88% in age-group 6-11 and 40% in age-group 11-14. In the Fifth Plan it should be
possible to provide 100% facilities for children of the 6-11 age group and 60%-50% on the full time basis and 10% on part time basis for age group 11-14. This target was sought to be achieved by the provision of a primary school within a walking distance, that is, 1.5 km and a middle school within 5 k.m. of each village. Organisation of other facilities like construction of additional class rooms, Ashram schools for tribal children, supply of free text books and mid-day meals to the needy children were envisaged.

2. Public Health Programme.

Planning Commission took into consideration the disparities in the availability of facilities for public health, family planning, medical treatment etc. between rural areas and the urban areas and set the following target for the Fifth Plan :-

a) Establishment of one Primary Health Centre for each Community Development Block. It was supposed to cater to a population of 80,000 to 1 lakh.

b) Establishment of one Sub-Centre for every 10,000 of population.

c) Provision of drugs at the scale of Rs.12,000/- per annum for each Primary Health Centre and Rs.2,000/- per annum for each Sub-Centre.

d) Upgradation of one in every four Primary Health Centres to the status of 30-bed rural hospital with specialised services in surgery, medicine, gynaecology etc.

e) Making up of deficiency of buildings including residential quarters of Primary Health Centres and Sub-Centres.

Planning Commission estimated that about 150,000 villages out of a total of 567,000 villages suffered from scarcity of drinking water. In addition, there were villages with inadequate supply. It was, therefore, decided that the programme for rural water supply should cover the following categories:

a) Those who did not have an assured source of drinking water within a reasonable distance say, 1.6 km.

b) Those areas where sources of water supply are endemic to water-borne diseases like cholera etc.

c) Those areas which suffer from excess of salinity, iron and fluorides.

It was proposed to increase the expenditure on rural water supply to about Rs.550 crores during the Fifth Five-Year Plan.


It was decided to give concentrated attention to pregnant women, lactating mothers and children in the age group of 0-6 in tribal areas, urban slums and drought prone areas and to the school going children of the weaker sections. Supplementary feeding should be provided to the children in the pre-school age for 300 days while provision should be made for mid-day meals to be served in schools for 200 days in a year. It was estimated that it should be possible to cover about 11 million additional beneficiaries in the Fifth Plan. An outlay of Rs.500 crores was fixed in the Fifth Plan for nutrition programmes.
5. Rural Roads.

The target was to provide all weather roads by the end of the Fifth Five-Year Plan period to all villages with a minimum population of 1500 persons. In the hill areas or in coastal areas, where the population is relatively dispersed, it would be necessary to provide all-weather roads linking a cluster of villages having that minimum size. It was anticipated that the road length under the category of rural roads would increase by about 75,000km during the Fifth Plan period. It was decided that the rural roads programme would be formulated on the basis of the following principles:-

1) The alignment of roads would be determined in a manner which would link up largest number of villages with the minimum of road length;

ii) the specifications for rural roads would conform to the recommendations of the Committee of Chief Engineers and the cost would be kept within the parameters laid down by this Committee;

iii) the cost of land and earth-work would be contributed by the communities likely to benefit from the construction of rural roads;

iv) except in special circumstances, where the outlay for Minimum Needs may be utilised for the upgradation of existing kutcha tracks, all improvements and upgrading of existing kutcha roads will be provided for through the integration of the Minimum Needs Programme with the general programme of rural development in the State Plan;

v) only the expenditure on culverts, drainage works would be charged on the Minimum Needs Programme, cost of construction of minor and major bridges will be debited to general programme for rural development under the State Plan; and

vi) priority will be given to the allocation of resources out of the overall outlay for Minimum Needs Programme for covering
hilly, coastal and tribal areas.

6. Rural Electrification.

It was estimated by the Planning Commission that by the end of the Fourth Plan about 40% of the rural population would have electricity. There were, however, wide regional disparities. Therefore, the target for rural electrification was to extend the coverage to at least 30-40% of the rural population in every State. The broad principle for formulation of the programme of rural electrification was that only those States which did not reach coverage of 40% by the end of Fourth Plan would normally be eligible for allocation under the Minimum Needs Programme. In exceptional cases, however, some provision might be made to enable the States to provide adequately for the tribal and other backward pockets. Priority should also be given to centres where educational, health and communication facilities converge. It was expected that the programme for rural electrification would be integrated with the expansion of irrigation facilities.

7. House sites for rural landless.

A provision of about Rs.100 crores was made for this programme. There was little progress under this programme in the Fourth Plan and this provision was likely to ensure a substantial coverage of landless labourers in the States. The target was to provide yearly four million house sites during the Fifth Plan period.

8. Environmental improvement in slum areas.

The scheme was introduced towards the end of the Fourth Plan and it provided for financial assistance for expansion of water supply, sewerage, provision of community latrines etc., in slum areas. The
scheme was first extended to 11 cities with a population of 8 lakhs or more. Later on, it was further extended to 9 cities in the States which did not have towns of this population. During the last two years of the Fourth Plan an amount of about Rs.30 crores was estimated for this scheme resulting in benefit for about 3 million slum dwellers.

During the Fifth Plan this scheme was proposed to be extended to all towns with a population of 3 lakhs and more and at least in one town in the States which did not have a town of this population.

In the Approach Paper, the Planning Commission contemplated an outlay of Rs.3300 crores for the Programme. In the Draft Fifth Five-Year Plan the provision was reduced to Rs.2803.79 crores. A comparative picture of the proposed outlay for the Fifth Plan and the expenditure incurred during the Fourth Plan on the items relating to the Minimum Needs Programme is given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Expenditure in/Outlay in the Fourth Plan</th>
<th>Expenditure in/Outlay in the Fifth Plan</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Elementary education</td>
<td>225.88</td>
<td>451.51*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Rural health</td>
<td>22.79</td>
<td>291.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>530.20**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Rural water supply</td>
<td>165.11</td>
<td>554.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Rural roads</td>
<td>206.28</td>
<td>498.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>House sites for landless</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>107.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Slum improvement</td>
<td>6.91</td>
<td>94.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Rural electrification</td>
<td>427.11</td>
<td>276.03***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>1059.92</td>
<td>2803.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The components of the Minimum Needs Programme were thus already there in the Fourth Five-Year Plan. What was then the necessity of drawing up a composite Minimum Needs Programme in the Fifth Plan? The answer is that the related programmes in the earlier Plans had failed to make the desired impact. Some of the States did not give the programmes high priority because of the claim of other programmes on their resources. Decisions on the individual programmes were often taken without integrating the facilities in a comprehensive manner. The Minimum Needs Programme in the Fifth Plan envisages that the schemes in the Programme are integral parts of a package of facilities. It means that the villages having schools and Primary Health Centre should also be provided with roads, electricity and water-supply arrangements. Convergence of various facilities indicated the possibility of transforming some of these points ultimately into growth centres.

The Planning Commission expected that public resources would be allocated for only those items which could not be obtained by local initiative. It was anticipated that integrated planning of the schemes would bring about growth and create a feeling of participation in the process of development by all sections of the people.

The Minimum Needs Programme ensures flow of more resources to social services sector. The programmes in this sector have a role in distribution of income. While such distribution in the backward regions will reduce regional imbalances the distribution of income, with more income to backward and poorer classes, will lessen the
social tension which is apt to grow from concentration of income in a few hands of the upper echelon of society.

At the beginning of the Fifth Plan, self-sufficiency in foodgrains had been achieved and the country was free from the anxiety of having to import foodgrains. Therefore, by improving the consumption pattern of the low income strata, which had a lower import component, there was no apprehension of imbalancing the import situation. Attainment of self-reliance, which was one of the objectives of the Fifth Plan, depended to a large extent on the restraint in consumption of goods and services, having a significant import content, by the persons belonging to the upper income strata. It followed that redistribution of consumption in favour of the poor would have a favourable impact on the balance of payments. The Minimum Needs Programme was thus one of the tools in the hands of planners to bring about social equality by redistribution of income and increase in consumption by the poorer sections of society.

In the health sector, the Minimum Needs Programme meant a departure from the past strategy. Previously, the emphasis was on the increase of doctors, hospitals and dispensaries etc., without any systematic plan to ensure that the benefits of the health measures reach the poorer sections of society. The policy now was to have a minimum standard of health facilities in rural areas with integration of health and nutrition services.

The outlook in respect of road development is also slightly
different in the MNP. In the earlier Plans, the development of road was just a step towards economic growth. Now, it was part of a scheme to reduce urban-rural disparities. The policy was to provide facilities in rural areas for development as also for reducing potential migration from rural to urban areas.

The difference in approach is also seen in the case of slum improvement. Clearance schemes were previously undertaken with the result that slums were merely transferred from one place to another. Improvement of slums, on the other hand, means improving the condition of slum areas by introduction of facilities like drinking water, electricity, drains, paved streets etc. Slum improvement here does not imply slum removal.

Most of the items in the Minimum Needs Programme are in the social services sector. But, it will not be proper to view the Programme just a social welfare measure. All the items under MNP relate to development of human resources. It was considered by the planners that, after the implementation of four Five-Year Plans, a stage had been reached where the required infrastructures for a modern economy were already available and when the resources spent on redistributive measures were not the resources diverted from the measures for economic growth. A decision was, therefore, taken on substantial investments in a programme, irrespective of the availability of resources of the individual States, for development of human resources along with the usual emphasis so long given on overall growth. The Minimum Needs Programme was thus contemplated as a programme of economic and social development rather than merely of social welfare.