

Healthy children build healthy nations

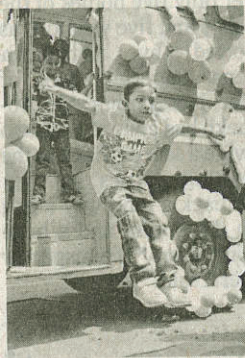
Our country is home to the largest child population in the world. A substantial 41 per cent, around 450 million, are children. But it is incongruent that for their education, health and protection a paltry 4 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) is being spent. A great deal of political and social will is required to prioritise children in budgetary allocations.

On health, it has been observed that among the general category of patients in public hospitals, about 70 per cent were once child labourers. By letting manufacturers exploit them as inexpensive labour, the government is inheriting an army of sick and invalid persons in the years to come. A large portion of the government's budgetary allocation will go towards health care and reparations in the foreseeable future. This will have a crippling effect on the development agenda.



Kailash
Satyarthi

The health indicators of children in India are among the worst in the world with only 65.3 per cent of the under-five children fully immunised. Eighty per cent of the children under three years of age are anaemic and 2 out of 5



For all children to have an equal opportunity at realising their full potential, innovation must not only benefit those who can afford it but reach and meet the needs and rights of those who are the most marginalised and invisible. For instance, warranted within the law should be a provision for treatment of poor children at zero cost at all hospitals.

There are some aspects such as central planning through schools which should fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health in alignment with State education boards. Ideally, schools should facilitate regular health check-ups, vaccination programmes and provide easy medical access to students.

We need a more concrete and compassionate road map to ensure that every child is safe and protected. This requires changes in resource allocation for right interventions and creation of platforms for integrated cross-sectoral approach, thus propelling