

## **Welfare of Weaker Sections**

10.42 The Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002) commits itself towards empowering Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Minorities as one of its nine primary objectives. Concerted efforts have been made during 1999-2000 to empower these Socially Disadvantaged Groups. Most of the on-going programmes/schemes have been reviewed and restructured wherever necessary to enhance their scope. Their norms and procedures have been simplified to ensure increased coverage of the target groups.

10.43 An enhanced central plan allocation of Rs. 1400 crore has been provided during 1999-2000 (BE) as against Rs.1147 crore in 1998-99 (RE), registering an increase of 22.1 per cent.

10.44 The on-going National Scheme for Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers and their dependants has been under revision so as to fulfil the commitment of complete eradication of manual scavenging in the country by 2002.

10.45 The financial institutions viz., National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC), National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation (NBCFDC) and National Minority Development and Finance Corporation (NMDFC) have been strengthened by enhancing their authorised share capital to improve the performance of these collaborations with enhanced coverage.

10.46 The welfare and development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes through centrally sponsored and central sector scheme has been closely monitored from time to time. The State and UT administrations have also made efforts for the welfare of Scheduled Castes through Special Component Plan (SCP) and Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP). During 1998-99, 25.6 lakh Scheduled Caste families under

11-A of 20 Point Programme and 11.8 lakh Scheduled Tribe families under 11-B of 20 Point Programme were assisted. A target of 25 lakh Scheduled Caste families and 11.1 lakh Scheduled Tribe families has been fixed for 1999-2000. The on-going schemes for educational development including hostel facilities for both boys and girls of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes/Other Backward Classes and Minority families continue to be operative during 1999-2000. Towards attending to the special problems and needs of the scheduled tribals, an exclusive Ministry for Tribal Affairs has been set up in October 1999.

### *Welfare of Disabled and Caring of other Disadvantaged*

10.47 The six national institutes specialised in different areas of disabilities expanded their activities in the area of education, training, professional guidance, research and development of rehabilitation aid for improving the quality of services for disabled persons. With the commitment for improving the economic status of the disabled, the National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation extends loans for promoting employment ventures.

10.48 In response to the growing problem of the aged, a number of important initiatives have been taken during the first two years of the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002). During this year, some of the major initiatives taken in this regard included observing 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons; revision of assistance schemes for Panchayati Raj Institutions/voluntary organisations etc; announcement of a National Policy for older persons; launching of an Integrated Programme for Street Children; planning of a Center for Drug Abuse. Prevention and starting three months Certificate Course on De-addiction Counselling and Rehabilitation of Drug Abuses.