

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SINCE INDEPENDENCE: EARLY GAINS AND LATER STRAINS

Nimal Sanderatne

ABSTRACT

Sri Lanka is a celebrated case of high social attainments for a poor country. In 1994, Sri Lanka's Human Development Index was estimated at 0.711, compared with 0.445 for Pakistan, 0.446 for India and 0.368 for Bangladesh in South Asia; 0.832 for Malaysia, 0.833 for Thailand, 0.672 for the Philippines and 0.641 for Indonesia in South East Asia. Sri Lanka's Life Expectancy and Education Indices are even more favourable. Her Life Expectancy Index at 0.79 and Education Index at 0.82 are far better than those of her South Asian neighbours as well as those of the four South East Asian countries cited above, excluding Philippines whose Education Index is higher at 0.89. The country is ranked 91st among 175 countries and classified as a Medium Human Development country by the UNDP, 1997.