

Human Development Index

New measure for quality of life



India might be the fastest growing economy in the world after China, but the quality of life in India still leaves much to be desired, with the country ranked a measly 134 among 182 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Asia's third-largest economy has slipped in comparative terms in ensuring a better quality of life for its citizens as it has been steadily slipping in the previous index, published for 2007 and 2008 together, at 128 while the position for the year before was at 126.

“Overall, however, India has made steady progress on the Human Development Index (HDI). Its value has gone up from 0.556 in 2000 to 0.612 in 2007,” said Patrice Coeur-Bizot, the resident representative of UNDP in India. The index takes into account a host of parameters including poverty levels, literacy and gender-related issues to measure the quality of life is being published from 1990 onwards.

Norway continued to top the chart while Australia, Iceland, Canada, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden, France, Switzerland and Japan made up the top 10. The US is ranked 13 while Britain and Germany are further down at 21 and 22. Among the countries in the neighbourhood China, Sri Lanka and Bhutan rank higher than India at

92, 102 and 132, respectively, while Pakistan at 141, Nepal at 144 and Bangladesh at 146 rank lower.

The report focused on migration — “Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development” — to cast a new light on some common misconceptions on the subject and propose a series of policies to increase people’s freedom and improve their lives. According to the report, nearly 1 billion of the world’s estimated 6.7-billion population are migrants with women making up for almost half of that.

The report lays out the case for government to reduce restrictions on movement within and across their borders, so as to expand human choices and freedoms. It argues for practical measures that can improve prospects on arrival, which in turn will have large benefits both for destination communities and for places of origin (Economic Times, 6 October 2009).