My views on health and family planning are well-known and have often been repeated. We are already converted. The question before us is how we can convert others in large enough numbers not only in favour of family planning but even in favour of ordinary elementary health care. Health of the nation depends on the health of the individuals. Without it we can have no progress in any direction that would be enduring or meaningful. So the provision of adequate health services is one of the first responsibilities of any Government.

The main task before us is to examine the National Programme of Health for All, which has been drawn up in the context of the global programme of the World Health Organisation for better health for all by the year 2000.

The first thing we need is to develop health consciousness amongst all sections of our people, not the least amongst those who are in responsible positions. In this I include even doctors. We have capable, well-trained doctors, who go out to treat diseases. But there isn't that consciousness of seeing whether the neighbourhood in which they themselves live is conducive to healthy living, or that they have created that feeling in people they meet or the patients they treat. So that what we need is a massive people's movement which
brings into focus the things which some of us take for granted but which unfortunately the large majority of our people, even if they are affluent, even if they have all the opportunities, do not always take care about.

National health policy

Health programmes must be an integral part of our general national development. Our ancients rightly emphasized the close relationship between mind, emotions and the body. Each reacts on the other. It is necessary, hence, to create the right atmosphere as well as the physical conditions for good health. The Government is deeply committed to a National Health Policy. The Health Ministry has prepared three drafts for the consideration of this Conference. I hope there will be frank and constructive discussion so that final shape can be given to these important policy statements.

Right habits and attitudes

Our attitude to health must change. Everyone should recognize that health is not luck or chance but must be worked for everyday of one's life. I can say this from personal knowledge and experience. Every now and then, people ask me how I am able to bear the strain. Well, for the simple reason that I have prepared for it all my life and I continue to do so. I can tell you that one week's negligence shows in one's efficiency and capability.

Of course, there are many unforeseen situations where disease strikes. But for the most part good health is a result of an attitude to life as well as of good habits. These habits are mostly inculcated by three sets of people, parents, teachers and doctors. We cannot leave it to the doctors altogether.

Education, agriculture, planning for science and technology, vigilance and high standards as regards food and drugs, the use of pesticides, the use of fertilizers, all these must be included in our plans, in the overall plan for a more healthy nation. There are diseases due to insanitary conditions which may be the result of underdevelopment and poverty, but there are others equally caused by industrial development. We are taking some measures with regard to air and water pollution. But not yet noise pollution. I think it is high time that we give some consideration to that as well.

Diet, of course, is very important. In our country where vegetarianism is so widely practised, the consumption of vegetables is quite low. Also we seem to think that only expensive vegetables fulfill our various needs of minerals, protein etc. There are many things growing in villages, and on the mountains which can be used for food, specially for small children who need greens. Health planning must take account of what is available locally. It is no use prescribing something which has to be got from across the country. In our country, even those who have the means do not usually have a balanced meal. They may eat too much, but it is not balanced. It does not provide them with the minimum nutrients they need in some areas while they may have excess in others. The right attitudes have to be inculcated from the earliest childhood, from kindergarten, through the mother and child care centres.