

Respected Speaker Sir,

With your permission, I rise to present the budget estimates for the year 2008-2009.

1. At the outset, I would like to thank the people of Himachal Pradesh who in the elections of November - December 2007 gave a decisive mandate in favour of the Bhartiya Janata Party. This decisive mandate in our favour by the people of this Pradesh shall help us to usher in good governance. We promise the people of the State that our government shall function with complete transparency and dedication.
2. Our commitment is towards faster development and our resolve is to uplift the weaker sections of our society. Immediately upon assumption of office, we have raised the minimum daily wage rate from Rs. 75 to Rs. 100. Hon'ble members of this august House would recall that it was our Government which had earlier raised the old age, widow, and disability pensions from Rs. 100 to Rs. 200 per month. The previous Congress Government in its entire tenure of five years did not raise this amount by a single paisa. After taking over, we have immediately raised these pensions again by 50% from Rs. 200 per month to Rs. 300 per month. These measures of increase in daily minimum wages and pensions are estimated to potentially benefit almost all the poor households in our State.
3. To promote greater empowerment of women, our Government has also taken the decision of 50% reservation for women in elections to the Panchayati Raj and Urban Local Bodies. We believe that this measure shall increase the social and political contribution of women and they shall get proportionate representation. It was the BJP Government that introduced holiday on Karva Chauth for the women. As a mark of our respect towards women, immediately upon assumption of office our government announced free travel in HRTC buses for women on the festival days of Bhai Duj and Raksha Bandhan and declared holidays for women employees for both these festivals.

4. Food subsidies were announced by the previous Government without any budgetary allocations. It is for this reason that we have now had to take a supplementary grants burden of Rs. 70 crore on this account. I have further made a budgetary provision of Rs. 90 crore for food subsidy in the next financial year. Since rise in prices affect the poorest sections of the society the most, our aim shall be to target these subsidies for the more vulnerable sections of society.

**Economy**

5. Speaker Sir, as per the latest estimates of the Central Statistical Organisation, the national economy grew at 9.6% in 2006-2007 and the GDP growth rate for 2007-08 is expected to be 8.7%. This seems to suggest that at the national level, the growth process is slowing down.
6. In the last three years our state's growth rates have been less than the national average. We are concerned about this fact. The State's growth rate at constant prices in 2006-07 was 9.2% against the national rate of 9.6%. In 2007-2008 it is expected to be 8.5% against the all India rate of 8.7%.
7. This clearly shows that investment activity in Himachal Pradesh has been less than the national level. The challenge before us is to accelerate the investment activity in Himachal Pradesh, otherwise our State's growth rates shall start sliding behind the national growth rates.
8. As per the latest statistical estimates, the gross domestic product of Himachal Pradesh has grown from Rs. 28,358 crore in 2006-07 to Rs. 31,974 crore in 2007-08. Per capita income in current prices has increased from Rs. 36,657 in 2006-07 to Rs. 39,819 in 2007-08.

**Fiscal issues**

9. Speaker Sir, our Government has inherited a huge fiscal problem of total outstanding debt of Rs. 22,930 crore from the previous Government. This debt commits us to repayment liabilities next year of almost Rs. 3000 crore. In the next financial year, expected pay

and pension revisions will cause additional financial burdens. In addition our grants under the Twelfth Finance Commission award shall decline over the next two years, which shall further compound a difficult financial position.

10. This situation is a grave pointer to the formidable fiscal challenges, however, we are determined that we shall not allow this financial position to obstruct our vision for faster development. My Government shall take all possible measures to increase its resources during the next year. **As a measure of incentive for resource mobilisation, I announce that the concerned revenue collection departments shall be given one percent of the additional tax collections made over and above their budget targets for the next financial year. This incentive amount would be used by the concerned departments for their infrastructural requirements.**

Good  
Governance

11. Speaker Sir, the democratic change of Government brought about by the elections of December 2007, gives a clear signal that the people of this Pradesh desire good governance. Towards such good governance we shall provide transparency in the utilisation of public money for developmental schemes, speedy redress of grievances of the public by the administration. We shall give priority to merit in all government recruitment and our policy shall be to provide stability of posting tenures for the government employees.
12. One important parameter of our good governance agenda shall be to ensure speedy disposal of all pending land record cases. Accordingly, case disposals shall be monitored regularly after setting time bound targets for the revenue officers. It is our belief that speedy disposals of pending matters by all concerned departments shall strengthen our resolve to provide good governance. Our government shall issue strict directions for regular inspection of the work of all officers in the field. The senior officers shall regularly review time bound disposal and progress of such work.

13. Speaker Sir, I would now like to draw the attention of the Hon'ble members of this august House to our Government's developmental priorities for the next financial year. For the year 2008-09 our State's Annual Plan has been fixed at a size of Rs. 2,400 crore which is 14.3% higher than the previous year's plan size.
14. The Planning Commission's initial assessment was that due to our inherited fiscal position from the previous Government, Himachal Pradesh did not have adequate resources to fund a Plan of this size. **However, for faster development of our State, we were successful in getting approved a Plan size of Rs. 2400 crore. We have also been successful in obtaining an increase of Rs. 108 crore in our special plan assistance. This assistance has been increased from Rs. 342 crore in the current year to Rs. 450 crore for the next year, which shall be an increase of 32%. This performance of our Government should be viewed in the context of the performance of the previous Government. For the annual Plan of Rs. 1800 crore for the year 2006-07, special plan assistance of Rs. 475 was available. For 2007-08, in the approved Plan size of Rs. 2100 crore, there was a decrease of Rs. 133 crore in the special plan assistance and it was reduced to Rs. 342 crore. Thus against the decrease of 28% in the previous government tenure, we have achieved an increase of 32%.**
15. Expenditure priorities for the next year's plan, are based upon extensive consultations which were held in January, 2008 with all the Hon'ble members of this august House. Based upon these consultations, the highest priority in the next year's plan has been accorded to social services relating to education, health, drinking water supply, sewerage and sanitation, urban development and social welfare. Our total proposed expenditure on such social services is Rs. 818.13 crore, that is, 34 % of the total plan size.
16. The farming community constitutes the largest section of our society and the priority of our budget is to increase investment activity for the agriculture and

allied sectors. A plan outlay of Rs. 548.13 crore has been kept for agriculture and irrigation sectors. To give a thrust to rural development and rural employment, I have earmarked an outlay of Rs. 116.68 crore for these priorities. Thus, Rs. 664.81 crore is being provisioned in this manner for the agriculture and rural sector, which shall be 28 % of the total plan size.

17. The need for a greater focus on roads, bridges and transport connectivity was unanimously recommended by all the Hon'ble members of this House during our pre-budget consultations. Accordingly I have accorded this sector high priority with a total proposed outlay of Rs. 374.15 crore, which shall be about 16% of the total plan size.

18. Hydro Power development is the key to the future financial prosperity of Himachal Pradesh. With a view towards starting of new hydro power projects and to be able to pose these projects for external funding, I am proposing an investment outlay of Rs. 328.24 crore in this sector, which shall be about 14% of the plan size.

**Agriculture,  
Horticulture  
and Allied  
Activities**

19. Speaker Sir, with your kind permission I would now like to present our developmental strategy details for certain key sectors. The National goal for the Eleventh Five Year Plan is "faster and more inclusive growth". This implies that our efforts should be to increase farm incomes which are not growing as rapidly as incomes in the manufacturing and services sector.

20. In our plan consultations, the members of this august House had rightly emphasised the need for investing more for better irrigation benefits to our farmers. At present out of total net sown area of 5.83 lakh hectare, irrigation potential has been created for 2.12 lakh hectare, which is 36 % of the net sown area. Irrigation potential created has not yet been optimally utilised. Our IPH Department shall comprehensively analyse this problem and evolve district wise strategies so that benefits of the already created irrigation schemes actually flow to the farming community.

21. Simultaneously, the Agriculture Department shall coordinate preparation of comprehensive District Agriculture and Irrigation Plans taking into account the net sown area of each District, irrigation potential already created and phased investment that would be required to double the irrigated area of farmland within the next five years. These District plans shall be prepared in coordination with the Palampur Agriculture University and the Rural Development Department. We shall also endeavour to obtain technical and financial support from NABARD for this purpose.
22. An important suggestion given during our plan consultations was that norms for irrigation should move towards sprinkler and drip irrigation. IPH Department shall reorient its irrigation projects towards such new norms.
23. The Agriculture, Forest, Rural Development and Irrigation Departments shall give first priority to rain water harvesting for flow irrigation as against current practices of lift irrigation which involve massive operational costs on account of high energy charges.
24. Soil testing shall be a priority so as to advise farmers about optimal farming practices for raising high value crops including fruits, off-season vegetables and medicinal herbs. During 2008-09, the Agriculture Department shall issue one lakh soil health cards to the farmers. Based upon the success of such intervention to raise farm incomes, we shall try and provide such soil health cards to all farmers within the next five years.
25. Our farmers need timely supply of high quality seeds, fertilizers, technological support, market information and marketing facilities. The Agriculture and Horticulture Departments shall prepare a detailed annual action plan to meet these objectives.
26. The field staff of the Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries departments shall be revitalized for technological dissemination of

information and extension activities. These departments and the Agriculture and Horticulture Universities shall operate widely publicised toll free telephone numbers, email accounts and internet based extension services to respond to farmers' queries and impart advice on techniques for increasing farm incomes. Such call centres shall also be service providers of farm market information, so that farmers have better information access to present and future market price trends. To revitalise and strengthen the extension activities of the Agriculture and Horticulture departments, more than 300 posts of Development officers and extension officers shall be filled up in the next year.

27. Our Marketing Board shall facilitate the setting up of convenient market yards which can attract the bulk purchasers, so that farmers can get a good price for their produce without having to worry about transport arrangements for selling their produce outside the State.
28. We shall also facilitate the setting up of 'state of the art' cold stores in the private sector. Our Agriculture and Horticulture departments shall encourage the marketing retail chains and bulk buyers to source more and more bulk purchases from our farmers, through appropriate price agreements and contract farming. Such arrangements shall facilitate our farmers to have better access to market information, technological inputs, improved seeds and agricultural practices for high value crops.
29. Speaker Sir, majority of the milk producers in Himachal Pradesh comprise Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, women self help groups, Gujjars and others. With a view to increase their income, I am happy to announce that in the beginning of the next financial year, MILKFED shall raise the procurement rates of milk by Rs. 2 per litre. Through such price incentive, MILKFED shall target to increase prosperity of at least one lakh farmers, by

bringing them into this cooperative movement. To compensate MILKFED for this dairy developmental activity, I am happy to announce a special budgetary support of Rs. 9 crore for the next year.

30. Speaker Sir, this development effort shall not be limited to only price incentives through MILKFED. The Animal Husbandry department shall coordinate all efforts to improve the livestock and milk yield techniques for this cooperative movement. The Animal Husbandry department would work in tandem with the 'Milch Cattle Breed Improvement Societies' to achieve this. The Rural Development Department and the Cooperation Department shall provide necessary synergies to the Animal Husbandry Department and MILKFED. Social Justice and Empowerment department shall work closely with MILKFED to promote more women self help groups for this economic activity.
31. Beekeeping activity can also significantly supplement farmer's incomes. Our government shall explore a public private partnership, so that this activity also gets a boost in Himachal Pradesh.

**Power**

32. Respected Speaker Sir, without doubt, the financial prosperity of Himachal Pradesh lies in the speedy exploitation of its 20,564 MW hydro power potential. Out of this total potential, only 6393 MW stands actualised. Projects aggregating 5951 MW have been allotted and are at different stages of execution. 8220 MW of hydropower projects still need to be allotted.
33. Of the total unallocated projects, 12 are of more than 100 MW capacity, aggregating 2248 MW. My Government shall ensure that by December, 2008 these balance 12 projects are allotted through a transparent competitive bidding process. This shall ensure speedy harnessing of our State's natural wealth.
34. In our first Cabinet meeting, our Government took a decision to allot all projects above 5MW, through transparent competitive bidding. This policy decision shall augment the financial resources of the State

Government. It shall also speed up the allotment process. We will also be saved in future from the numerous litigations which have arisen due to the erroneous policies of the previous Government to allot projects between 5MW to 100 MW without competitive bidding.

35. Since the Power Department shall now coordinate many issues related to energy development and sale of power, it has become necessary to strengthen this Department through a separate Directorate. Accordingly, our Government has decided to create a new Directorate of Energy.

#### Roads

36. Speaker Sir, In the absence of adequate network of railways and water transport, roads are the lifelines of our State. The total length of road network in our State is 30,834 kilometres, which includes 1261 km of National Highways and 720 km of Border roads. However, of a total of 17,449 census villages, only 8588 villages stand connected with motor-able road. The challenge of providing road connection to the balance more than 50% villages is truly challenging.
37. Under the dynamic leadership of our then Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna was started in the year 2000-2001. Himachal Pradesh has greatly benefited under this scheme and till date Rs. 2146 crore has been sanctioned for our State, whereby 11,292 Km of road length will be constructed/upgraded with 3562 villages getting connected by all weather roads. 5455 Km of road length has already been added and upgraded under this scheme. Our goal shall be that by 2009, all villages having population of more than 500 persons are provided connectivity. Thereafter, we shall strategise to provide road connectivity to all villages with population of more than 250 persons.
38. Out of the 3243 Panchayats in the State, 460 are yet to be connected by road. By pooling of all our financial resources under State Plan funds and Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna we shall strive to provide connectivity to all Panchayats within the next financial

year. Wherever the connectivity is being hampered due to environmental issues, our Government shall take up the case with the Union Environment Ministry for speedy clearances.

39. To shorten distances and bring greater physical and emotional integration for different geographical regions, there is a great need to construct tunnels. Consultancy studies have been awarded for seven tunnels and funding of these tunnels shall be progressed, including the Ranital and Kanchimore-Mela tunnels. We intend to award similar consultancies for a few more tunnels such as Utrala-Holi road and Dhaneta-Bangana road. After these DPR's have been prepared, such projects shall be posed for public private partnerships and external funding.
40. The Congress Government had discontinued our scheme of 'Mukhya Mantri Gram Path Yojna.' To accelerate road connectivity for villages, I am happy to announce the reintroduction of this scheme, with a total provision of Rs. 10 crore for the next financial year. The PWD shall supervise the road alignments under this scheme so as to ensure that the constructed roads are of proper standards.
41. Members of this august House have been raising the issue of budgetary allocations to be enhanced under Vidhayak Kshetra Vikas Nidhi Yojna. I am happy to announce acceptance of this demand and to raise the limit by Rs. five lakh for each Vidhayak, from the current limit of Rs. 25 lakh to Rs. 30 lakh for the next year. This additional amount shall be earmarked to be spent under the norms of the Mukhya Mantri Gram Path Yojna.
42. The previous Government did not pay any attention towards the rising cost of operations of the Himachal Road Transport Corporation. While the total costs of inputs like diesel, tyres, spares and wages had experienced an increase of about 65 per cent, the previous Government reduced the grant-in-aid of the HRTC from Rs 48 crore to Rs 40 crore, which has led to a severe financial crisis in this Corporation. To

correct the mistakes of the past, I have increased the non-plan grant for next year to the Corporation by 20%, from the current amount of Rs. 40 crore to Rs. 48 crore. I have also provided for a Plan support of Rs. 33 crore and Rs. 14 crore for repayment of past loan liabilities, thus totalling a budgetary support of Rs. 95 crore for the next year.

43. My government shall prepare a special scheme for providing self-employment opportunities to the unemployed youth of the state under which they would be given permits on priority basis for running buses and small vehicles. We shall also explore the issue of a tax concession policy for the transport sector so that private investment is encouraged.

#### Tourism

44. Tourist arrivals in Himachal Pradesh are increasing. In 2007 there were 88.21 lakh tourists out of which 3.39 lakh were foreign tourist. There is considerable scope to increase employment opportunities in the tourism sector. Our government is trying to attract external funding of Rs. 300 crore for the tourism sector. We propose to develop various tourist circuits through such funding which shall include among others, heritage tourism, ropeways, water sports and angling. The Fisheries department shall be encouraged to work in close coordination with the Tourism Department for development of infrastructure and amenities pertaining to angling circuits of tourism. Under the proposed externally aided project for tourism, we shall also set up through appropriate public private partnership, an Institute to train our youth in hotel related skills.
45. Our effort shall also be to build many more motels along our main arterial roads on a Public Private Partnership model, so that Tourists are attracted to new destinations, with an assurance of comfortable stay at reasonable costs. These motels would be built along well defined tourist circuits emanating from the more popular tourist destinations of Shimla, Dharamshala, Manali, Dalhousie, etc. so that tourists extend their stay period in Himachal Pradesh and the benefits of tourism also percolate to the hinterlands of the established tourist centres. My Government shall make special

efforts to develop new tourist spots particularly in the tribal areas. In addition, we shall also pay special attention towards initiating Heli-taxi services in the state.

46. To give a further boost to tourism we shall concentrate on public private partnerships for ropeway projects such as Palchan-Rohtang, Bhunter – Bijli Mahadev, Palampur-Neogal, Dharamkot – Triund , Shah Talai – Deothsidh and Shri Naina Devi – Anandpur Sahib.

#### Education

47. Speaker Sir, towards the end of its term, the previous Government hastily opened a large number of schools and colleges without paying adequate attention to the infrastructure requirements of these institutions. Requisite attention was also not paid towards recruitment of required teachers. Our Government shall correct this and with a view to meet the shortages of teachers we shall fill up about 18,000 posts in the next financial year. It has come to our notice that some categories of teachers such as Village Vidya Upasaks are getting discriminatory remuneration. With a view to end such discrimination we shall rationalise the remunerations.
48. Our Government shall also correct the wrong educational policies of the previous Government by suitable reorganisation of educational institutions. Because independent surveys have shown that despite increase in number of educational institutions quality of education has declined, we shall ensure that the quality of key institutions shall be strengthened so as to promote centres of excellence in all Development blocks and districts of the State.
49. One immediate measure taken by our Government to improve the quality of teaching has been to ban political and social functions on working days in school premises so that precious academic time is not wasted. The purpose of this measure is also to prevent the teachers and the students from becoming a 'bonded audience'.

50. All members of this august House would agree that improvement in the quality of education is urgently needed to increase the employment prospects of our educated youth. Two key issues which shall be addressed by our Government would be to increase the proficiency of our students in computer skills and in spoken English. I am happy to announce that in a phased manner, we shall ensure that by the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> Plan, every senior secondary school and college shall be equipped with internet enabled computers to ensure that our students possess the necessary IT and computer skills. It has come to our notice that the private sector contracted for teaching IT skills in our educational institutions is not paying fair wages to the computer instructors. Our government shall renegotiate such contracts to ensure fair wages for such computer instructors.
51. With regard to English language skill improvement, the Education Department shall prepare a separate detailed action plan. We have also decided to make available 100 teachers for Punjabi Language.
52. Many private educational institutes have shown interest to start Universities in the State. We intend to foster all such partnerships with the private sector so that the youth of Himachal Pradesh have a wider range of choices in matters pertaining to higher and technical education.
53. Our educational institutions suffer from a great deficit of infrastructure pertaining to class rooms, science labs, lecture halls etc. To overcome such deficiencies in infrastructure, I am happy to announce that our Annual Plan for next year shall make a provision of Rs. 197.03 crore for capital works of schools and colleges. This shall be 142% more than the current financial year provision of Rs. 81.26 crore and shall go a long way in meeting the infrastructure deficit of our large number of schools and colleges.
54. We are trying to set up an IIT in Mandi district with central assistance. A Central University shall also be established in Kangra district. We shall also use our

own resources to start one fully equipped Science college as a centre of excellence.

55. For purpose of greater democratic decentralisation of primary education, the Panchayats shall be given progressive responsibility in the management of Elementary Schools. Similarly, the Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads shall be given greater responsibility in the management of High Schools and Senior Secondary schools. The roadmap for such devolution of powers shall be prepared by a Cabinet Sub Committee chaired by the Education Minister.

**Technical  
Education**

56. Technical Education and Vocational Industrial training will play a vital role in enhancing the employability skills of the youth of Himachal Pradesh. To meet the skill needs of industry, this sector requires close coordination with the private sector. To bridge the skill gaps our Government shall prepare district wise plans. Based upon such plans, the technical courses will be suitably reoriented so that the unemployed youth get training in accordance with the needs of labour markets. Placement cells in each of these institutions shall be strengthened to promote greater on-campus recruitment. Since the hydropower sector shall see much greater investment in the coming years, commensurate attention shall be paid to imparting the requisite technical training skills in this sector for our youth.

57. A total plan provision of Rs. 27.6 crore is proposed for the next financial year to meet the investment requirements of technical education. If required, this amount will be suitably enhanced to better train our unemployed youth.

**Information  
Technology**

58. Respected Speaker Sir, in our modern economy employment opportunities and productivity will depend on the steps we take in the field of Information Technology. Himachal Pradesh has become the first State in the country to launch a State Wide Area Network, that is HIMSWAN. This will improve efficiency and transparency in administration.

59. The IT Department shall work towards setting up of a State Data Centre as per Government of India guidelines. In a phased manner and through Public Private partnership, 3366 community service centers shall also be set up to facilitate IT enabled computer services right up to Panchayat levels. We shall also go in for e-procurement by making it compulsory for all high value tenders. This shall be piloted for PWD and IPH departments.
60. Computer labs are being progressively set up in all government colleges in the State. As the next stage, we have decided to set up computer labs with broadband internet connectivity in all District Libraries and in all senior secondary schools. In the first phase, all such schools with more than 600 students from class 9 to 12 shall be covered. These computer labs shall also be used to impart soft skills for IT Enabled Services and BPO industry so that we have reasonable number of trained IT professionals. To further attract more IT industries, IT Parks-cum-Townships shall be set up through a competitive bidding process.

**Health**

61. Hon'ble Speaker Sir, Himachal Pradesh has been adjudged as the leading State in the field of health services. With a birth rate of 18.8 per 1000, death rate 6.8, infant mortality rate 50, child mortality rate 14 and total fertility rate of 2.1, our State has one of the best health indicators in the country.
62. While health indicators are good due to efficient preventive measures, curative services in many parts of the State are suffering due to shortages of trained medical manpower. To meet the shortage of doctors, we shall appoint 250 doctors in the concerned institutions. Incentives shall be offered for working in tribal and difficult areas. Similarly 1000 posts of nurses and other paramedical staff shall also be filled up. To overcome the specialist shortages my Government shall also send our doctors on special training courses. Since kidney ailments are very common in Himachal Pradesh, we shall send doctors from every district for training in special nephrology courses. To meet the shortages of doctors, we shall initiate the process of

setting up of three more medical colleges in Mandi, Una and Hamirpur districts in the private sector with suitable forms of public private partnership.

63. A public private partnership model shall also be formulated to utilise the services of specialist private doctors to meet the immediate gaps in health service delivery. To improve the outreach of medical services for the tribal, backward and difficult regions, the Government will organise multi-speciality surgical camps and involve private doctors also in such mobile clinics and camps. Our government shall also leverage information technology to promote greater use of internet enabled and telemedicine projects. The medical libraries of our medical colleges shall be given special attention for online high speed broadband connectivity to enable medical students and doctors to access all the latest medical journals and medical information.
64. Speaker sir, the nursing profession faces shortages of skilled personnel not only at the State level but also at the national and international level. This gives us huge opportunities to provide employment avenues to our youth, especially women who take readily to this profession. I therefore propose that our Health Department shall formulate a proactive investment policy to encourage the private sector to come forward and set up more and more nursing colleges and nursing schools. To encourage such private investment, the Govt shall provide partnership support, including allotment of land for such institutions on priority. Similarly, to overcome the shortage of trained paramedical staff, our government shall encourage public and private sector investment for starting training courses to meet such shortages.
65. Our next year's Annual Plan shall also concentrate on completing various pending capital works of health institutions. With this aim, I am happy to announce an increase in such capital outlay from Rs. 33.67 crore in the current financial year to Rs. 104.01 crore for the next year. This increase of 209 percent is a true measure of our commitment to provide better health

infrastructure for the people of our Pradesh. Additional Health institutions shall be opened as necessary.

66. Poor families often face economic hardship for accessing quality health care. I am happy to announce that we shall introduce a health insurance scheme for families below the poverty line, in which no expenditure will need to be made by these poor families. Our government has also decided that "Parchi fee" shall be abolished in all health institutions.
67. Tuberculosis and HIV AIDS are two dangerous diseases in Himachal Pradesh which will be given special attention by the Health Department. We shall take all necessary measures to check the spread of these infectious diseases, including the setting up of a special care centre at the T.B. Sanatorium Dharampur. AIDS is a disease that needs to be detected early in our battle for an AIDS free society. I accordingly propose that our society shall be motivated that just as 'janampatris' are matched before marriage, the youth also match for AIDS free reports.

**Ayurveda**

68. The Department of Ayurveda has played a stellar role in providing health services in the rural and remote regions of the State. In the next year, we plan to open 250 Ayurvedic clinics in the Primary Health Centres, 70 clinics in community health centres/rural hospitals and 10 wards in the regional/medical college hospitals. Total estimated amount for this initiative shall be Rs. 44 crore. To strengthen Ayurveda health services, our Government shall also fill up 85 posts of Ayurvedic doctors.
69. Speaker Sir, Ayurvedic medicinal herbs are in great demand in the health sector and commercialisation of the farming of such medicinal herbs has promising potential to raise incomes of our farmers. The Ayurveda Department shall interface with the relevant Govt. of India institutions to tap funds for popularising medicinal herb cultivation in our State.
70. The Ayurveda Department shall also coordinate with the Agriculture, Forest and Horticulture departments the

activity of dissemination of information regarding high value herbs which can be grown by our farmers in different climatic zones of the State and the market returns for such cultivation. This information shall be disseminated by extension activities of all these departments and the websites of the respective departments shall also update such information, on district/block wise basis.

71. We also need to associate the special therapies of Ayurveda such as “Panchkarma” with the various tourist circuits of our State. There can be great synergy in this proposition to attract more high value tourists to Himachal, as well as provide employment opportunities to our youth. Accordingly, the Tourism department shall identify such tourist circuits. Tourism department shall also coordinate with the Ayurveda department a skills training exercise for such ayurvedic therapies which can be offered to domestic and foreign tourists.

**Water Supply  
and  
Sanitation**

72. Speaker Sir, by the end of this year, we expect to provide safe drinking water to all the habitations identified as per the Comprehensive Action Plan - 1999. Thereafter, from the next financial year we shall concentrate on the 30,220 slipped back habitations identified under the 2003 survey.

73. In our pre-budget consultations the members of this august House had accorded high priority to this sector. Accordingly I am happy to announce that I have increased the Plan outlay for rural water supply from Rs. 111.03 crore in this financial year to Rs. 155.40 crore for the next year, which is an increase of 40%. This increase shall be further supplemented through additional central funds of about Rs. 170 crore. I am sure that this will help accelerate our target to provide safe drinking water in all villages.

74. Provision of piped water supply is far costlier as compared to hand pumps. Members of this august House are aware that it was the BJP Govt which in the early 1990's popularised the concept of hand pumps for water supply in Himachal Pradesh. A total of 15,393 hand pumps are now installed. Taking this low cost

initiative further, I propose that as a “first charge” on next year’s budgetary outlays, the IPH department shall install additional 2000 hand pumps, especially for the drought prone areas where considerable sums are spent each summer on water tanker supplies.

75. The accelerated hand pump initiative shall also help us save on energy charges of water supply, since such energy charges have already reached an unsustainable level of about Rs. 200 crore per year. As a further measure to reduce our energy charges in the long run, our Government has pursued the case with the Planning Commission to provide funds for a gravity water supply scheme for Shimla capital region. Simultaneously, the IPH department and the Municipal Corporation Shimla shall make a plan to detect and prevent leakage of water in the distribution systems.

**Forest and  
Environment**

76. Our forest cover constitutes the wealth of our nation and we are determined to take necessary measures to protect this national wealth. In this context I have already written to the Union Govt to adequately compensate Himachal Pradesh for the proper maintenance of its forests. We shall also pursue this matter with the Thirteenth Finance Commission.

77. During our previous tenure we had removed all restrictions on the export of Khair so as to ensure that our farmers received competitive prices for their product. The previous Congress Govt again imposed restrictions on the export of Khair by stipulating that it could only be exported along with its bark. This made the cost of transportation very expensive and our farmers have suffered. I announce that we shall allow the export of Khair without such restrictive condition so that our farmers can again benefit from competitive prices.

78. Our Department of Environment shall prepare a comprehensive Environment protection plan and shall thereafter explore suitable avenues of funding such an environment plan. By December 2008 an action plan shall also be prepared for projects which can earn carbon credits for the State Government. Our

Government shall encourage setting up of ex-servicemen eco-battalions in Himachal Pradesh. This will provide significant employment avenues for our ex-servicemen.

79. To encourage eco-tourism, tourism department shall work in close coordination with the Forest department. Involvement of Panchayati Raj institutions shall also be encouraged so that this can be a good source of employment for our rural youth.
80. The wild life wing of the forest department shall also pilot projects to tackle the monkey problem for the farmers of our state. Primate Protection Parks shall be set up in Shimla and Hamirpur Districts to attract monkeys away from the farmer's fields. In addition to one facility for sterilization of monkeys at Shimla, my Government has decided to set up two more such facilities at Gopalpur and Hamirpur.
81. Our Government shall take special steps to tackle the problem of damage to farmers' crops from stray cattle. In this context we shall encourage and give all possible assistance to various trusts, voluntary organisations, temple trusts and other religious organisations to set up "Gosadans". The Animal Husbandry department shall also seek NABARD funding for this activity. Measures to tackle the problem of farmers regarding damage of crops by stray cattle and wild life shall be suitably integrated into district agriculture plans being prepared by the Agriculture department. Our Government shall tackle this problem by seeking inclusion of such crop protection measures under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.
82. Speaker Sir, from the next financial year, The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) shall provide 100 days of assured wage employment to all rural households. The measure has already been taken by our Government to increase the minimum daily wages from Rs. 75 to Rs. 100. This shall benefit all rural households by increasing their wages under NREGS by 33%.

83. Speaker Sir, as a result of our minimum wage initiative, Himachal Pradesh now has the potential to disburse more than Rs. 1000 crore per year as wages for the rural families. NREGS allows a 60:40 wage – material ratio. Thus all Panchayats in Himachal Pradesh can potentially benefit from a total NREGS investment of Rs. 1666 crore per year! Such average annual investment of more than Rs. 50 lakh per Panchayat can bring in unprecedented prosperity for all our villages.
84. NREGS lays stress on schemes of rainwater harvesting, minor irrigation, land improvement, soil conservation and rural connectivity. Our Government shall ensure concerted efforts to promote such investment in all villages. The Rural Development Department shall coordinate the implementation of these schemes and also associate the Panchayati Raj, Agriculture, Horticulture, Forest, PWD and Irrigation departments. Mid Himalayan forestry scheme being executed by the Forest Department in 600 Panchayats shall be integrated with NREGS, so that the farmers living in these areas are fully benefited. For effective implementation of NREGS we shall recruit 1081 gram rozgar sewaks, that is one sewak for every three Panchayats.
85. To strengthen Panchayati Raj institutions, I have specifically raised the total outlay for these institutions by 50 percent from Rs. 87.08 crore in this financial year to Rs. 130.94 crore for the next financial year.
86. Respected Speaker Sir, our Government shall give more emphasis to the planned development of our 49 Urban Local Bodies. A grant of Rs. 41.76 crore shall be provided to the Urban Bodies in 2008-09 in consonance with the 3<sup>rd</sup> State Finance Commission Award. In addition, a special grant of Rs. 6 crore is also being provided for the purpose of maintenance of about 1000 Km of roads, streets and paths falling under the jurisdiction of the Urban Bodies.
87. The Urban Bodies shall be encouraged to build more commercial spaces, including vehicle parking spaces so as to augment their resource base from lease and

**Urban Local  
Bodies**

rental of such commercial space. With a view to encourage the urban local bodies to go in for such projects, the state government shall initiate a new scheme under which 50 percent of the funds for construction of commercial complexes and parking places shall be provided by the state government and the remaining 50 percent expenditure shall be borne by the concerned local bodies. The income earned from these properties will go to the concerned Urban Bodies.

88. We have taken a decision that ongoing sewerage scheme works of Urban Bodies need to be better monitored. Accordingly, the IPH budget for the sewerage schemes is being transferred to the Urban Development Department and the IPH would henceforth undertake such works on deposit basis. No departmental charges will be levied by the IPH for execution of such works. A total plan provision has been made on this account of Rs. 34.50 crore for the next year.
89. Speaker Sir, from the environmental viewpoint it is very important that we improve the solid waste and garbage management facilities of our Urban Bodies. Low cost toilet facilities also need to be encouraged. Our Government shall initiate action for preparation of such sanitation and garbage management plans for the Urban Bodies.
90. The previous Government made tall claims of bringing Central Assistance of 3136 crore rupees under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission. Actual sanctions have been only Rs. 36.12 crore. On assumption of office it became clear to us that the previous government knew that such high level of funding may not come under this scheme. However the political announcements on this account continued. It would be the endeavour of my government to get the pending DPRs prepared at the earliest and send them to the Government of India so as to get maximum possible allocation under this programme.
91. As against the current year budgetary provision of Rs. 56.62 crore for Urban Bodies, I am happy to announce

the increase of this outlay to Rs. 97.57 crore for the next year, that is, an increase of 72%. I am sure that judicious use of these resources by the Urban Bodies would result in provision of better civic amenities.

#### Industries

92. Speaker Sir, the pace of industrial development picked up because of the special package of tax incentives for our State announced in January 2003 by the NDA Government. Although the NDA Government had approved the industrial package for units coming into production up to the year 2013, the present UPA Government curtailed this date up to March 2007 and later extended it up to March 2010. We shall take up the matter with the Central Govt. to extend the concessions till 2013.
93. The previous Government failed to capitalise on the excellent investment incentives which our Government had obtained. Tall claims were made about total investment attracted and jobs created, whereas the actual investment was only Rs. 3374 crore which is 11% of the Rs. 30,000 crore investment claim. Likewise hollow claims were made of having provided lakhs of jobs.
94. We shall make maximum possible efforts to improve the infrastructure for the upcoming industrial areas. We have impressed upon the Central Govt. to rapidly upgrade our rail network for industrial needs of Himachal Pradesh, including the Chandigarh-Baddi line announced last year and the Bhanupalli-Bilaspur Railway line announced last month in the railway budget. Since the Bhanupalli railway line will be in partnership with the State Government, I have made a provision of investment of Rs. 37 crore for this railway line in our next year's Plan as against only a token provision having been made by the Union Government on this account. As per information, the central government has now changed the alignment of the earlier announced Chandigarh-Baddi rail line and is taking this up for a re-survey. Such a move shall go against the interests of the State and we shall seriously take up the matter with the central government.

95. Speaker Sir, the BJP believes in development of all sections of our society, especially the disadvantaged groups. Our Government has taken a historic decision to earmark Plan Budget in proportion to the scheduled caste population of the State. Accordingly, as against the 2007-08 current year outlay of Rs. 231 crore, Rs. 594 crore is being provisioned under the scheduled castes sub plan for the next year. This increase of 363 crore rupees will be a 157% increase over the current year outlay and shall be spent for the welfare of scheduled castes under various activities including Education, Health, Drinking water supply, roads, irrigation and other agricultural activities.
96. Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar is the symbol of empowerment of the scheduled castes. As a mark of respect to him our Government shall provide ten lakh rupees each for construction of Bhimrao Ambedkar Bhavans in every assembly constituency. We shall provide Rs. 6.80 crore for this purpose during the next financial year.
97. For the aged, widows and disabled, the pensions have been already increased by our Government by 50%, from Rs. 200 per month to Rs. 300 per month. This shall entail an additional financial outlay of about Rs. 30 crore per year, benefiting about 2.38 lakh families. It has come to the notice of our Government that many deserving persons who are below the poverty line are still not getting the benefit of this pension scheme. Accordingly, I am happy to announce that our Govt. shall further cover all such destitute families. The Social Welfare department shall cover such remaining persons below the poverty line who meet its pension criteria. We have received complaints that many ineligible persons have got themselves pensions sanctioned through manipulation. Action shall be taken as per rules against all ineligible persons who have manipulated to receive such pensions by depriving the deserving persons for years. Appropriate administrative action shall also be taken against those Government employees who connived in the giving of such undue benefits.

98. On 25<sup>th</sup> September 2000, to commemorate the birthday of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya I had introduced an insurance scheme for the IRDP women called "Matri Shakti Bima Yojna." This provides for insurance benefits in case of accidental death of Rs. 25,000/- and Rs.12,500/- in case of loss of one limb. I am happy to announce doubling of these benefits to Rs 50,000 in case of accidental death and Rs 25,000 in case of loss of one limb. This demonstrates our concern for the welfare of families below the poverty line. I am also happy to announce that our Government shall also introduce a special insurance scheme for weavers.

99. It has come to our notice that poor students belonging to the 'Other Backward Classes' are not getting adequate pre-matric scholarships. Accordingly I announce that the education department shall introduce a scheme of scholarships for such students. It is estimated that we shall benefit 10,000 needy students in such manner, at a total cost of about Rs. 90 lakh per year.

**Tribal  
Development**

100. Development of Scheduled Tribes in the State is a high priority of our Government. Accordingly, I propose an outlay of Rs. 216 crore for the next year, under the Tribal Sub Plan. This amount shall be spent in areas such as of irrigation, horticulture and vegetable cultivation, roads, education, health, drinking water supply etc. as per the priorities identified on a decentralised basis for each of the five tribal regions of Kinnaur, Lahaul, Spiti, Pangi and Bharmour.

**Youth  
Services,  
Sports, Art  
and Culture**

101. The youth of our State will guide its destiny in the future. It is important for their youthful energies to also be channelled towards sports and cultural activities. Synthetic athletic tracks shall be built at Dharamshala and Hamirpur. To improve sports facilities in the state, the Youth Services and Sports department shall also build partnerships with sports bodies such as the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association. These sports facilities shall enthuse our youth to prove their mettle at national and international track competitions. The Youth Services and Sports department shall also separately earmark 3% funds for physically challenged

sportspersons. The previous government created many hurdles for sportspersons and for years did not release to them their due incentive awards. Our Government will give due recognition to all sports and sportspersons.

102. It has come to our notice that various sports facilities built in the past are not being properly maintained due to lack of funds for maintenance with the Youth Services Department. Accordingly, I announce that during the course of next financial year, the Department shall prepare a maintenance plan for required normal and special repairs. After due scrutiny, the funds shall be budgeted for such maintenance. To encourage our sportspersons, I am also happy to announce that all departments shall make special efforts to fill 3% posts reserved for outstanding sportspersons. Simultaneously, the Youth Services and Sports department will recruit coaches for different sports, as per requirements.

Ex-  
Servicemen

103. Speaker Sir, the soldiers from our Pradesh are well known for their valour in the defence of our nation. The Himachal Pradesh Ex-Servicemen Corporation presently provides margin money to ex-servicemen up to Rs. 50,000/- at a subsidised interest rate of 7%. I am happy to announce the doubling of this amount to Rs. one lakh. This shall enable the ex-servicemen to also double their bank loan cases from Rs. five lakh to Rs. ten lakh.

104. The Ex-servicemen Corporation also provides employment avenues for the ex-servicemen by placing them for private sector jobs, especially the security service needs of the various companies operating in Himachal Pradesh. I am happy to announce that henceforth, before filling up posts of security guards in government departments, the requisition for such security service provision shall also be sent to the Ex-servicemen Corporation.

Home

105. Hon'ble members are aware that the success of the developmental process of Himachal Pradesh is due to a peaceful law and order situation. The role of an

efficient police force is therefore an important ingredient of this developmental effort. For the next financial year, I have earmarked a sum of Rs. 10.81 crore to take care of the housing needs of our police personnel. This shall help maintain the high morale of our police force.

106. I am happy to share that the Union Home Ministry has recently sanctioned an Indian Reserve Battalion for our State. Based upon my discussions with the Home Minister, we have also been assured of two more Battalions, including one for women. These measures would result in creating about 3000 jobs for our youth and thousands of others will get indirect employment. The Central Government has also assured that that they shall set up a Disaster Management Battalion. We have given our acceptance for setting up of such battalion in Kangra district, near Nurpur.

**Revenue  
Department**

107. The Revenue Department is engaged in a special program for computerisation of all land records which shall lead to facilitation of the public in accessing their land ownership records. By the end of next financial year, data entry work of all villages shall be completed. 97 out of 109 Tehsils / Sub-Tehsils have started issuing computerised copies of land records to the general public. It will be our effort that the balance Tehsils and Sub-Tehsils also come online and issue such computerised record of rights. Our IT Department shall work in close coordination with the Revenue Department to meet this goal. As a measure to improve the housing infrastructure for the Revenue agencies, I propose an outlay of Rs. 5.01 crore for Revenue Housing.

**Employees  
Welfare**

108. Speaker Sir, the total number of employees in the State Government including public sector undertakings and semi autonomous bodies are estimated at 2.77 lakh, as of 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2007. On the Punjab pattern, the previous Government had announced a 5 percent interim relief for state employees, to be adjusted against the forthcoming Pay Commission Award. This announcement was subsequently not honoured by the previous Government.

109. Despite financial constraints, I am happy to share with the members of this august House that my Government has decided to release the 5% interim relief to our employees. The additional financial liability on this account is estimated at more than Rs. 300 crore.

**Pensioners  
Welfare**

110. I am happy to also announce that on the Punjab pattern my Government shall release 5% interim relief to the pensioners. I am sure that this decision will bring a smile on the face of the more than one lakh pensioners.

111. Medical requirements increase for the aged and I am aware of the problems being faced by the pensioners regarding shortage of budget provisions for their medical reimbursement claims. I am therefore happy to announce a special budgetary provision being made by me of Rs. 16 crore for the next year, to take care of the medical reimbursement claims of pensioners.

**Budget  
Estimates**

112. Speaker Sir, I now come to the macro budget estimates for 2007-08. As required under the FRBM Act I am separately presenting the Medium Term Fiscal Plan of the State Government for 2007-08 to 2010-11. This Medium Term Fiscal Plan does not fully account for the next Pay Commission liabilities since such Pay Commission recommendations are not yet known. During 2007-08, net additional borrowings is estimated at Rs. 1003 crore. Thus by the end of this financial year total borrowings shall be Rs. 22,930 crore rupees.

113. As per budget estimates for 2008-09, the total revenue receipts are estimated at Rs. 9,398 crore and the total revenue expenditure is estimated at Rs. 9,328 crore, leaving a surplus of Rs. 70 crore on the revenue account. On the capital account the total expected receipts shall be Rs. 3137 crore and total capital expenditure including loan repayments is Rs. 3214 crore. The fiscal deficit for 2008-09 is expected to be 5.4 % of the Gross State Domestic Product. Within the approved plan ceiling I have increased net capital expenditure from Rs. 1098 crore in this financial year to Rs. 1931 crore for the next year, which is an increase of 76%.

114. Total expenditure estimate for 2008-09 is Rs.12, 542 crore. The estimated expenditure on salaries is Rs. 3376 crore, estimated interest payments are Rs. 1834 crore, loan repayments are expected to be Rs. 992 crore and pension expenditure is estimated at Rs. 1206 crore.
115. As per the budget estimates, against an expenditure of every 100 rupees, the State will have 75 rupees as total revenue receipts including transfers from the Centre. The gap of Rs. 25 will have to be met by borrowings. Out of every 100 rupees of State revenue receipts 25 rupees will accrue from own tax revenues, 13 rupees from non-tax revenues, 9 rupees from share in Central taxes and 53 rupees from Central grants. Out of every 100 rupee spent, salaries will account for Rs. 27, interest payments Rs. 15, loan repayments Rs. 9, pensions Rs 10, maintenance Rs 7, and the remaining Rs. 32, will be spent on all other activities including major developmental works.

**Strengthening  
of Panchayats  
and Urban  
Bodies.**

116. The elected representatives of the Panchayati Raj institutions and Urban Bodies play a very important role in strengthening democracy. I am happy to announce an increase in their honorarium. The honorarium of the Chairperson, Zila Parishad would be increased from Rs. 3000/- to Rs. 3500 and that of the Vice Chairperson from Rs.2000/- to Rs. 2500/- per month. The honorarium for the Chairperson of Panchayat Samiti will be enhanced from Rs. 1500/- to 1800/- and that of the Vice Chairperson from Rs. 1200/- to Rs. 1500/- per month. The monthly honorarium for the Gram Panchayat Pradhans would be increased from Rs. 1000/- to Rs. 1200/- and that of the Up-Pradhans from Rs. 750/- to Rs.1000/-. The honorarium of Zila Parishad members will be increased from Rs. 1350/- to Rs. 1500/- and that of Panchayat Samiti members from Rs. 1000/- to Rs. 1200 per month. The sitting fee for the members of Gram Panchayats is also proposed to be increased from Rs. 125 to 150 per sitting with maximum two sittings per month. The total honorarium to these elected representatives would thus be about Rs. 18 crore for 2008-09.

117. The Panchayat Secretaries and Panchayat Sahayaks play a very important role in managing the affairs of Gram Panchayats. Panchayat Sahayaks have been urging to provide them promotional avenues. I consider this request genuine. At present 260 posts of Panchayat Secretaries are lying vacant. I propose that these vacant posts would be filled up on contract basis on monthly remuneration of Rs. 4680/-, by selecting/appointing senior most and eligible Panchayat Sahayaks from various districts with minimum 8 years service. The resultant vacancies of Panchayat Sahayaks would be filled through direct recruitment to ensure either a Panchayat Sahayak or Panchayat Secretary in every Panchayat. At present only the Panchayat Secretaries have the financial powers to sign cheques. This delays works where Panchayat Sahayaks are posted. I propose to delegate appropriate financial powers to the Sahayaks also.
118. For Nagar Panchayats the monthly honorarium of President shall be raised from Rs. 1000/- to Rs. 1200/-, that of Vice President from Rs. 800/- to Rs.1000/- and members from Rs. 500/- to Rs. 600/-. For Municipal Councils this amount shall be increased for President from Rs. 1500/- to Rs. 1800/-, for Vice President from Rs. 1200/- to Rs. 1500/- and for members from Rs. 500/- to Rs. 700/-. For the Mayor of Shimla Municipal Corporation this amount shall be increased from Rs. 2700/- to Rs. 3500/-, for Deputy Mayor from Rs. 1800/- to Rs. 2500/- and for the Councillors from Rs. 1500/- to Rs. 2000/-

Summary

119. Speaker Sir, before I conclude I would like to summarise some of the major initiatives of the annual budget for 2008-09.
- **As a measure of incentive for resource mobilisation, concerned revenue collection departments shall be given one percent of the additional tax collections made over and above their budget targets for the next financial year.**
  - **Against a decrease of 28% of Special Plan Assistance for 2007-08 in the previous government tenure, our government has achieved an increase of 32% in such assistance for 2008-09.**
  - **To revitalise and strengthen the extension activities of the Agriculture and Horticulture departments, more than 300 posts of Development officers and extension officers shall be**

filled up in the next year.

- MILKFED shall raise the procurement rates of milk by Rs. 2 per litre.
- Creation of new Directorate of Energy.
- Mukhya Mantri Gram Path Yojana reintroduced with a provision of Rs. 10 crore.
- Under Vidhayak Kshetra Vikas Nidhi Yojana, limit raised by Rs. five lakh for each Vidhayak.
- Total budgetary support of Rs. 95 crore for HRTC for 2008-09.
- 18,000 posts to be filled to meet the shortage of teachers.
- Remunerations of Grameen Vidya Upasaks to be rationalised.
- Provision of Rs. 197 crore for capital works of schools and colleges - which shall be 142% more than the current year provision of Rs. 81 crore.
- To meet shortages of doctors and paramedical staff, 250 doctors and 1000 nurses and other paramedical staff to be appointed.
- Three medical colleges planned under public private partnership in Mandi, Una and Hamirpur districts.
- Increase in capital outlay for Health institutions by 209 percent from Rs. 33.67 crore in current year to Rs. 104.01 crore for the next year.
- Introduction of free health insurance scheme for families below the poverty line.
- “Parchi fee” abolished in all health institutions.
- 85 Ayurvedic doctors to be appointed and new Ayurvedic clinics to be opened.
- State Plan outlay for rural water supply increased by 40% from Rs. 111 crore in this year to Rs. 155 crore for the next year. Total outlay to be Rs. 325 crore including central funding.
- IPH department to install 2000 hand pumps for the drought prone areas.
- Export restrictions of previous government on Khair lifted for the benefit of farmers.
- 1081 Gram Rozgar Sewaks to be recruited.
- Outlay for Panchayati Raj institutions increased by 50 percent from Rs. 87 crore in this year to Rs. 131 crore for 2008-09.
- Outlay for Urban Bodies increased by 72% from Rs. 57 crore to Rs. 98 crore for the next year.
- Historic decision to earmark Plan Budget in proportion to the

scheduled caste population of the State. Increase in this sub plan by 157% from Rs. 231 crore to Rs. 594 crore in the next year.

- Rs. 10 lakh for construction of Bhimrao Ambedkar Bhavans in every assembly constituency at a total cost of Rs. 6.80 crore.
- All remaining eligible persons below the poverty line to be covered under social security pension.
- Doubling of insurance benefits under “Matri Shakti Bima Yojna.” to Rs. 50,000 in case of accidental death and Rs 25,000 in case of loss of one limb.
- Government to also introduce a special insurance scheme for weavers.
- Scheme announced of pre-matric scholarships for poor students belonging to Other Backward Classes. 10,000 needy students to be benefited at a total estimated cost of Rs. 90 lakh per year.
- Synthetic athletic tracks to be built at Dharamshala and Hamirpur.
- Special drive to fill 3% posts reserved for outstanding sportspersons.
- Doubling of subsidised loan to Rs. One lakh for Ex-servicemen.
- Provision of Rs. 11 crore for construction of houses for police personnel.
- Thousands of direct and indirect jobs to be created through new police battalions.
- Provision of Rs. 5 crore to construct houses for revenue personnel.
- Release of 5% interim relief to Govt. employees and pensioners at a total estimated liability of more than Rs. 300 crore.
- Honorarium increased of all categories of elected representatives of Panchayati Raj institutions and Urban Bodies.
- 260 posts of Panchayat Secretaries to be filled from Panchayat Sahayaks.
- Net capital expenditure increased by 76% from Rs. 1098 crore in 2007-08 to Rs. 1931 crore for 2008-09.

**Conclusion** 120. I have briefly outlined all the major development initiatives which shall be taken by our government in the next year. The complete details of all budget schemes are available in the comprehensive budget documents presented in this august House.

121. Speaker Sir, from the day that our BJP Government has assumed office we have demonstrated our commitment to provide a transparent and efficient Government. Our focus of governance has been and shall remain the poor and downtrodden sections of society. Despite a difficult financial legacy, we have demonstrated our concern for the vulnerable poor by taking immediate decisions to raise minimum wages and social security pensions by 33 and 50 percent. I have further built upon this measure through my budget assurance that we shall provide welfare pensions to all the left out poor families. Insurance cover for the IRDP families has also been doubled.
122. Our decision of 50% reservation for women in Panchayati Raj and Urban Bodies shall empower them and enhance their social status. By earmarking a sub plan of Rs. 594 crore for the Scheduled Castes, we have taken a historic decision to make plan outlays in proportion to the population of scheduled castes. Through our budget we have also addressed concerns of the Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes, unemployed youth, ex-servicemen, government employees, pensioners and other sections of society.
123. Respected Speaker Sir, this budget is not just about welfare. It is also a forward looking budget which has created the right fiscal direction for investment activity in critical sectors such as hydropower, agriculture, irrigation, roads, education, health, drinking water supply, sanitation and environment, rural and urban development. In the fiscal space provided to me by hard budgetary constraints, I have tried to present before this august House a carefully thought out, forward looking and balanced budget.
124. With these words, Mr. Speaker Sir, I commend this budget to this august House.

**Jai Hind**  
**Jai Himachal**