

# Race to the top

Interview with Haryana Chief Minister Bhopinder Singh Hooda. BY RAJESH AHUJA

“We are in the process of making **Haryana the number one State**. We are trying to provide employment opportunities for all and are taking steps to deal with the problem of power shortage.”

BHUPINDER SINGH HOODA, who defeated the late Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal four times in parliamentary polls from his home town, Rohtak, is serving his first term as the Chief Minister of Haryana. Hooda, who humbled many political heavyweights, including former Chief Minister Bhajan Lal, has proved his mettle in the four years of his tenure. His mantra is to transform Haryana into the number one State in terms of development. Excerpts from an interview.

## What are the major achievements of your government?

Before we assumed office in March 2005, people were fed up with the misrule of the previous government. There was no rule of law and people used to feel insecure. Industry was shifting and there was no development worth its name.

Immediately after forming the government, I committed myself to making Haryana the number one State in all spheres of development. We have achieved our goal in many areas and are marching ahead in other sectors. As a result of the congenial atmosphere created for rapid development, Haryana is now on the threshold of an industrial revolution. Industrial projects involving an investment of about Rs.90,000 crore are under implementation and projects worth Rs.40,000 crore have been implemented.

Also, Haryana has received a foreign direct investment of Rs.9,000 crore in the last three years. Compare this with the fact that Haryana had received in the last 40 years, since its inception, a total investment of only about Rs.40,000 crore.

Today, Haryana has the highest per capita in-



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**BHUPINDER SINGH HOODA:** "Our emphasis is on increasing farm yields and improving the socio-economic status of the farming community."

come, among the big States, after Goa. It has the highest per capita investment and is the first in fiscal management. It is again at the top in giving the highest minimum wages. We were the first to successfully introduce semester system in schools and set up the country's largest EDUSAT network.

Haryana is the first State in northern India to set up a women's university. It is the first to give administrative and financial powers to panchayati raj institutions. Haryana received the Nirmal Gram Puraskar from the President of India. We were again the first in the country to provide justice at the doorsteps of people through a mobile court.

I am getting the support of all sections of society and we are working as a team to make our State more prosperous. I am confident that we will succeed.

## What is your agenda for the future?

We are still in the process of making Haryana the number one State. We are trying to provide employment opportunities for all and are taking

steps to deal with the problem of shortage of power.

**You are regarded as the “messiah” of farmers. What steps have you taken to ameliorate their lot?**

My government has followed a two-pronged strategy. On the one hand our emphasis is on increasing farm yields. On the other, we are focussing on improving the socio-economic status of the farming community. Our strategy is working and it has been highly appreciated.

We have increased the budget for agricultural development from Rs.142 crore in 2004-05 to Rs.298 crore in 2008-09. We have withdrawn the law under which farmers could be arrested for recovery of their cooperative loans. Also, the rate of interest on crop loans has been reduced from 11 per cent to 7 per cent. Apart from this, we have also ensured that the loanee farmers do not have to return more than the principal amount.

We had implemented a scheme to waive arrears of the electricity bills of farmers amounting to Rs.1,600 crore. We also waived Rs.4.71 crore worth of interest on the loans from cooperative banks, benefiting more than 3.82 lakh farmers, small shopkeepers and workers.

A new scheme has been formulated for those who pay their crop loans regularly. Under this, the agricultural loans will be available to them at an interest rate of 5 per cent instead of the existing 7 per cent.

**LOAN WAIVER**

The UPA [United Progressive Alliance] government has waived loans of farmers amounting to Rs.71,000 crore, Rs.2,189 crore of which has benefited 7.12 lakh farmers in Haryana. Earlier, a relief of only Rs.26.77 crore was announced by the then State government in 1987.

We have implemented a rehabilitation policy to safeguard the interests of those whose land is acquired. We have fixed area-based floor rates and these have been revised twice. In

addition to the compensation, a royalty would be given for 33 years with an annual enhancement. Those farmers whose land is acquired by the Haryana Urban Development Authority are entitled to a plot.

In case of acquisition of land for commercial purposes, the owners of the land would get sites for shops. The displaced farmers would also have the facility to get their children trained so as to enable them to get employment.

The farming community is appreciative of the efforts that I have made to lift the ban on the export of the Pusa-1121 variety of paddy and then get it declared as “basmati” variety. The Central government has given the highest MSP [minimum support price] for wheat and paddy. We have also given remunerative prices to the farmers for their produce.

**“We ensured that the loanee farmers do not have to return more than the principal amount.”**

We have announced the highest ever State Assured Price for sugarcane, which is Rs.170 a quintal for early maturing varieties, Rs.165 a quintal for mid-maturing varieties and Rs.160 a quintal for late-maturing varieties, thus giving an incentive to more than three lakh sugarcane farmers in the State. In respect of early maturing varieties, this rate is higher than Punjab’s by Rs.5. In Uttar Pradesh, the price announced for early maturing varieties was Rs.145 a quintal and for late varieties Rs.140 a quintal.

Construction of the 109-km-long Bhakhra Main Line-Hansi Butana Multipurpose Canal has been com-

pleted at a cost of Rs.392 crore to ensure equitable distribution of water. The Dadupur-Nalvi canal is being constructed on a war footing. A scheme has been formulated to construct the Mewat canal at a cost of Rs.326 crore in Mewat district. A new channel is being constructed in the NCR [National Capital Region] at a cost of Rs.225 crore to supply drinking water. We are also taking effective steps to get Haryana’s due share of the Ravi-Beas waters through the SYL [Sutlej Yamuna Link] canal.

**What steps are you taking to solve the perennial power crisis in the State?**

It is unfortunate that we had to inherit the problem of shortage of power as no previous government took effective steps to increase its generation. The installed generation capacity available with Haryana is 4,679.86 MW.

Out of this, 2,187.7 MW is located within the State, at the thermal power stations in Panipat and Faridabad and the hydroelectric station at Yamunanagar. The remaining comes from Haryana’s share in the Central sector generating stations and from long-term power contracts.

The peak demand in the State during 2008-09 is expected to go up to 7,335 MW considering the 14 per cent rate of growth. By 2009-10, demand can go up to 8,362 MW and in 2011-12 up to 10,867 MW. To meet this demand and to mitigate the deficit, new power-generation projects are being set up.

The government has implemented a programme to renovate and modernise old thermal generating units of Haryana Power Generation Corporation Ltd. (HPGCL). At present, HPGCL has a generation capacity of 2187.7 MW.

Among the State sector projects, a Rs.2400 crore, 2x300 MW coal-based plant, the Deen Bandhu Chhotu Ram Thermal Power Plant in Yamunanagar, has been commissioned. A Rs.4,297 crore, 2x600 MW Rajiv Gandhi Thermal Power Project

(RGTPP) is being set up at Khedar in Hisar district.

The cost of Rs.3.19 crore per MW for this project is the lowest in the country and is being talked about as a new benchmark. A greenfield project of this size takes 39 to 42 months for commissioning. However, for the Hisar project, an aggressive commissioning schedule of 35 to 38 months has been envisaged.

This is the first project in the northern region to be awarded mega project status by the Government of India. This has resulted in the reduction of project costs and lowered the cost of generation. With the commissioning of these two units, Haryana will be able to provide an additional 288 lakh units a day. The construction work at the project site is in full swing.

The 3x500 MW Indira Gandhi Super Thermal Power Project is a coal-based super thermal power project, which is being set up at Jhajjar. It would cost approximately Rs.7,892.42 crore. The project is being executed by NTPC from concept to commissioning. Subsequent operation and maintenance will be a joint venture with the Government of Delhi and the Government of Haryana.

The best commissioning schedule of three units under this project is 35, 38 and 41 months. Haryana's share of power is 750 MW. The project has equity contribution by NTPC at 50 per cent, Haryana at 25 per cent and Delhi at 25 per cent.

The State government has decided to procure power up to 2,113 MW on a long-term basis through tariff-based competitive bidding. The HPGCL has initiated procurement of 2,000 MW on behalf of both the distribution companies. Possibilities are being explored to set up a pet coke based power plant of about 250 MW capacity.

Nuclear power is another option being explored by HPGCL for generating electricity. A suitable site has been identified in Kumharia village in Fatehabad district for setting up a 2,800 MW (4x700 MW) nuclear power plant.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had given an assurance on setting up a nuclear power project in Kumharia during the foundation-stone laying ceremony of the RGTPP at Hisar on May 19, 2007. The matter is being pursued with the Government of India for the setting up of this project during the 11th Plan.

I am sure the power scenario will improve in a couple of years and we will be able to supply power for at least 20 to 22 hours daily.

**“We are implementing many schemes to reduce the gap between the poor and the rich.”**

**Are you satisfied with the steps being taken to improve the infrastructure in the State?**

We have given a boost to the development of infrastructure and the State is humming with activity. The State government has implemented a Rs.3,000 crore programme, the Rajiv Gandhi Bridges and Roads Infrastructure Development Programme. This will be completed in three phases by March 31, 2010.

As against Rs.1,744 crore spent by the previous government, our government has incurred an expenditure of Rs.2,824 crore during the last three and a half years for the construction of bridges and roads.

Metro rail services will be extended from Gurgaon to Manesar and it is also proposed to connect Faridabad-Bahadurgarh and Sonapat with this service.

The 135-km Kundli-Manesar-Palwal expressway is under implementation. Economic hubs will be developed around this expressway and it

would generate large-scale economic activities and employment opportunities. The expressway will pass through major towns from Kundli (Sonapat) on NH-1 [National Highway] to Palwal (Faridabad on NH-2) via Jhajjar, Bahadurgarh and Manesar. This expressway will be four-laned on the BOT [build-operate-transfer] basis at an estimated cost of Rs.1,200 crore for construction and Rs.630 crore for land.

For strengthening infrastructure in the irrigation sector, the Plan budget for irrigation has been increased from Rs.172.16 crore to Rs.650 crore during the year 2008-09. The Central Water Commission has approved the construction of a dam on the Kaushalya river at a cost of Rs.118 crore.

#### RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The research and development projects initiated in the State include a Central Institute of Plastic and Engineering Technology.

This is being set up at Panipat with an investment of Rs.23 crore. The National Institute of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management (NIFTEM) will be set up with an investment of about Rs.350 crore. HSIIDC [Haryana State Industrial Development Corporation] has offered 100 acres of land for this project at Kundli.

The National Automotive Testing and R&D Infrastructure Project (NATRiP) will be set up at IMT [Industrial Model Township], Manesar, with an investment of Rs.400 crore. The State government is providing 40 acres [16 hectares] of land for this project.

According to a survey conducted by the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy in 2007, Haryana is at the top in the country with a per capita investment of Rs.78,709. Although these achievements are encouraging, we have a long way to go.

**What steps are you taking to bring about qualitative changes in education?**

Only nations or societies that fo-



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**A WHEAT FARMER** at a grain-purchasing centre in Chandigarh. Haryana has increased its budget for agricultural development from Rs.142 crore in 2004-05 to Rs.298 crore in 2008-09. It has also reduced the rate of interest on crop loans from 11 per cent to 7 per cent.

cus on providing quality education to the people will progress. Therefore, we declared the year 2008 as the “Year of Education”. We have implemented incentive-based schemes so that children from poor families will not lack education for want of funds. At the same time, we have taken steps to ensure that the children get quality education, which will make them capable of competing globally.

My government has implemented a Rs.485-crore scheme under which monthly scholarships are given to children belonging to Scheduled Castes, Backward Classes-A and below poverty line families right from the time they get school admission until they finish college. The scheme will benefit about 13 lakh students.

Many new job-oriented courses have been introduced in schools and

colleges and the number of seats in technical institutions has been increased to 81,000. We are setting up a Rajiv Gandhi Education City at Kundli to provide world-class education to students.

A Central university will also be set up in Mahendragarh district. We have also enacted legislation to pave the way for the setting up of private universities.

**What initiatives are you taking to bridge the divide between the rich and the poor and bring about social changes in the State?**

We are following the policies of the Congress to ensure social justice for all. It is with this view that we got a fresh survey conducted to identify families living below the poverty line. This was conducted to ensure that no eligible person was left out and no ineligible person was enlisted.

**HOUSING FOR THE POOR**

We are implementing a Rs.2,300 crore scheme, the ambitious Mahatma Gandhi Gramin Basti Yojana. Under this, Scheduled Caste and Backward Classes-A families and families of all categories living below the poverty line [BPL] are being allotted residential plots of 100 square yards [81 sq.m.] each, free of cost.

Such colonies will have all basic amenities, including drinking water and electricity. Another scheme, Ashiana, is being implemented to provide dwelling units to the poor. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is being implemented in all districts of the State.

Under the public distribution system [PDS], BPL families are supplied foodgrains at subsidised rates. All Deputy Commissioners have been instructed to review the implementation of the PDS at the meetings of District Grievances Committees. We are implementing many other incentive-oriented schemes too through various departments and corporations to enhance the socio-economic status of the poor and reduce the gap between the poor and the rich. □