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Medicinal fund up by 5 times

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INCREASING POPULARITY of traditional medicines, thanks to people like Ramdev, has earned the government a new business venture — traditional Indian medicines.

The new zeal for the ministry has come from a five-fold increase in allocation for National Medicinal Plant Board (NMPB) in the 11th plan. The board has got Rs 950 crore for the plan period as compared to Rs 142 crore in the 10th plan.

Very soon the environment ministry will ask state forest departments to grow medicinal plants and conserve these plants in the forests in a bid to make them richer. "It will also boost the traditional Indian medicine industry, which has over 10,000 licensed pharmacies in India," a ministry official said.

According to the plan document, the money is to provide financial assistance to farmers to cultivate short rotation annuals and bi-annuals. But, there would also be funds for raising perenni-

MEDICINAL PLANTS			
Country region	Total species in flora	medicinal plant reported	% of total flora
World	297000	52885	10
India	17000	7500	44
Indian Himalayas	8000	1748	22

BOOST TO TRADITIONAL MEDICINE INDUSTRY					
	Ayurveda	Siddha	Unani	Tibetan	Homeopath
Medicinal plants known	2000	1121	751	337	482
Licensed pharmacies	8533	384	462	—	613
Hospitals	753	276	74	—	223
Dispensaries	15193	444	1193	—	5634
Registered practitioners	43872	117560	43578	—	217460
Under graduate college	219	6	37	—	178
Post graduate college	57	3	8	—	31

In trade there are 960 species of which 176 are in high trade demand segment. Out of them, 21 occur in temperate forests while 72 in tropical forests

als and trees through the Forest departments of the state governments. "The forest departments will have mainstream plants in their activities and develop innovative projects to avail the large Central funding in the 11th plan," a ministry note on medicinal plants said.

A senior ministry official said,

"The money earned can then be pumped back for forest and wildlife conservation."

The ministry has also urged the states to cut taxes on medicinal plants to boost its conservation. All these proposals would be discussed with state environment ministries next week.