



First time voters of CUHP speak out



Students in the campus engaged in a discussion on different candidates.

Deeksha Kulshrestha

Dharamshala: "Mei Janti Nahi (I don't know)" says Isha Bhardwaj, a Post Graduate student with the Central University of Himachal Pradesh, about the candidates in the fray at the Hamirpur Lok Sabha constituency, where she hails from. She is one among the 88,127 first time voters in the state who will exercise their democratic franchise during the elections in May.

As the state is preparing up for the elections to constitute the 17th Lok Sabha, first time voters are an unpredictable lot in the four Lok Sabha constituencies in the state - Kangra, Mandi, Hamirpur and Shimla. However, not all of them are indifferent about the elections, like Isha.

"Most of the first time voters are literate and educated like me, so they are keen about the educational qualification of the candidates", says Prateek Vasudeva,

another first time voter from Hamirpur constituency.

Lok Sabha elections is an occasion of great pomp and show, people participate with great enthusiasm and are concerned about their voting rights. "It's a big day, not only for people but also for country, as in last 5 years government has brought various changes, so the day of voting is a great day", said Nancy Dutta, a voter from Kangra Constituency. She is excited to go for voting for the first time in the elections. "I will surely go to vote this time, no matter what are the circumstances", adds she.

From 1989 general elections, "Indian National Congress" and "Bhartiya Janta Party" are the key players in the Lok Sabha elections in Himachal Pradesh. Both leading parties have announced their candidates for the four constituencies. Himachal Pradesh always has shown a

trend for change in legislature assembly elections, with incumbent governments being voted out after their term is over. But in parliamentary elections, different constituencies have shown favour for specific parties in the past.

But the imminent elections are a different story. It is always a hot topic for people here to see who will win. "Elections becomes trending topic for us and even we have put away our studies for this", says Archana Kumari, a student in the University who is a first time voter from Suppa village, in Chamba District.

BJP bagged all the 4 seats in the last Lok Sabha elections in 2014. But trends indicate that this time it is going to be a neck to neck fight for both parties in the state.

"Whomever forms the upcoming ruling government, my demand is that they should have the check on policies to see if they are properly implemented or not. They should know that people know about the schemes meant to help them," says Prateek Vasudeva.

Though many first time voters in the university do not know much about the candidates of their constituencies, they have expectations. "I don't know anything about the candidates of my constituency. But I need them to be sincere, honest, strict to their words", says Isha.

"Winning candidate should work for the betterment of the constituency than just absconding for 5 years' after getting elected," says Vaebhav Dogra, a student of the Department of MBA at the Central University of Himachal Pradesh.

Capacity building workshop on substance abuse organised in CUHP

Reena Thakur

Dharamshala: Substance abuse is destroying the present generation and humanity at large. To impart skill and training to professional social workers to tackle the issue in a more scientific manner, Department of Social Work in collaboration with National Service Scheme, Central University of Himachal Pradesh organized a two day workshop to generate awareness about substance abuse.

"It is important for everyone to know what substance abuse is and how it is affecting the youth of India. This capacity building program is not only been organized in Central University but also in various other universities and schools to impart awareness to the youth," Ambreen Jamali, Coordinator of the event said.

The event was inaugurated by Prof. (Dr.) Kuldeep Chand Agnihotri, Vice Chancellor, Central University of Himachal Pradesh. During the workshop, Dr. Ashutosh Pradhan spoke about how community is involved in the prevention of drug abuse amongst youth. Ex consultant of NACO, Vijay Kumar talked about the demand and supply control as a way of preventing drug abuse.

Shabab Ahmad, Assistant Professor with the Department of Social Work dealt a session on the type of drugs and their harmful effects. The program concluded by certificate distribution to all the participants.

A day in the life of an inmate of the Open Jail

Neha Thakur

Dharamshala: Most days, Chaman Singh* can be seen sitting inside the small shack by the roadside where he repairs shoes at the Civil Lines, near Government Degree College in Dharamshala. Sometimes he passes his time by cooking his favorite dishes in a self-made 'Chulah' in the corner of the shop. This has been Chaman Singh's routine for the last 9 years. When he had a fight with some people at his village some 20 years before, he had no idea that he will end up in here.

Chaman Singh is one among the inmates of the Open Jail in Dharamshala. He is serving a life term after getting convicted under Section 302 of Indian Penal Code for committing murder. As part of the policy of the open jail, authorities have allowed to him to run a shoe repairing shop near the jail premises.

A history of good behavior in the initial days of his punishment has made him eligible to be transferred to the open jail. He is repentant about the momentous mistake he made 20 years before. "I did a mistake but now this is my current situation where I need to come out at 7 am and go back at 5.30 pm. Anyhow, I am happy that I am working at least," he added.

However, there are other sorrows which haunt him. Despite working hard, he was not able to save his son when a health condition forced him to undergo a kidney transplant surgery. "Bahot koshish ki, par shayad bhagwan ko yahi manzoor tha, nahi jeene dia uski bimari ne, (we made a lot of efforts but perhaps god's decision was not to let him live with his diseases)," says Chaman Singh. Despite the surgery, his son was not able to survive as he died soon at the age of 24.

"Meri ek beti bhi hai jiski shadi mene karvayi, yahan se chutti leke or ab uska ek beta bhi hai jo ki chamba mien rehta hai (I have a daughter too, whom I have married off. Now she has a kid and lives in Chamba)," says Chaman Singh as his face glitters with a smile of contentment. He remembered how he went for his daughter's wedding after DG and the High court issued permission on a returnable bond of Rupees One Lakh or property worth equivalent. He was able to perform all the rituals at his daughter's marriage.

As an inmate of the Open jail, he gets one month parole every year, when he returns to his wife and family at Palampur. A chance for a jail break ever occurred to him? "Where to go running?", asks he. "I will have to go home at last and soon I will be caught again. When we have so good



Representational Image

facilities here I never thought of running off", says Chaman Singh as he pulls with a clincher giving finishing touches to the torn shoe in his hand.

The momentary independence of the open jail is subject to stringent terms and conditions. "If I don't go back in time or go beyond 8 km from the jail, I will never be allowed to come out here again," says he.

"I earn and send some money to my wife; she is the only one with whom I have a responsibility now," he says. He has to also contribute Rs. 920 from his earnings in a month to the welfare fund maintained by the welfare trust in the Open jail.

Crouched among a pile of damaged shoes and sandals on the floor of his shack, Chaman Singh recalls his past

when he was a worker with a private firm in Amritsar. He pulls together the collars of his yellow shirt, adjusting the multi-coloured sweater over it. "I lived in Amritsar, I have a house there. Me and my wife used to live there when I was working with a company which made soft drinks there."

The siren from the nearby DC office wakes him up. "Ab yahin rehna hai, parivar se mil leta hoon, dukan hai kaam ke liye kedi hoke ye milta hai, isi mien khush hun" (Now I have to stay here, I am able to meet my family and work, I am happy with all this), he says taking a deep sigh, as he prepares to wind for the day to go back to his cell.

*Name changed under request

India to propose international trade ban on Star Tortoise



Star tortoise (*Geochelone elegans*) is a fresh water turtle found in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. (Image Credit: David V Raju/wikiMedia Commons)

Priya Nagar

In certain regions in Asia, star tortoise (*Geochelone elegans*) is a sign of good luck and prosperity. However, the belief seems to be bad luck for the turtle, making it the most trafficked freshwater turtle in the world based on seizures in the past. As the trafficking and trade threaten the species, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, which are home to wild star tortoises, are going to propose a ban on all international trade of this fresh water tortoise. The proposal will be moved in the upcoming 18th Conference of the Parties (CoP) meeting to be held in Colombo in May.

According to official reports, the proposition will recommend to move Star Tortoise from Ap-

pendix II to Appendix I of CITES, an international agreement on trade of endangered animals and plants to which India is a signatory. Species included in the Appendix I of CITES are threatened due to trade and so are banned from commercial trade internationally.

According to an analysis about the status of Star Tortoise by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), trade may cause a thirty percent decline in star tortoise population by 2025. "The population of the species is not small but it has been estimated that if threats continue, declines of greater than 30% (but less than 50%) are likely to occur during the three generation period from 1995–2025," says the IUCN analysis.

According to the estimates

from TRAFFIC, an international organization which works to bring down illegal wildlife trade, at least 48400 live star tortoises illegally trafficked were confiscated by authorities between 2000 and 2018. The officially sanctioned trade of the specimens bred under captivity for the period stood at 63000 live specimens, as per CITES Trade database.

One of the most prominent reasons for the increase in illegal collection and trading of star tortoise is their popularity as pets. Across the Asian region, except in Sri Lanka, it is considered to bring good luck and fortune.

In India, Star Tortoise has been placed in Schedule IV of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 since 1980. This makes it illegal to hunt this species or trade it domestically without a license. However, these restrictions were not very effective.

For instance, a study by British researchers in 2015 on illegal trade of star tortoise in India, has recorded Gujrat and Andhra Pradesh as the domestic trade hubs. It recorded the existence of organized trade networks originating from Andhra Pradesh, with the village Madanapalle in Chittoor district being the site for the collection of 55500 juvenile wild star tortoises within a year.

The species is being smuggled from India and Sri Lanka appears to be heading to Asian countries such as Thailand and China and also in the pet markets of Europe and the USA.

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The Guest Column

I see Fire

*I see Fire rendered in your
Eyes,
They burn and dazzle, mes-
merize.
I'm lost in them, I conflagrate,
I cannot cease, I cannot
abate!*

*What consumes me so in
your Fire?
Is it just Passion, Love or De-
sire?
It blisters the Eyes, Beauty
like yours,
You're the Answer; you Un-
lock all Doors.*

*I had but one Moment in
your Gaze,
But that one Moment shall
last all my Days,
For e'er since I've burnt in
that embrace,
I've learnt to ponder, suffer
in sweet Disgrace.*

*I cannot hold the Floods
you've left behind,
I couldn't comprehend your
Fire, I lost my Mind.
You're spiralling higher and
higher, lost within the Gyre,
I'm Ash now, and yet I burn;
I see Hope, Destruction, I see
Fire.*

Naren Verma

Department of English and European Languages

Campus Voices!



Photo by: Ajay Kumar

Kiran (on the Left) and Kalpana, of Sociology Dept. are from Pangti, Chamba. They haven't been back to Pangti from 8 months. Its a 12 hours bus ride from Dharamshala to reach Chamba but during winters roads are closed due to heavy snowfall and landslides. Kalpana says her ambition has brought her far away from home, as she is interested to learn more about societies and their problems. She wants to research tribal cultures across the globe. For Kiran, the ambition is to crack UGC-NET.



Photo by: Swati Thakur

"I love bikes. Whenever I see one, I day-dream myself wearing a leather jacket, leather boots and bike riding gloves and going to the mountains to have a marvelous ride all by myself. One of my dreams is to be a bike rider, and I'm inspired from my dad. My father is a great rider. I've grown up watching him and so my interest has developed into my love for the bikes." (Suman Bushari, M.A English)



Photo by: Umang Arora

"It's been 6 months since I moved to Dharamshala from Assam. The journey had been difficult but beautiful so far. I've travelled half of the Pradesh yet and it has been an amazing expedition. I've fallen in love with its people and culture. People were hesitant in accepting me at first, but now I feel like I'm one of them. I've made friends from all corners of Himachal here in this university. I'll never forget this amazing part of my life!"

(Manjil Bodo from Assam, Dept of MSW)

Photographs in the 'Campus Voices' are from a photo project by students of Photojournalism. Find more stories from the project at our instablog: [Journokids](https://www.instagram.com/journokids)