



# Voice

wisdom of words....

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## Dharamshala reels under scarcity of parking spaces

By Shubham

**Dharamshala:** Despite being selected to be developed as a smart city, Dharamshala is yet to have enough parking spaces in the city limits. Though a new parking lot has just finished construction in the DC office compound, it is limited in capacity.

Baldev Guleria, the guard who takes care of the parking lot in the DC office, says that when traffic increases the place gets filled easily. "This parking lot is too small and gets filled up easily when the traffic increases", he said. The parking lot can accommodate only 60 cars.

Most of the hotels have no parking available and even government offices have insufficient parking. Due to this, in most places in the city limits and the adjoining tourist spots, vehicles park on the road side, often



Traffic jam near Kaccheri junction in Dharamshala on Monday. Image Credit: Shubham

causing traffic jams, especially on peak days.

"Dal Lake is a good place but there is no parking area for tourist vehicles. They have to be parked on the roadside," said Nikita Patel, a tourist from Gujarat. Especially after the recent snowfalls, road to Naddi and Dal Lake got choked with traffic jams

on weekends as hundreds of tourists poured in to enjoy the snow. In the absence of parking space, vehicles parked on the side of these narrow roads holds up the entire traffic. "My family members had to wait for an hour in the car to reach the tourist spot, due to the traffic jam", says Nikita.

This is also affecting the

local business as well. According to Saurabh Thakur, owner of Thakur Tea Stall near the Police Ground, it costs him good business on certain days. "Due to lack of parking, people are not able to stop nearby to have a cup of tea," says he.

The narrow roads are a big issue here, especially

ly during the peak season from May to June, says Vijay Kumar, a traffic police officer in Dharamshala.

"There shall be one way system in the city to improve the situation", says he. Many shop keepers feel that the parking problem in Dharamshala and nearby tourist places such as Bhagsu Naag, Dal Lake, Mcleodganj, and Naddi could be eased by developing some more parking areas.

The absence of parking spaces has also resulted in people getting used to parking by the roadside. "More parking lots are needed but strict rules are also required as in case of other smart cities like Chandigarh", says Vijay Kumar. "In those cities, police quickly takes away vehicles which violate parking rules", he said.

### WORDS OF THE DAY

**ELUCIDATE**  
-to make clear or easy to understand

**SURREPTITIOUS**  
-kept secret, particularly because it would not be approved of

"I offer you peace.  
I offer you love.  
I offer you friendship.  
I see your beauty.  
I hear your need.  
I feel your feelings.  
My wisdom flows from the highest source.  
I salute that source in you.  
Let us work together.  
For unity and peace."

- Mahatma Gandhi

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## Number of Government schools with less than 60 students increases in the state

By Shalini Thakur



Students going to school (representative image) Credits: Wiki Media Commons

**Dharamshala:** The number of government schools with less than 60 students is increasing in the state for the last decade, reveals the latest Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2018 brought out by Pratham, an NGO working to improve quality of education. According to the report, 58.1% government schools in the state had less than 60 students in 2009, now the figure stands at 83.1%.

"In our school there are 50 students at present. The strength was the same last year too. But earlier, we used to have more than 70 students," says Anjana Kumari, a Para Assistant teacher in Government School, Khaniyara.

According to ASER 2018, the enrollment of students between the

age group of 6 to 15 in private schools in the state marked more than two percent increase between 2016 and 2018. This is just 0.03% at national level.

"I am a former student of this school which started in 1927. At that time it used to be at its best", says Vijay Kumar, who heads the Government Primary School in Khaniyara. "But now things have changed, everybody prefers private schools," he adds.

"Quality of education won't be improved just by yielding infrastructure to schools" says Naveen Bhandari, Principal of Government Senior Secondary School at Khaniyara Khas, Dharamshala. "Being a father, I want my son to get good education. He is studying in a private school because I

know the conditions of government schools. In my school itself, there are no recruitments of teachers for the past one year," he says.

However, not everything is hunky-dory with private schools in the state as per the figures released. For instance, the percentage growth in students of 8<sup>th</sup> standard who can do division was 4.3 between 2016 and 2018 in government schools. But it fell by 5.1 percent in private schools in the state for the same period.

"The students who are weak in studies are removed from private schools. Sending them to our schools is the only option left with their parents," says Anjana. Despite this, learning levels of students enrolled in government schools in the state shows improvement. Percentage of 5<sup>th</sup> standard students in government schools who can read at least a 2<sup>nd</sup> standard text was 65.3 in 2016, which improved to 74.5 in 2018. Corresponding figures for the private school students were 78 in 2016 and 80.4 in 2018.

## On Display, From The Graveyard Of Pattons

By Manish Gupta

**Dharamshala:** "The M-47 Patton tank captured from Pakistan during the 1965 war is like a medal for Indian Army", says Col KKS Dadwal (Retd), the current chairman of war memorial in Dharamshala about the battle tank on display at the memorial.

According to the memorial officials, it belonged to the 6<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division of Pakistan Army and was among the tanks captured by the 1<sup>st</sup> Armoured Division of Indian Army in the battle of Chawinda in one of the largest tank battles after World War II. Also used as MBT (Main Battle Tank), the M47 Patton tanks were the most advanced tanks during the period. During the 1965 conflict, India has destroyed 471 Pakistani tanks as per official estimates and captured 38 of them.

"The tank's barrel is kept low as it is the practice with captured tanks", said Dadwal. The tank on display at the Dharamshala war memorial, the only War Memorial in



An M-47 Patton tank captured from Pakistan army on display at the War Memorial in Dharamshala. Image credit: Manish Gupta

tourist from Punjab.

Named after General George S Patton, an exponent of tank battle, who commanded the US Third Army in World War II, Patton tanks were considered formidable weapons till 70s.

The 1965 Indo-Pak conflict became the first real combat test for Patton tanks and it did not turn good for it. During the conflict, Indian army decimated more than 97 Pakistani tanks in the Khem Karan- Asal Uttar battle on 10th September 1965. According to US war historian Steven Zaloga, more than 65 of these tanks were M47 & M48 Pattons. The place and the battle came to be known as the 'graveyard of Pattons'.

# Time for Indian politics to regain civility in debate

By: Umang Arora

Indian politics appears to be at a very alarming stage. With the kind of behavior shown by our representatives in Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha, there's no hope for healthy discussions in our democracy.

Lately, the sessions have deteriorated to bedlam whenever a controversial issue comes up for deliberation. Rajya Sabha was adjourned till 2 pm on Tuesday due to Congress protest seeking Home Ministers' resignation on the NRC issue. Samajwadi Party members later started protesting against the 13-point Roster system disrupting the later session. Speaking outside Parliament House, Speaker Sumitra Mahajan said that "unruly behavior" would not be accepted from any Member of Parliament. "I had warned them



Parliament being disrupted by MPs

three times not to make noise or throw papers but despite my warning, they created a ruckus." The productivity of Rajya Sabha, in this budget session, clocked at a mere 5%, according to some estimates.

There's no country in the world where conflicts don't take place. Debates and discussions are a sign of healthy democracy. However, minimum civility should be maintained even at the face of extreme dis-

agreements. Hooting, hugging or screaming, they all interrupt the activities, wasting the public money involved in holding a session.

Unruly behavior in the Sabhas is nothing new in the Indian context. The President's address to a joint session was disrupted on 18th Feb 1963 by some of the MPs for the speech being in English instead of Hindi. Then Prime Minister Nehru condemned the act and described it

as "the first of its kind" and "most regrettable".

"The Rules of Conduct and Parliamentary Etiquette" of the Rajya Sabha draws out the rules very clearly. "The House has the right to punish its members for their misconduct whether in the House or outside it. In cases of misconduct or contempt committed by its members, the House can impose a punishment in the form of admonition, reprimand, and with-

drawal from the House, suspension from the service of the House, imprisonment and expulsion from the House," it says. It is the duty of Chairman/Deputy Chairman of the Parliament to apply the existing rules strictly.

The way politicians presented themselves in the Sabha can not be shown to the young in the country as a civilized example of debate. In fact, the culture of debate is coming down day by day. For instance, out of the 14 bills passed in the winter session, 9 were deliberated upon for less than an hour and a half only. Even when someone's speaking, the other side would keep hooting or interrupting.

Most of the politicians don't even bother to show up. Only 5% of MPs have 100% at-

tendance. While the average attendance of MPs is 73% against the required 80%, there are MPs like Hema Malini(BJP), Mausam Noor(INC), Anoop Mishra(BJP) or Muzaffar Hussain Baig(PDP) who've attendance of 39%, 47%, 46% and 11% respectively during their tenure as per the data of PRS Legislative Research. Almost 25 MPs have never participated in any discussion or asked any questions ever.

We talk of becoming a superpower nation but it is only possible if the citizens, most importantly our politicians, acknowledge the importance of debate in a democracy and follow the ways of expressing disagreement in civility. Though democracy is also about agreeing to disagree, it shall not be by shouting the other down.

## Millennials, finding their way towards Sustainability

By: Preshita Thakur

State of Fashion 2018 report by BoF and McKinsey reveals that nearly sixty percent of global millennials are willing to spend on sustainable brands. Nielsen have dubbed 2018 as the year of the influential sustainable consumer which they credit entirely to the millennials and their shopping patterns.

Millennials as a word refers to people born between the early 1980s to late 1990s, marked by their increased use of communication, media, and digital technologies. A very common misconception is that millennials are into 'fads'. But aren't we all confusing millennials as the immature type, not at all concerned about the quality of their consumption, wasting their money on whatever that's 'in trend'?

It is high time we clear those judgemental clouds and see where this generation is headed to. What better way to learn about them if we don't include fashion as a way to understand the word 'sustainable' which has ended up in their regular life jargon.

Mehak Sharma, a mil-

lenial fashion blogger with more than 40k of followers on Instagram, says; "everyone knows what sustainability is. We've all studied it at school, in college, but what makes us different is our action". She points out that her regular posts about skin care are popular because people want to know about brands which don't hurt the environment and their skin. "They're very conscious about the chemicals", she says.

It is no wonder that names like Forest Essentials, Innisfree, Khadi Natural are a hit for their natural skincare and beauty products. Indian brands such as Pero, Nicobar, Bodice, 11:11 are all popular for their sustainable yet fashionable clothes and accessories.

'Sustainable' is such a hit that major fast fashion retailers like H&M have also introduced their own line called "Conscious" to cater to the growing niche. Celebrities like Emma Watson regularly promotes sustainable fashion through a special Instagram account where she details her sustainable practices.

The fact is that today, millennials have far more spending power and are willing to contribute towards an ethical cause. However, more brands need to identify this developing supermarket which will not only help them but also our home, our ecosystem. And to people who have still not thought about this, now is the time to think and act accordingly.

Designer Mercy Renthlei, who started her own accessories label 'MERCY' last year, points out to the same principle for using canvas and other eco-friendly fabrics. "It is a good investment with varying results, less clut-

## Dharmshala's oldest Taxi Union completes 27 years

By: Ajay Kumar



Lined up taxis and some drivers near the taxi union office.  
Image Credit: Ajay

Hoshiar Singh is sipping hot tea from a small glass, sitting on a worn out chair in the office of Dharamshala Taxi Union, as the western disturbance pours cats and dogs in Dharamshala. "We have some 200 taxis operating with us" he says, pointing to the small Alto cars queued up in the rain outside. He is the current president of the oldest taxi union in Dharamshala.

On his right side, a man is making an announcement through the microphone. "Kripaya dhyaan se sunen, jo bhee 11 baje yaatriyon ko McLeodgunj le gayen the, Apne Apne taxi me dekhe. Agar yaatriyon ka koi saamaan taxi mein mile hai to kripaya union ke office mein suchit karen". (Please listen carefully. Whoever took passengers to Mc-

leodgunj, please check if any of the belongings of the passengers is left in the taxi. If found, please report to the office.)

"Daily we receive calls from passengers in our customer care number regarding baggage, purse or mobile left in the taxis and we try solving each case", says Singh while taking another sip of tea. "Usually the driver submits the found article here and we return it to the passengers after verification", he added.

The union came to existence in 1992 mainly as a collective to avoid any sorts of quarrel and fights between taxi drivers in this small hill station. "It was also necessary to make everything systematic and when people are together they are strong", says Singh. Now there are

three more taxi unions in Dharamshala- Mcleodgunj Taxi Union, Bhagsu Taxi Operators Union and Ex-Serviceman Taxi Union.

These unions enable many in the local population to earn daily bread by driving taxis hassle-free. Praveen Kumar (35), is from Sakoh was not able to complete his education and decided to try his luck as a taxi driver in Dharamshala. "Since I did not complete my schooling, so I cannot try changing my job", says Kumar. It has been 15 years since he is in this business and now owns a taxi.

However, hassle-free does not mean they don't face other issues. "Rain in Dharamshala is really frustrating", says Kumar, zipping up his jacket.

"It keeps raining which badly affects the business because very fewer tourists come here if it rains", he says. According to him, the daily earnings which range between ₹3000-5000 during the peak season of May - July, it plummets to ₹250-1200 during the rest of the year. Occasional parking fines, maintenance cost and the increasing number of taxis are also part and parcel of his daily concerns.

# "We want respect", hired hands and the noises in their heads

By: Harshil Thakur

Dharamshala: "Being a labourer in India is considered a low class job. Only the rich have power and respect while the poor always face discrimination. Often it feels that we are yet to get freedom", says Ramesh Kumar, a young man of 22 from Bihar who has been living in Dharamshala for the last 5 years. He lives here with friends and relatives, all of whom work as manual labourers at construction sites in and around Dharamshala. For them, being an unskilled migrant labourer in Dharamshala is a mixed bag of experiences.

"My father was also a labourer and he taught me to lead a dignified and hardworking life," says Ram Charan Manjhi hailing from Sitamarhi district of Bihar. "It's been five years now in Dharamshala and living conditions here are very good. Himachalis are very soft spoken but as in every society, there are some bad people here also who mistreat us and discriminates for our language and skin colour", added Ram Charan Manjhi.

Despite that, Dharamshala attracts them for certain reasons. In



A group of migrant labourers at their working site near Sakoh village.

Bihar, the daily wages they can expect range between Rs.220-250 daily. Here it is Rs. 330-350. Moreover, the social condition and the hierarchical society in their home state do not allow them to carry out certain better paying professions - like driving a rickshaw in their own town. This, according to Ram, forces many youngsters like him to come out of Bihar to earn more.

Though the current government in Bihar has made many efforts to decrease migration by providing employment within the state, they are simply not enough for a state with high population. "During floods our villages sank, resulting in heavy loss. Government did not help us to bear that loss", says Ram Charan.

home at the age of 17 to feed his family which now has his parents, his wife and two children.

Ram and Ramesh consider hard work as the only option to move forward, but they find that the society around looks down upon physical labour. "We believe in hard work, not in begging. We work as labourers at construction sites, or as street vendors. But society has never given us respect for what we do. It is very difficult to comprehend India as a place where hard work is not appreciated, when it involves manual labour," says Ramesh.

"We are giving our hundred percent in constructing India, but in return we only want respect and dignity like in any other profession," told Ram Charan.

## It never rains, it pours in Dharamshala...

Picture by: Sayed Adi Shah Ashraf



The support wall near the taxi stand in Kotwali Bazar has collapsed last week. The collapse of the wall now makes the buildings nearby and the stairway from the busstand to the bazar potentially dangerous and unstable.

# "Whatever happens now, I will not be silent. I will run away with kids if I've to"

By: Umang Arora

"My husband wouldn't use protection, *Didi*. I've to buy contraceptive pills every now and then. I now have started to feel pain in various parts of my body. He would drink daily. I don't know what to do. I cannot even leave him. My children will suffer," says Kusum\*, a woman in her mid-forties who hails from Uttar Pradesh and works as a home maid at several houses in Jalandhar city.

This is not just the story of Kusum. Many women, living in the villages of rural North India, virtually go through similar experiences. Dominated by the husband, tortured by the in-laws, they often don't speak to anyone about the misery they put up with. Domestic violence related to dowry and sex determination is a matter of regular occurrence for them, even today.

"He even said that if I get pregnant somehow, he'll dump me and marry someone else," says Kusum with fear in her eyes. Kusum's story about how she manages to go home at the end of the day to face her husband is a shaking one.

Kusum has three boys but her husband won't let any of them go to school. He wants them to pick up errands



Representational image

(Credit: Umang Arora available in the residential complexes in the city, like washing people's cars, which will pay up small sums. She has tried several times to enroll them in the school but he wouldn't let them go.

The misery does not condone the hard work needed to earn the daily bread. Her daily shift starts from 8 in the morning till 9 in the night. She would find extra part time work as well to make the ends meet.

"Whatever I earn at the end of the month, he manages to snatch away. Even if I try to hide it from him, he would make me swear by my children. I cannot lie then." Kusum's husband usually takes

away all the money and spends it on booze.

"Fortunately", her mother-in-law has died but it is her husband now, who is making life a hell for her. "It's good if this person also dies, I'll sail my kids somehow," she murmurs. "My mother gave bed, utensils, jewelry and what not; still my in-laws used to beat me up and would ask me to get cash from my mother. My mother has brought up us three sisters on her own" recalls Kusum.

Her father would beat up her mother when they used to live in their gaon. As a little girl, she would see her sisters getting beaten up by her father and in-laws. "Every night my father used to beat my mother for not giving birth to a boy," recalls Kusum. When it became unbearable, her mother ran away from there. She was carrying her fourth child in the womb at that time.

There's a long, long battle for Kusum to fight through. For herself and her children. "The bastard doesn't even die! Whatever happens now, I will not be silent. I will run away with kids if I've to," fidgets Kusum, as she takes the apron off her. She is done for the day. Picking up her *jholā*, and left for home.

\*Name changed for the privacy

Film Review By: Anuj Kumar Pandey

## 'Soni': A Slow Burn Drama About Two Delhi Cops Facing Misogyny

Film: Soni

Director: Ivan Ayr

Cast: Geetika Vidya Ohlyan, Saloni Batra, Vikas Shukla, Mohit Chauhan

Production: Kimsi Singh, Kartikeya Narayan Singh, Jabberwockee Talkies, The Film Cafe Production

Rating: 4 out 5

Soni, the latest Netflix release in India, is an important and brave drama which chooses to tackle issues related to misogyny and all the implications it entails in our society. It opts to do so by showcasing the issues faced by women in law enforcement, at their working place and at home. It depicts these issues through the bonding that develops between the eponymous protagonist Soni (Geetika Vidya Ohlyan), a Sub Inspector with the Delhi Police and her mentor like superior Kalpana (Saloni Batra).

The opening scene depicts a woman being stalked and verbally harassed by a cyclist and it ends with her giving him a beat down in a fit of justified, though worrisome, anger. The woman is

Soni who stays hot-headed under such circumstances throughout the film's narrative. Kalpana, an IPS officer and Soni's superior is an exact contrast to this in personality. With her calm demeanor, Kalpana tries to deal with Soni's outbursts and their implications.

The film draws parallels between these two women by showing the domestic situation in terms of the social pressure faced by Soni from neighbours to reconcile with her husband or Kalpana's in-law's pestering for her hard work and not taking enough time for home. The plot kicks in when Soni gets transferred for beating up an inebriated navy officer who tries to harass her.

In terms of screenplay, it has very subtle moments embedded throughout. This subtlety is reflected in instances such as a radio announcement about a new initiative by the govt to segregate Delhi buses based on gender that hints that the gender issue, at heart, is a systemic one. At one point, it shows corrupt cops chiding a man for of-



A screengrab from the movie featuring them bribe which he has to loan from his girlfriend, again insinuating the subtle aspects of masculinity norms. Moments like these in Soni, which points to a better world building, is an unusual departure from mainstream Bollywood's way of dealing with such themes.

The brilliant acting by the leads Ohlyan in terms of the range of emotions and subtleties she invokes in her role and Batra who conveys a whole lot even in an understated performance, is to watch out for. Even the bit players leave a mark in your mind with their performance.

Director Ivan Ayr chose to make this movie after learning about the 2012 Delhi rape case. His D.O.P David Bolen has shot most of the scenes around Delhi in cold winter nights which helps build the tensions and uncertainties in scenes and builds up a very compelling atmosphere. It is littered with a lot of silent scenes and has almost no music in it which along with single take scenes informs the narrative of a much needed realism.

All in all, Soni is a slow burn drama which realistically portrays its important subject matter. It demands a serious viewing.

# Uttar Pradesh voters gear up for verdict 2019

By Syed Adi Shah Ashraf

Lucknow: The air is getting warm in UP despite the prolonged winter spell as major parties prepping up their pre-poll games in the state for the imminent Lok Sabha elections. Expected in April – May this year, the elections will find UP, with its sizeable LS seat share, playing a major role in deciding who will rule in Delhi. Tea shop discussions are already on about the possible outcome.

"Public is now educated and sincere and they will vote for those who will work for the future of the country," says Sanjay Tripathi, a businessman from Lucknow. He adds that the election should be held on the ground of development rather than caste or religion.

Moizuddin Ansari, a cycle mechanic who has been living in Lucknow for the last 35 years is that the SP-BSP alliance has better chances this time. "Akhilesh Yadav has worked for UP and I will definitely vote for him," says An-



Rumi Darwaza, a historical monument in Lucknow (Image Credit - Wikimedia)

sari. SP and BSP have formed an alliance this time. Both parties have decided to contest 38 seats each and will leave 2 seats for smaller allies.

Though a staunch supporter of Akhilesh, Anzari says he is unsatisfied with SP and BSP alliance. "This alliance is formed just to oppose NDA. It must work for the state and county, instead," he says.

However, this thinking is not reflected by many SP supporters. For instance, Ram Yadav, a shopkeeper from Lucknow has only one slogan, "no one else than

Akhilesh Yadav." He told that he has been voting SP all his life and he will continue to do so.

Ritesh Kumar lives in Gomti Nagar and is an employee of a private firm. He thinks this time BJP should be winning the fray. "I used to vote for BSP, but now on seeing the larger picture, I think I will vote for BJP," says he.

INC has decided to fight in UP alone this time. Nitish Dubey, a journalism student with the Lucknow University showed a different picture for the election. According to him, voters are very much confused with the

alliances and it will definitely have an effect in the upcoming election. Being a ground level worker for Congress, he is confident that his party will make good this time in UP.

It is not difficult to spot Modi fan boys, especially among young voters. Suraj, an engineering student from Babu Banarsi Das University says he is going to vote for BJP mainly because of Modi. "For me the major concern is development and better opportunities and Modi, I believe, is working in the exact direction," he says.

However, UP is turning out to be a tough nut to crack for major parties. The exit polls point out that the SP-BSP alliance can actually play spoilsport by dampening the hopes of INC and BJP in UP. During the last general elections in 2014, BJP along with its ally Apna Dal bagged 73 out of the 80 seats leaving SP with five seats and INC with two seats.

Cartoon Corner by Shubham



## IIT Mumbai drops Pashi from screening list, courts controversy

By: Anuj Kumar Pandey



Siddharth Chauhan

Shimla:Pashi, a film made by Himachali film maker Siddharth Chauhan ran into controversy on Saturday after IIT Mumbai Film Festival authorities decided to drop it off the screening schedule owing to "explicit" content.

Chauhan expressed his dismay in the festi-

val organisers decision through a FaceBook post.

"They feel that my film will make the audience feel uncomfortable. I don't get it!" said Chauhan about the decision in his Facebook post.

"An institution like IIT Mumbai first approaches me to screen my film at their Film Festival which is being held tomorrow and day after (9th & 10th Feb, 2019). They chased me for days seeking permission and after all the discussion which followed, they finally de-

cide to NOT screen the film," he said in the post. The film maker alleged that organisers did not inform him about the decision to drop the film. IIT Mumbai authorities are yet to release an official response about the incident.

After his social media post garnered lot of attention, he clarified his remarks through another post.

"I do not blame the students and volunteers who must have worked very hard for this event. I know that they must

have fought for my film in their own capacity. If anyone is to be blamed and shamed it's the ones who had the authority to do it," he said in his post on Sunday.

Pashi has been screened at multiple film festivals across the globe and has garnered a lot of accolades for the Shimla born filmmaker. It was also shortlisted for final selection at the Academy Awards. Pashi explores issues related to homosexuality through fantasy and desire of a young teenager.

## Unsung Heroes of the campus...



"I have been working in this institution since 2010. The staff, the students and colleagues are very kind and polite. However, I clean women's washrooms and have to clean gents as well." - Krishna Devi

## FUN SECTION



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