



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mandi's meticulous Five who have proven their mettle beyond words

TNR SPECIAL

Prof Anupama Singh

ACADEMIC LUMINARY, CHAMPION OF SARDAR PATEL UNIVERSITY

MUNISH SOOD | TNR NEWS NETWORK

MANDI: As we commemorate International Women's Day on Friday (March 8, 2024), TNR embarks on a journey of recognition and celebration. It's a day to honour the trailblazers, the visionaries and the change-makers who have shaped history and continue to inspire generations. From the suffragettes who fought for women's right to vote to the activists leading movements for gender equality, the contributions of women have been monumental. As we reflect on their achievements, let us not only recognise their past triumphs but also commit to creating a future where every woman can thrive.

Serving as the Pro VC at Sardar Patel University in Mandi, she boasts of 25 years of administrative and teaching experience. Hailing from a political family with her parents among senior members of a party, Anupama has been an academic achiever and excelled at HP University. She pursued PhD in public administration before assuming a professorial role.

Her contributions extend beyond academia, as evidenced by her directorship of Canadian studies and pivotal role in establishing the SPU, Himachal Pradesh's

second university. At 55, her accolades include university distinctions, scholarships and fellowships throughout her academic journey. Her global footprint spans 35 countries, primarily dedicated to educational and administrative endeavours. With 15 PhD scholars under her mentorship, eight registered PhD students and three post-doctoral projects, she has significantly contributed to academic research. Additionally, her authorship of seven books underscores her intellectual prowess and scholarly contributions.

She played an active role in not only saving the university when the government considered converting it into a PG centre of HPU, but also consistently advocated for the university's interests with the government and the media during times of crisis. She spared no effort in raising the university's issues with the central leadership, drawing attention to its plight. The university credits her with achieving 2f status within a mere two months of its establishment, securing approval for statutes and acquiring the buildings of the Sundernagar and Bassa campuses. Additionally, she successfully appointed 35 guest faculty without any controversy.



Tara Devi Sen

BOTANICAL PIONEER AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARD OF MANDI

An assistant professor of botany at Vallabh Government College in Mandi, she has been a facilitator for Mid Himalayan Watershed Project from 2006 to 2009 where she spearheaded efforts to uplift both human and non-human resources, including animals, water bodies, land and forests within the watershed area.

Collaborating with various government departments such as agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry and forest, she implemented holistic strategies for community upliftment and biodiversity conservation. She played a pivotal role in establishing self-help groups and user groups for biodiversity conservation. Having postgraduate degrees in environmental sciences and botany as well as a PhD in botany, Tara actively engages in community awareness programmes aimed at promoting the sustainable utilisation of wild nutritional and medicinal food plants. Her extensive field visits to schools and remote areas of Mandi district and Himachal Pradesh have empowered women and schoolchildren to embrace traditional knowledge for their wellbeing. She has been instrumental in leading people biodiversity preparation initiatives across five blocks of Mandi district, facilitating nursery

raising, plantation, and distribution of important wild food plants.

Her expertise extends to traditional processing of wild edible plants as demonstrated in her research project titled "Traditional Processing of Wild Edible Plants of six tehsils of Mandi". Recognised for her outstanding contributions, Sen received the prestigious project "Withania somnifera: Awareness for Cultivation and Optimum Utilization in Mandi District of Himachal Pradesh for Boosting Health and Immunity" from the National Medicinal Plants Board, Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India. She is also the driving force behind the popular website www.himalayanwildfoodplants.com, which features articles on 235 locally consumed wild plants, their traditional processing methods, and indigenous uses. Her remarkable achievements have garnered widespread acclaim, including the Special Jury Mention in the Indian Biodiversity Award 2021, FSIA - Real Super Woman Award 2021, 2nd Position in HP State Leadership Award 2021-22, Young Scientist Award 2021 from The Society of Tropical Agriculture, New Delhi, Fox Clues India Prime Women Icon Award 2022, and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan Teachers Award 2023, among others.



Vineeta Thakur

FROM RURAL ROOTS TO MEDIA TRAILBLAZER, JOURNEY OF RESILIENCE

Her remarkable journey is a testament to the power of determination and passion in breaking barriers and driving change. Born at Jamoh village in Silag panchayat of Mandi, her upbringing was grounded in simplicity yet filled with aspirations for a better tomorrow. Raised by her father Dhani Ram Thakur, an inspector in the transport department, and her homemaker mother Vidya Thakur, Vineeta imbibed values of resilience and perseverance from an early age.

Education became the cornerstone of Vineeta's journey towards empowerment. From her formative years in Mandi city to her high school education at the Government Senior Secondary School in Drang, Vineeta's thirst for knowledge knew no bounds. It was during her pursuit of higher education in the field of autism spectrum disorder, specialising in educating specially abled children, from Delhi that Vineeta discovered her calling to make a difference in the lives of others.

At the tender age of 21, Vineeta embarked on her career path, dedicating herself to teaching special children in Paddhar. Her innate talent for communication and her passion for advocacy propelled her into the world of media. From anchoring school events to hosting the prestigious "Miss India Himachal" beauty pageant

in Solan, Vineeta's journey was marked by a series of milestones that showcased her versatility and commitment to her craft.

Amidst the challenges posed by the global pandemic in 2020, Vineeta returned to her roots in Mandi where she began her stint as a reporter for a local channel. It was during this time that Vineeta's talent caught the eye of Monica Thakur, the MD of Pole Star Media, who recognised her potential and offered her a role in a groundbreaking programme aimed at celebrating the essence of her language and culture.

The inception of "Being Pahadi" not only catapulted Vineeta into the spotlight but also served as a platform for her to advocate for women empowerment and linguistic pride.

Her unwavering commitment to promoting her language and culture resonated with audiences, setting new records of viewership and cementing her status as a trailblazer in the media industry. Vineeta's contributions to society have not gone unnoticed. In 2023, she was honoured with the prestigious Thakur Ved Ram Memorial Award, a testament to her dedication and impact. Furthermore, her selection as a youth icon for the Lok Sabha elections 2024 by the Election Commission underscored her influence and ability to inspire positive change.



Seema Sharma

EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH THEATRE, COURAGE, CREATIVITY

Her journey is a testament to the transformative power of art in empowering women. Born in Mandi, Seema embarked on her path to empowerment through the medium of theatre.

A graduate from Himachal Pradesh University in Shimla, Seema's passion for sociology led her to pursue a master's degree from Lucknow University, followed by a BEd from Annamalai University. Her story is not just one of academic achievement but of breaking barriers and carving a niche in a traditionally male-dominated field.

During her school days, Seema's love for music was evident, but it was her recognition as the best

actress in the eighth grade that ignited her passion for acting and set her on a remarkable journey of self-discovery and empowerment.

Through her stellar performances in various plays, including classics like "Oedipus" by Sophocles and contemporary works like "Silence! The Court Is in Session" by Vijay Tendulkar, Seema has not only showcased her talent but also challenged societal norms and stereotypes.

Her dedication to the craft and her ability to portray diverse characters with authenticity have earned her accolades and admiration from audiences and peers alike. Beyond



Through her work, she has inspired countless women to break free from societal constraints and pursue their passions with courage and conviction. In recognition of her contributions, Seema has been honoured with prestigious awards, including a senior fellowship from the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, and the Excellence Award by 'Divya Himachal'. Her most recent accolade, the National Award by Dastak Foundation, Amritsar, serves as a testament to her enduring commitment to women's empowerment.

the stage, Seema has been instrumental in using theatre as a tool for social change and women's empowerment. Since 1987-88, she has been at the forefront of directing children's theatre workshops in Mandi, instilling confidence and creativity in young minds. She has also written and directed educational

plays and street plays, addressing important issues like gender equality and social justice. Her commitment to empowering women extends beyond the stage, as evidenced by her involvement in cultural presentations and festivals, where she promotes inclusivity and diversity.



Help Needy, Nail Greedy...

Champa Thakur

OUTSPOKEN POLITICIAN AND EPITOME OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Champa Thakur, the daughter of Congress veteran and former Himachal Pradesh Health Minister Kaul Singh Thakur, embodies the spirit of leadership and empowerment. A dynamic Congress leader, she stepped into politics during her college days and swiftly rose to prominence. Her remarkable



journey includes serving as a zila parishad member four times and holding the position of zila parishad chairman for a full term.

A staunch advocate for the socially marginalised, Champa has dedicated herself to the upliftment of disadvantaged

communities. Her influence extends beyond her constituency, shaping the political landscape of the state. Fearlessly outspoken and tirelessly active, she remains a steadfast ally for her constituents.

Despite electoral challenges, her commitment to service has never wavered. Even in defeat, she continues to inspire as a beacon of resilience and determination. Since entering politics after her marriage in 2005, she has earned the trust and admiration of her constituents, serving as both a member and

■ **Championing the cause of women's empowerment, Champa Thakur has pioneered numerous initiatives, including the establishment of self-help groups, empowering women to chart their own paths to success. Her unwavering dedication to uplifting the downtrodden and vulnerable is a testament to her compassionate leadership. As a role model and mentor, she stands as a guiding light for thousands of women, illuminating the path towards a brighter, more inclusive future.**

chairperson of the Mandi Zila Parishad.

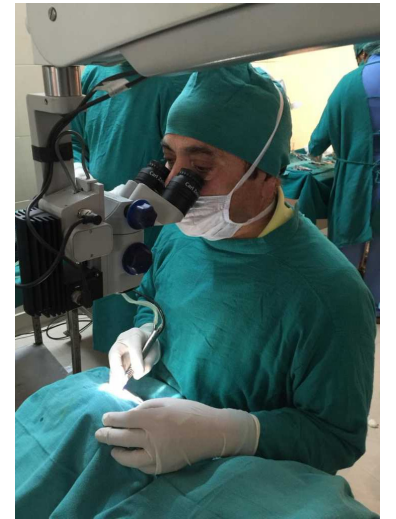
Kangra's SM Eye Hospital becomes first NABH-certified ophthalmology facility of HP

DIRECTOR DR SANDEEP MAHAJAN SHARES DETAILS OF HOSPITAL'S FOUR-DECADE SUCCESS JOURNEY

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In a landmark achievement, SM Eye Hospital at Ghurkadi in Kangra has, under the leadership of its director and chief eye surgeon Dr Sandeep Mahajan, has been conferred with the prestigious NABH (National Board for Hospital Standardisation) certification, making it the first eye hospital in Himachal Pradesh to achieve the feat. Dr Mahajan expressed immense pride in this achievement, emphasising that the accreditation not only symbolised a significant accomplishment for the hospital but also a moment of pride for the people of Himachal Pradesh.

■ Over the span of his four-decade career, Dr Mahajan has witnessed a paradigm shift in the landscape of eye care, where patients no longer needed to seek treatment outside their home state due to inadequate facilities. "SM Eye Hospital has not only bridged this gap, but has also set new benchmarks for eye care standards in Himachal Pradesh and beyond," he said. Dr Mahajan's vision of a state where no individual suffered from preventable blindness is gradually materialising through SM Eye Hospital's relentless pursuit of excellence.



"The journey towards this milestone was propelled by SM Eye Hospital's commitment to delivering world-class eye care services for over four decades. The treatment for cataract and glaucoma,

Johnson and Johnson's laser procedure for removal of glasses, cutting-edge diagnosis with OCT machine and other scanning machines and technology such as pentacam, biometer, wavescan and

fundus cameras have been pivotal in securing the NABH accreditation," he said.

Dr Mahajan highlighted that the hospital's pursuit of excellence extended beyond borders. "Patients from neighbouring states and even foreign

tourists now seek treatment at SM Eye Hospital, drawn by its reputation for comprehensive eye care services coupled with tourism amenities. This shift in patient demographics underscores the hospital's transformation into a global destination for eye care," he said.

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Help Needy, Nail Greedy...

Congress central observers implicate Himachal CM Sukhu, Pratibha, Vikramaditya alike for political crisis facing govt

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Congress central observers deputed by the party high command to resolve the crisis facing the Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu government in Himachal Pradesh have blamed Chief Minister Sukhu, state unit president and Mandi MP Pratibha Singh as well as her son and PWD Minister Vikramaditya Singh for plunging the state regime into trouble. In their report submitted to the high command, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda blamed the trio for the challenges facing the Congress government in Himachal.

The Sukhu government had to face an embarrassing situation recently when the party's Rajya Sabha nominee Abhishek Manu Singhvi, a renowned legal luminary, had to face defeat despite the Congress having comfortable majority with 40 MLAs in the 68-member Vidhan Sabha. The BJP had 25 MLAs of its own, but it managed the votes of six Congress rebels and three Independent MLAs. BJP's Harsh Mahajan won after draw of lots as both the parties were tied at 34 votes each.

The Congress in Himachal Pradesh has been embroiled in internal turmoil following the recent Rajya Sabha election debacle and subsequent crisis within the state unit. The Congress observers dispatched to assess the situation submitted a comprehensive report to party president Mallikarjun Kharge, shedding light on the underlying issues plaguing the party.

Chief Minister Sukhu has come under severe scrutiny as the observers have labelled him as "unaware of the ground realities" in the state. The report highlights Sukhu's failure to anticipate the cross-voting that occurred during the Rajya Sabha election, questioning his ability to maintain cohesion within the party. The observers criticised Sukhu for his inability to prevent dissent within the party ranks and expressed doubts about his capacity to quell future rebellions.

State unit president Pratibha has also been implicated in the report, with observers holding her accountable for the party's shortcomings in the elections and the overall state of disarray within the unit. The report suggested that Pratibha should be fielded in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections and recommends a change in leadership at the state level.

Dissident leader Vikramaditya



- To address the internal rift, the report proposed the formation of a coordination committee comprising the Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister and key party leaders, with two members suggested by the Congress president. The report underscored the urgency for the Congress to address internal divisions and strengthen its position ahead of upcoming elections, emphasising the need for swift and decisive action to restore unity and stability within the party ranks.
- For further developments, the Congress is expected to deliberate on the recommendations outlined in the observers' report in the days to come.

Singh's actions during the crisis discipline, raising concerns about his reliability as a leader. The report has

cast doubt on Vikramaditya's ability to garner trust from key party members in the future.

The observers further alleged that rebel MLAs were lured by the BJP, which sought to destabilise the Congress government in the state. They emphasised the need for immediate reforms to prevent further instability within the government and suggest distributing corporation and other posts to the disgruntled MLAs before the implementation of the code of conduct. While acknowledging BJP's attempts to topple the government, the report advised against changing the Chief Minister, cautioning that such a move could play into BJP's strategy of holding simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.

Mahajan meets Shah, lauds PM for generous grants, says Sukhu govt only 'enjoying power'

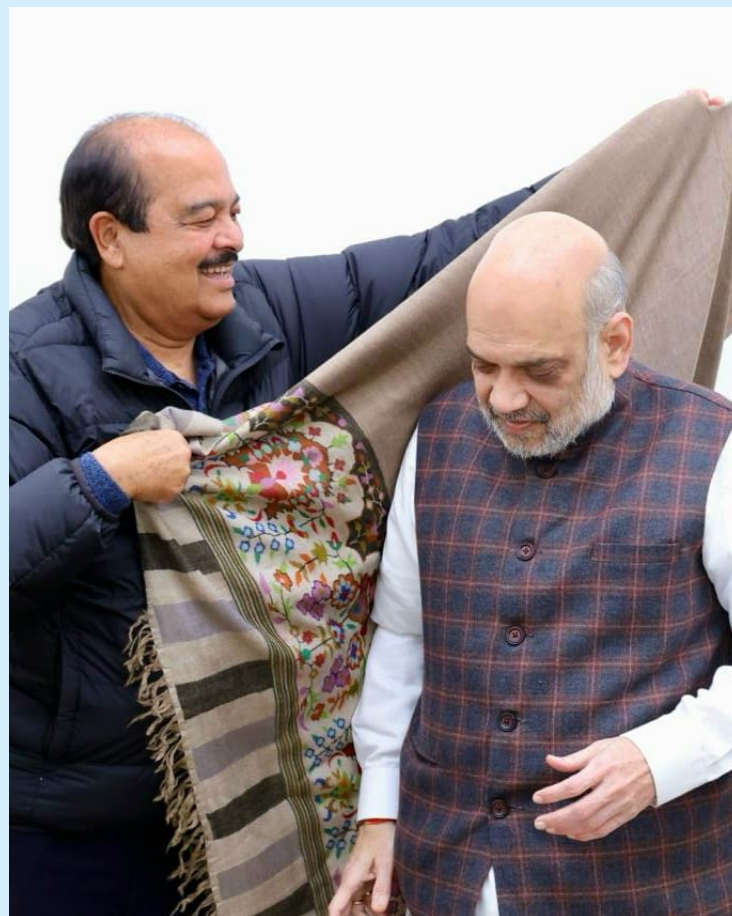
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In a recent meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah, senior BJP leader and newly elected Rajya Sabha MP from Himachal Pradesh Harsh Mahajan voiced concerns over the alleged mismanagement of funds allocated to Himachal by the Centre. Mahajan's remarks come amidst growing tensions between the state BJP and the ruling Congress following the political crisis in the aftermath of the recent cross-voting by six Congress rebels that led to Mahajan's victory. During his courtesy call on Union Minister Amit Shah in Delhi, Mahajan extended his gratitude for his recent victory in the Rajya Sabha elections. However, the conversation swiftly turned towards the utilisation of central funds in Himachal Pradesh.

Mahajan criticised the Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu-led state government for what he perceives as a "lack of effective implementation of central projects". He highlighted recent statements made by Union Minister Nitin Gadkari during his visit to Himachal Pradesh where Gadkari announced ambitious infrastructure projects worth Rs 1 lakh crore, including 15

National Highway projects valued at Rs 4,000 crore.

Expressing appreciation for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiatives, Mahajan particularly lauded the inauguration of development projects worth Rs 25 crore at the revered Shaktipeeth Mata Chintpurni Dham in Himachal Pradesh. He emphasised the significance of these projects in fostering growth and development in the region.



- One of the focal points of Mahajan's concerns was the delayed completion of the CIPET Centre in Baddi, a project aimed at promoting industrial growth and employment opportunities in Himachal Pradesh. Despite the allocation of Rs 46 crore for its construction, Mahajan highlighted the slow progress in its completion and its potential to benefit the state.
- In an attack on the Congress government, Mahajan accused it of prioritising power over progress. He alleged that the Congress regime had failed to effectively utilise the funds allocated by the Centre, thus hindering the state's development.



220 deities to descend on Mandi as 7-day Mahashivratri fest commences tomorrow

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MANDI: Chhoti Kashi Mandi, known for its rich cultural heritage and spiritual fervour, is gearing up to host its highly anticipated Mahashivratri festival, set to commence on March 9 (2024). The traditional festivities kicked off on March 7 with the ceremonial arrival of the revered deity 'Bada Dev' Kamrunag, marking the auspicious beginning of the week-long celebrations. The annual extravaganza, blending spirituality with cultural grandeur, will see Mandi adorned with excitement as it welcomes 220 revered gods and goddesses, promising a spectacle beyond compare. The International Mandi Shivratri Festival, a week-long affair, has earned global acclaim, drawing participants and enthusiasts from around the world.



Central to the festivities is the ancient Bhootnath Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, serving as a focal point for devotees who gather to offer prayers and seek blessings amidst its architectural splendour. Special rituals and prayer sessions underscore the devout reverence for Lord Shiva, highlighting the festival's spiritual significance.

attire and carried on elaborately decorated palanquins, their arrival creates a mesmerizing spectacle accompanied by traditional music and fanfare. The in-

A unique highlight of Mandi Shivratri is the assembly of hill gods and goddesses, gracing the fair as esteemed guests of the district administration. Bedecked in traditional



augural ceremony on March 9, led by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, will feature a grand 'Shobha Yatra' or 'Jaleb,' showcasing cultural troupes, police contingents, and home guards. Traditional performances and folk music will further enliven the festivities, offering a glimpse into the region's rich cultural tapestry.

Culminating on March 15 with a grand ceremony presided over by Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla, the festival promises enchanting performances by acclaimed artists representing diverse Himalayan, Hindi,

and Punjabi cultures. To ensure global participation, the Shivaratri celebrations will be live-streamed on social media platforms, allowing enthusiasts worldwide to partake in the cultural extravaganza. Additionally, the National Rural Livelihood Mission will host a Saras Mela, showcasing indigenous crafts and products, adding another layer of vibrancy to the festival.

With a focus on health and safety, organizers have implemented stringent measures, including quality standards for vendors and enhanced cleanliness protocols. A robust security presence comprising 900 police personnel will ensure public safety and traffic management throughout the festivities. The International Shivratri Festival in Mandi promises to be a celebration of spiritual enlightenment and cultural splendour, uniting people from diverse backgrounds in a shared celebration of tradition and heritage.