

Specialised eye hospital coming up in Bahadradab

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HARIDWAR: The Hans Foundation is building a ₹500 crore specialised eye hospital at Bahadradab in the district with financial assistance from a non-resident Indian. The district and nearby areas do not have specialised eye care facilities at present.

A staggering 63 million people in India are needlessly blind or visually impaired, but access to quality eye care could cure 80% of them, said a report. According to the Uttarakhand Health and Family Welfare Society website, cataract is the most common eye disease with 63% of those above the age of 50 having it. About 19.7% have refractive errors and 18% have corneal glaucoma and retinal diseases, according to the site.

Premvati, 45, of Rohalki village near Bahadradab had almost lost her eyesight to a large extent because of mercury poisoning while working in a factory. It caused a toxic reaction in her body leading to wasting away of her muscles, hands and feet. There was scarring of the eyelids which in turn led to exposure of the cornea. It could have led to corneal ulcers and loss of any remaining vision, but with the timely treatment at the eye care centre, she can close her eyes and the cornea are no more dangerously exposed. "She will need more surgeries for her cataract and corneal scars. For now the worst is over," said her surgeon.

Another patient Shagun from Jagjeetpur lost her husband at an early age. The sole bread winner of the family of three had to stop working altogether about

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a month ago making bricks because she became blind due to cataract. With the meagre earning of ₹3,000, getting a minor operation done was beyond her reach. This cataract blind patient was the first patient to be operated at Hans Eye Care in Bahadradab. This is a small eye care centre run by the same foundation and the new hospital would be a much bigger project.

Now Shagun can see with 6/12 in the operated eye, has returned to her work and her happiness knows no bounds. Shagun wants to get her other eye operated as soon as possible.

For a long time, the need for a specialised eye hospital for the treatment of complex cases had been felt in the district. The chief minister had laid the foundation stone of the eye hospital recently.

Co-founder of The Hans Foundation Manoj Bhargava told HT, "By the year 2020, we aim to fulfil the needs of the people of the holy city in matters of specialised eye care. It would cost nearly ₹500 crore."

There is no specialised eye hospital in the state for patients holding BPL cards. "Patients come from far off villages of Uttarakhand to Hans Eye Care," said Major General A V Balakrishnan (Retd) who looks after the activities of the foundation.