

Gangtok sends 50,000 votes for Baichung's victory on 'Jhalak'

As many as 50,000 SMS votes have been cast in the past two weeks for Indian football captain Baichung Bhutia from this Sikkim capital alone to ensure his win on Sony TV's reality dance show 'Jhalak Dikhla Jaa'.

With the competition getting tougher, people have started a mega campaign in Sikkim and in the hills of neighbouring West Bengal to garner support for the Sikkim football star.

According to Thukchuk Lachungpa, president of the social organisation Citizens Forum, vouchers worth Rs.150,000 were bought to vote for Baichung.

'Citizens Forum has taken the responsibility to ensure that the son of Sikkim wins the reality show. He has shown considerable commitment towards dancing and is doing everything that a footballer can do to be a dancer,' said Lachungpa.

According to Lachungpa, the football player was lagging behind in the show because of lack of votes and that is why Citizens Forum decided to back him up.

The forum is being supported by local cable network, Nayuma Television, as well as organisations like the Tibetan Youth Club and the United Sikkim Soccer Club.

'It is a similar case to Prashant Tamang (winner of 'Indian Idol 3'). People from all walks of life voted for Prashant along with people in Assam, Dehradun and the West Bengal hills. We want the same response for Baichung,' said Lachungpa.

Citizens Forum has planned meetings with the representatives of the Prashant Fan Club in Darjeeling and Kalimpong in next few days and will campaign in the northeast region where Baichung has a large fan following.

'Kolkata and the various football associations are voting for Baichung, which is not enough if we want him to win. Mass voting is scheduled for this Friday at Hotel Himalayan Heights where people are welcome to vote through SMS as recharge coupons will be provided by the Citizens Forum,' he added.

The organisations that had supported Prashant for 'Indian Idol' will now rally behind Baichung as well, he said.

'We have enough funds in place to carry out a large scale campaign for Baichung. What we need is more proactive support realising the 'urgency' and the same kind of frenzy, which was witnessed during campaigning for Prashant. We can do Sikkim's son proud by showing our support,' said Lachungpa.

A grand musical extravaganza has also been planned at Paljor Stadium in Gangtok for the finale, which is scheduled for the last week of May.

A similar campaign was carried out for Debojit Saha, winner of Zee TV's 'Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Challenge 2005' and 'Indian Idol 4' winner Sourabhee Debbarma too.

The third season of 'Jhalak Dikha Jaa' went on air Feb 27 with 12 contestants from different walks of life such as sports, films, fashion and music, among others, and they teamed up with professional dance partners to perform on the show. Out of 12, seven have been eliminated.

Baichung and his partner Sonia are competing with Hard Kaur-Savio, Parul Chauhan-Deepak, Karan Singh Grover-Nicole S. Alvares and Gauhar Khan-Himanshu for the title.

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