

Sikh Union members have the gift of sight

EYE care and specs might be easily available in this country.

But in India thousands of people carry on their lives each day without glasses or getting vital operations that could give them their sight back.

To give some of these people the chance to see again, seven friends from the Sikh Union Club in Coventry will travel to the Punjab, India, later this month armed with hundreds of pairs of glasses and medical equipment.

Bali Panesar, club spokesman, said: "Eye problems are very common in India but people can't afford the eye care they need. On our visits there we spoke to a lot of people who couldn't see the land that they were ploughing or see their grandchildren, so people here are giving them their sight and their independence back.

"One of the best things you can give to anybody is sight and over here eyesight is one of the things we take for granted, but in India people can't even afford it."

More than 300 pairs of used glasses have been donated to the project and £6,000 has been raised with a charity walk in the summer and donations from members of the city's Sikh and Hindu temples, plus other organisations and businesses.

The money will be used to set up an eye camp in the city of Phillaur, which is expected to see 600 people walk through



■ Sikh Union Club members Harbans Gumman, Palvinder Chana and Sarinder Marwaha who will be travelling to the Punjab later this month to deliver hundreds of pairs of spectacles donated by the people of Coventry.

Photo by Dave Thomas.

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the doors over three days - from Sunday March 21 until Tuesday March 24.

The group will work with two teams of doctors, opticians and surgeons from India to offer free sight tests, aftercare, medication and cataract operations to those who need them.

"It is a joint effort from the Sikh community in Coventry and the community at large," added Mr Panesar.

"The support from everybody has been so good and if this project works we want to keep it going. Everybody has been so supportive."

Harbans Gumman, club secretary, is looking forward to the trip.

He said: "We go to India regularly with our families but this is the first time we are doing anything like this. If this one is successful we hope to do lots more of

these camps. The support we have had has been enormous so we should have no problems carrying on with this project."

Anyone who would like to donate glasses or eye equipment to the project can drop them off at Ramgharia Sikh Temple in Foleshill Road, near the junction with Arbury Avenue. For details on how to donate money visit www.sikhunion.co.uk.

Uni is out for Africa

COVENTRY University is to host an Africa Day on Thursday March 12.

It is the second in a series of events aimed at bringing staff and students together while combining academic and sporting interests.

An African Nations Football Cup will start the day at 9am with eight teams competing. In the afternoon the Start Up cafe will serve African food.

And at 2pm African footballers and their agents will take part in a Coventry Conversations debate on whether football is the new slave trade.

The day will end with an African-style party in Fifty-four bar.

Professor David Pilsbury, the university's pro-vice chancellor for international development, said: "Coventry is fortunate to be the choice of many African students. We have a number of world class researchers interested in Africa and have strong relationships with many African universities.

"Events like this allow us to celebrate our many links, to bring leading figures to Coventry to discuss topical issues, and explore how we better serve these communities."