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HAR SHIKHAR TIRANGA

Har Shikhar Tiranga mission | 'A journey of unity, patriotism, and adventure'

The campaign that involved hoisting the Indian national flag on the highest peak of every State in India, involved 20 men, both Army and civilian, and led to many discoveries. It was supported by the Defence Ministry and Government of Arunachal Pradesh, where the National Institute of Mountaineering and Adventure Sports is based

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Shikhar Tiranga national team of Mt. Everest climbers, salute the National Flag after hoisting it atop Arma Konda, the highest peak of Andhra Pradesh. File photo: Special Arrangement

“It turned out to be a journey of unity, patriotism, and adventure,” said Colonel Ranveer Singh Jamwal, Director of the National Institute of Mountaineering and Adventure Sports (NIMAS), who led the Har Shikhar Tiranga Mission, an expedition to hoist the Indian national flag on the highest peak of every State in India.

The campaign was supported by the Defence Ministry and Government of Arunachal Pradesh and was flagged off by the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pema Khandu from the NIMAS Campus in Dirang. The team, consisting of 20 members, 10 Army personnel and 10 civilians, scaled 28 mountains in a year, with the expedition lasting from October 2, 2022 to the same date in 2023. In all, there were six mountaineers who had scaled Mount Everest, including Tsewang Chosgail, Kewal Krishan, Nehpal, Dorjee Khandu, and Tongchen.

Col. Jamwal, who has scaled Mt. Everest thrice, and was the recipient of the Tenzing Norgay National Adventure Award in 2013, said the just-concluded expedition was a part of the larger Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, commemorating 75 years of Indian independence. The mission had many aims: to showcase India’s high-altitude diversity to the world, to promote adventure and environmental awareness, and to spread the message of the national flag.

Col. Jamwal spoke of how people supported the expedition across States. A few locals even joined in summiting the peaks. They were warmly welcomed by students and the local administration wherever they went. For instance, in Andhra Pradesh’s Alluri Sitharamaraju district, where they hoisted the flag atop Arma Konda, at 1,680 metres, the team was facilitated at the Government Junior College in Hukumpeta. Many people provided accommodation and food, and some arranged felicitation meetings in huge gatherings.

In the run-up to the expedition, Col. Jamwal said the challenge was to locate the highest points of all States. The research, listing of peaks and their recce, planning and training, taking required permission, was done across three months.

Each peak had unique climatic conditions and the team faced challenges of extreme weather conditions from temperatures as low as -20-degree Centigrade and zero visibility, to navigation issues due to poor connectivity, heavy rainfall, avalanches, steep and slippery

terrain, humidity, leaches, and the fear of wild animals. "Sometimes, all these came in one single expedition," he recalled. They also encountered the unavailability of transportation in some areas, poor roads in many remote areas, security challenges in Naxal-affected areas and language barriers.

Some important discoveries were also made. For instance, it was found that Mt. Reo Purgyil is actually the highest peak of Himachal Pradesh and that the highest point of Punjab is located in the Naina Devi Range, he said.

On the roll-out of the mission, Col. Jamwal, who has 30 mountaineering expeditions across seven continents to his credit, said the first phase started in October 2022 and ended in December 2022. This saw the scaling of the highest peaks in all the north-eastern states.

In the second phase, the team unfurled the national flag on Mt. Reo Purgyil at an elevation of 6,818 metres, in the Spiti valley, on May 22. This is only the second team to have scaled this peak in recorded history; the previous time was in 1995. Mt. Kamet, at 7,756 metres, in Uttarakhand, was also completed in the second phase.

The remaining States were covered in the third phase, with Mt. Jongsong, 7,462 metres, in Sikkim done in the final stage on October 02 amidst heavy rainfall and bad weather conditions, Col Jamwal said.

On August 27, the team hoisted the national flag atop the highest point in Tamil Nadu, Dodda Betta Peak, 2,636 metres, after which the Dodas, a tribe in Ooty, gathered and performed their traditional dance and felicitated the NIMAS team, said N. Suresh Kumar, founder of Triumph Expeditions Private Limited based in Coimbatore, and official mission partner. The Ooty Superintendent of Police also joined in. Further, on August 29, the team hoisted the national flag at the highest point in Kerala, Anamudi, at 2,647 metres, he added.

"The mission which started as a mountaineering expedition to spread awareness about the national flag and the highest peaks turned out as a nationwide movement resonating with the mutual feelings of the masses for the motherland," he added. The team, now on their way back to Dirang, will reach on October 17, after which a formal flag-in ceremony will be held.