



AND THE AWARD GOES TO;

Few of our elite members received Awards for their great achievements in the Mountaineering field.

- **Harish Kapadia** received **The King Albert Memorial Award (Gold medal)** at an impressive ceremony on 2nd September 2006 at St Moritz, Switzerland

The details in his words;

We gathered at St Moritz, and were hosted at beautiful Kulm Hotel, overlooking the lake. A special performance of music on Swiss Horns was arranged in the hotel compound.

The award ceremony began with a dinner hosted on 1st Sept night - a very formal affair and in traditional Swiss style and punctuality. On the 2nd, at 9 in the morning the party walked to Sagantani Museum nearby and the award ceremony was held there. In a beautiful room with three large paintings, the award was presented by Mr Bruno Messerli, President of the Foundation. A representative from the family of King Albert was also present. Later a party was arranged at Pik Nair about 3015 m, which was reached by a cable car.



In the evening in two different hotels, the party continued. Each awardee was asked to give a speech, specially mentioning what work he/she has done in past 10 years, what is being done today and what they propose to do in the next decade. It was an experience to interact with the brilliant persons from different fields and understand what wonderful work is being done in the world in mountain related subjects.

The award consists of a beautifully designed certificate which is bound in leather specially imported from Ghana. A Gold Medal, with image of King Albert on one side and name of the recipient inscribed on the reverse was given to each awardee.

I was honoured to receive the award, wearing the Gorkha Khukri badge in honour of my brave son Lt Nawang Kapadia and – wearing the Himalayan Club tie!

Thank you all, once again.

Harish Kapadia.

- **Nawang Gombu**- our Hon. member received the **TENSING NORGAY ADVENTURE AWARD** for **Life Time Achievement** from **The President of India**.



The awards given by "Girimitra Samelan", an organisation of various Clubs from Maharashtra.

- **Mr. Jagdish Nanavati** our President Emeritus was awarded for **Lifetime Achievement** and contribution to the field of mountaineering.
- **Late Mr. Arun Samant** was given **The Posthumous** award for his contributions to the field of Mountaineering.
- **The Karakoram Maitri** Expedition received the award for **The Best Mountaineering** venture of the year.

In Spiti With Rain

Its rain, rain and more rain everywhere. Is the weather pattern changing or is it fruit of our sins? The construction and the destruction done by humans, is leading us to a water world. Most of the expeditions to Himalaya faced heavy rains this year. Do write to us about your views and news on rainy experience in the mountains.
– Jasmine

An expedition to P. 6160 m in the Khamengar valley of the Spiti Himalaya by a small three-member team comprising of Rajesh Gadgil – Leader, Rajan Rikame (both HC members) and Kaivalya Varma had to face many difficulties due to heavy rains in this ‘rain-shadow area’. The mules could not carry the loads to base camp because of flooded torrents enroute and the team has to ferry them on their own. After eight days (instead of three), they reached their base camp at ‘Tridhara’ (meeting place of three nallas) situated at around 4420 m on 29th July, 2006. Next day, they tried and reached their advanced base camp at around 5100 m towards north. From 31st July, one more week was lost due to incessant rains and thus they could not attempt P. 6160 m due to paucity of time. Rather than to come back empty handed they decided to make an effort to climb a small peak in the area. On 6th August they reached a high point of 5450 m. During the return journey, they were lucky and could come back safely avoiding the road blocks and land slides.



--Rajesh Gadgil

[Enter the Dragon](#)

***Himali Soin* recounts her experience of trekking through the dragon's path**

Our five-day trek in Bhutan began from Paro, and went along mountain ridges and passes to end at Thimpu, the capital of Bhutan. Hundreds of prayer flags dotted every mountain along our path. Chants of *om mani padme hum* echoed in the hills and valleys, permeating the ominous nimbus which made its presence felt despite the thick veil of mist.

Ours was a classic trek called The Dragon's Path, not so threatening despite its name, and ideal for families, which was what we were — seven families traveling together as a group under the Ibex Explorers fellowship, organized by Ibex Expeditions, New Delhi. For the more adventurous, there are, of course, many other trekking options in Bhutan, such as the famous Chomolhari trek that goes all the way to the base camp of Mt Chomolhari, or the tough Snowman trek where one can walk for more than a month.

We started from the ancient National Museum in Paro called Ta Dzong and before we knew it, the dampness of the red soil had given way to a forest trail filled with trees laden with moss called Spanish lace.

The forests of Bhutan are magical. Not only is there an air of religion and superstition associated with the chortens and prayer flags but also layers of clouds that lift their veil ever so often to reveal the splendor beneath. Then, miraculously, the sun shines and before you know, you find yourself standing amid a field of purple and yellow azaleas.

Along our path, the lush green of the land was juxtaposed with the red, blue and yellow of Buddhist Dzongs. The architecture of the country is in harmony with nature and blends with the landscape to enhance its own Buddhist identity.

A largely agrarian country, Bhutan's economy thrives on step farming, and the architecture also reflects the people's step farming culture. Monastery roofs, for example, are broad at the first level, and make their way upwards in layers.

On the last day of the trek, I spent more time stopping to appreciate the breathtaking views and the waves of dancing rhododendrons. Their magnificence was amplified by the occasional presence of the sun. The mist rose, and I could see the jagged Bhutanese Himalayas. The silhouettes were unique, mesmerizing in their uniqueness. As I walked further, round the occasional corner, I could see our previous camp sites.

Looking back upon a journey is always important. It reminds you of where you came from, and of where you are now. I could see our footprints on the landscape measure the passage of time, not only in physical distance but also in relationships built and the simplicity of thoughts that comes with such towering mountains.

Bhutan is one of those moments that slips from your fingers rather fast, for each entity is breathtakingly fascinating. Yet it is also a moment that lasts forever, for it remains etched in your memory for a long time to come.

Need to know

Getting there: By Druk Air to Paro via Kathmandu, or by road through Phuntsholing.

Accommodation: Three-star hotels charge Rs 3,000 daily, all meals included. It is advisable to carry money as travellers' cheques with some cash in US dollars. A few outlets in Thimpu accept credit cards but with an added surcharge. Foreigners are charged US \$200 a day for travelling through Bhutan, though Indians are exempt from paying this amount.

Must-haves: Light wind and waterproof jackets, sun glasses, sun block, passport (or election card, for Indians), camera.

Etiquette: Dress modestly (covered arms, no shorts or short skirts), do not wear a hat at Dzongs or religious complexes. Do not smoke. Walk clockwise around Chortens (stupas) and Mani (prayer) walls.

Photography: Photography is usually permitted in public areas, but not in religious premises.

The Indian embassy: Can be contacted at India House Estate, Thimpu, Bhutan. Ph: 00-975-2-322162; Fax; 00-975-2-323195; email: hocbht@druknet.bt; Website: www.eoiThimpu.org

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Dear reader,

In the last issue [E Letter Vol. 5] we had flashed news on **The 75th year Commemorative Expedition to Mt Kamet (7756m)**. For the detailed report of the expedition, the Kamet **celebration** in Kolkota, the Kamet **souvenir** and the corrected names of the summiteers, read on. **-- Jasmine.**

• **The Expedition;**

The Tata Steel sponsored expedition to Mt Kamet (7756m) was organized by The Himalayan Club , Kolkata Section, in May-June-July 2006. The team was led by the veteran mountaineer, AVM (Retd) Apurba Bhattacharyya. The other members, all from the HC Kolkata, were:Gautam Ghosh (Deputy Leader), Jayanta Chattopadhyay, Subrata Chakraborty, Pradeep Ch.Sahoo, Debajyoti Bhattacharya, Debraj Dutta, Tapas Sanyal, Subrata Santra, Shibnath Basu, Subhasis Roy, Rupjoy Dewan.



Four sherpas and two high altitude friends (porters) were included as climbing members of the team.

The team planned to retrace the footsteps of the first successful team lead by Frank S Smythe in 1931 and hence the traditional Meade Col route was selected for the climb, with an intended summit date close to 21st June in line with that of the 1931 ascent.

The summit team comprised:

Gautam Ghosh (Deputy Leader), Jayanta Chattapadhyay, Subrata Chakraborty, Pradeep Ch.Sahoo, Mingma Sherpa , Lhakpa Sherpa, Dawa Sherpa, Lama Sherpa, Devinder Singh Rana, Kapil Rana.

Kamet [7756m] was attained on 24th June 2006, after establishing five camps between the base and summit camps, by all the summit team members, thus representing a most satisfying commemorative expedition for the Kolkata Section. The success was due to excellent planning, teamwork and team spirit.

- **Mt. Kamet celebrated in Kolkota**

On 9th September, 2006 the Kolkata Section recalled 75 years of Kamet's history and romance with a day long commemorative program that included five eminent speakers and the two rare films were shown.

The speakers were:

Dr. George Rodway, USA (Kamet: Early History and First Ascent of a Himalayan Legend)

Col. Balwant S.Sandhu (The Kamet Bazaar – A survey of expeditions post 1950)

Cmdr. Satyabrata Dam (Coordinating Kamet)

Wing Cmdr. Amit Chowdhury (Surviving Kamet)

AVM Apurba Bhattacharyya (Kamet-75th year Commemorative Expedition, 06]

The films shown were:

The 1931 first ascent film – edited by BBC, and not before screened in India.

The 1985 first ascent of Kamet through the West ridge route.



Gurdial Singh, a Kamet veteran, and special guest at the program, launched the high quality Souvenir that the Kolkata Section had produced to mark the occasion. Among many others, rarely seen photographs taken by Smythe were extensively presented in the Souvenir, along with several first time articles and a Kamet summiteers chronology. Gurdial Singh described the Souvenir as a professional production and said and the photographic history of Kamet as depicted over the last 75 years was worth being owned by all in both personal and mountain libraries. An article on the 75th year Commemorative Expedition 2006 by AVM (Retd) A K Bhattacharyya appears in the Souvenir, a copy of which has been sent to all HC, Libraries. Details of the Program on 9th September 2006 will appear in the forthcoming News Sheet of the HC, Kolkata Section.

That evening, a tasteful cocktail party was hosted by Tata Steel at The Bengal Club at which the speakers, selected guests and members of The Himalayan Club were invited.

--**Priyadarshi Gupta**

- **Mt. Kamet (7756m) Commemorative Souvenir 2006**

All lovers of mountain literature will cherish reading the Commemorative Souvenir on Mt. Kamet brought out by the Kolkata Section of the Himalayan Club. The Souvenir does a brilliant effort in tracing back the entire history of climbs to Mt. Kamet including detailed coverage of the first ascent in 1931.

The interesting write up by Tony Smythe on his famous father Frank Smythe, includes photographs taken by his father and the coded language used on the 1931 expedition. There is also an interview with John Shipton on his father Eric Shipton, who also made the first ascent in 1931.

What makes the Souvenir really stunning is the collection of photographs, which have been put together. On the front cover is a photograph of the still unclimbed NW face of Mt. Kamet. The 160-page souvenir carries 25 articles and 60 photographs and maps all focusing on the long history of climbs on Mt. Kamet dating way back to 1855. This fabulously written souvenir 2006 is not only great reading but also a strong recommendation for a permanent space in any library. [For more details, please contact Priyadarshi Gupta, pgupta@abpmail.com]

--**Jasmine**

We received the following reply, to the letter written by Maninder Kohli to the Youth Hostel Association [India] regarding some issues [E letter Vol. 5].

27.07.06

Respected Kohli,

This has reference to your email dated 20th June, 2006 sent to Dr. Harish K Saxena, National Chairman, YHAI. I have already acknowledged your mail and sending you some more details pertaining to some remarks given by Maninder Kohli. We are pleased to note that Maninder Kohli had done some trekking with us many years back and still keeping the good memories of those programs. You will be remembering that under your Chairmanship of National Hiking and Trekking Committee National level trekking programs begin. We have come a long way. This summer more than 6000 trekkers participated in our different programs in Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal. We are proud that YHAI is the only organization, which has sustained these programmes for 36 years without any blemish. During this time more than two lac trekkers have participated making YHAI as the only organization of the country in a non-government sector to undertake such an activity to inculcate the spirit of adventure among the young people of the country. We also have pride that most of the other commercial/non-commercial set up to promote the adventure sports are trained by us. Let me clarify some points raised by Maninder Kohli in the email to us and in the article published in "The Himalayan Club".

Subsidy: Before I go further, I would like to inform you that none of the YHAI expeditions are subsidized. We are not getting any subsidy from any department/organization or government. We are managing everything within the participation fee collected from the participants.

Firewood: I would also like to mention here that we are not using any firewood for cooking. We use LPG and kerosene for cooking. However, on the higher camps we use dead wood. We do not use wood for camp fire. It would not be out of place to mention here that this year we have spent Rs.9,735/- on purchase of LPG, Rs.300/- for fuel (Kerosene/Diesel) in our camps for the Har-Ki-Doon programme and Rs.51,208 for LPG and Rs.3,600/- for fuel for the programme in Himachal Pradesh. We have been running our trekking expeditions in Himachal Pradesh/Uttaranchal with prior permission of the Forest Deptt. The concerned official visits all our campsites. They have never reported anything negative. I would also like to inform you that we segregate the Bio-degradable and Bio-Non degradable waste at all our camps and bring all the Bio-Non-degradable waste to the Base Camp for disposal. We are using Solar Lights in some of our camps.

Forest Entry Fee: We have paid Rs.1, 49,417/- as forest entry fee to the forest department for the Har-Ki- Doon Program. I would also like to inform you that YHAI has built several temporary bridges in Har-Ki-Doon area which are being used by our trekkers and trekkers of other organization and locals. We have paid Rs.1, 17,000/- as forest entry fee to the forest department for the program in Himachal Pradesh. We are also been organizing several medical camps and Social Awareness Programs in these remote areas for the benefit of villagers. Here I would like to mention that YHAI always organizes environment friendly trek and does not allow the use of wood in camp fire. These captions are always printed prominently on our brochures, some of these are enclosed herewith for your information.

Check-in Time: Regarding allowing check in before 4 P.M. in our camps in Himachal Pradesh, we have not received any such complaints. However, we will look into the matter.

Medical Kits: I would also like to inform you that YHAI is providing best of medical facilities to the trekkers. We have Camp Doctors, adequate medicines/injections at our camps. We have hired three Oxygen Cylinders for Uttaranchal Program and three Oxygen Cylinders for Himachal Programme and spent Rs.12,000/- on the same. We have 12 stretchers for our programmes. Most of our Camp Leaders are also trained in First Aid. In case of emergency, we provide all our trekkers best of medical facilities irrespective of the cost involved.

YHAI is doing its best to organize trekking expeditions at a minimum cost with all safety measures, medical facilities, environment protection etc. We welcome constructive suggestions from experienced person. We could not reply to you immediately as Dr. Harish K Saxena was busy in the 46th International Youth Hostel Federation Conference held at Davos, Switzerland and I am pleased to inform you that he has been elected third time as President, International Youth Hostel Federation.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

Yog Raj

National Secretary

