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Two from Jamshedpur part of FIT@50+ Women's Trans Himalayan Expedition

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TSAF collaborates with Fit India , Bachendri Pal to lead five-month-long expedition

Jamshedpur, March 8: Tata Steel Adventure Foundation (TSAF), in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, under the FIT India banner, flagged off a unique expedition titled FIT@50+ Women's Trans Himalayan Expedition'22 in New Delhi today. For the first time, women aged 50 years and above from across the country will participate in this odyssey. The event celebrates India's 75th Independence Day and is dedicated to the Central Government's "Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav" initiative.

The expedition will commence on March 12, 2022 and is expected to end by the first week of August 2022. The expedition is being led by Padma Bhushan Bachendri Pal, the legendary mountaineer and the first Indian woman to scale Mount Everest.

The expedition flag-off was done by Sujata Chaturvedi, Secretary, Department of Sports, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India; Chanakya Chaudhary, Chairman, TSAF & VP (Corporate Services), Tata Steel; and Bachendri Pal, Expedition Leader & Mentor TSAF.

The 14-member team, including the support crew, comprises retired professionals, mothers, grandmothers, and homemakers from across India. The team also includes three women Everest summiteers.

Sujata Chaturvedi, Secretary, Department of Sports, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, said: "Today is a very remarkable day. Today happens to be the annual celebration of women, formally called the International Women's Day. I'm happy to represent women on behalf of the Government for such a wonderful cause, with a bunch of very brave and courageous women. Another happy occasion is that this five-month-long programme is happening in the midst of the 75th year of our independence, dedicated to 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' initiative of the Central Government."

"It's a pleasure to be associated with Tata Steel Adventure Foundation. Let us take this partnership forward and plan more activities in the same way. I wish each one of you the best of health and the best of achievements. You have taken a brave oath; I hope all the factors stay in your favour and when you return to Delhi we will meet again and share your experiences," she added.

The five-month-long expedition involves traversing the Himalayas from East to West – from Arunachal to Ladakh- [covering over 4,977 kilometers and crossing 37 mountain passes](#). The team will commence their journey of ultimate human endurance at Arunachal Pradesh and pass through Assam, West Bengal, Sikkim, Nepal, Kumaon, Garhwal, Himachal Pradesh, Spiti, Leh, and Ladakh, [before concluding at Tiger Hill in Kargil at an altitude of 16,608 feet](#).

Chanakya Chaudhary, Chairman, Tata Steel Adventure Foundation & Vice President (Corporate Services), Tata Steel, said: "We are delighted to organise this one-of-a-kind expedition that aims to

spread awareness on issues related to women's health and fitness. The expedition, being led by Tata Steel Adventure Foundation (TSAF), promises to be an ultimate showcase of human endurance and the indomitable spirit of our participants. The Foundation, through its unique proposition and sustained endeavours, will continue to promote adventure sports in the country and inspire generations."

"I congratulate TSAF for conceptualising and enabling such a platform. I extend my best wishes to all the team members for a successful expedition," he added.

A dedicated website for the expedition was launched by Chanakya Chaudhary and Bachendri Pal. The website will provide expedition details and people can track the progress of the journey via an interactive map. <https://www.transhimalayanexpedition.org>. The expedition, earlier scheduled for 2021, had to be deferred due to the pandemic.

Bachendri Pal, Leader of the Expedition & Mentor, TSAF, said: "I always believe that the biggest risk in life is not taking risks and this belief has given me the guts to take risks, lead many path-breaking expeditions, face numerous challenges and continue the journey. With the same belief, a team of 12 women will be undertaking a five-month-long Himalayan journey and the biggest challenge this time is the age factor."

This expedition is very different, according to Pal. "The team members are aged 50 years and above, and the expedition's duration coupled with multiple challenges like emotional, social, mental factors, fatigue, and weather constraints make it unique. We intend to set up an example for all women and raise hope that it is possible to stay fit and healthy in old age," she added.

The expedition is also collaborating with the Indian Army for assistance all along the route across the Himalayas. The team's journey is also being supported by the Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force (ITBP) & Sashatra Seema Bal (SSB).

The FIT@50+ Women's Trans Himalayan Expedition this year is being supported by Tata Sports Club as the fitness partner, TraQ by Titan as the time partner, Vistara as the airline partner, and Tata AIG as the insurance partner. Adventure Worx is the Gear partner, Abaran Jewellers, Suprajit Foundation, Atul Foundation, Adukale & Cycle Pure Agarbathi are support partners.

The Team

The 14-member team include Bachendri Pal, Leader (67-Jamshedpur-Jharkhand), Chetna Sahoo (54-Kolkata-West Bengal), Savita Dhapwal (52-Bhilai-Chhattisgarh), Gangorti Soneji (62-Baroda-Gujarat), L Annapurna (53-Jamshedpur-Jharkhand), Payo Murmu (53-Jamshedpur-Jharkhand), Dr. Sushma Bissa (55-Bikaner -Rajasthan), Maj. Krishna Dubey (59-Lucknow-UP), Bimla Deoskar (55- Nagpur-Maharashtra) and Vasumathi Srinivasan (68-Bangalore -Karnataka), Shamala Padmanabhan (64-Mysuru-Karnataka) and Chaula Jagirdar (64-Palanpur-Gujarat). The support team includes Mohan Rawat (41) and Randev Singh (30) from Uttarakhand.

The Journey

The team will commence a journey of an ultimate human endurance starting from the misty mountains of Arunachal Pradesh from Pangsau Pass and then enter Bhairab Kunda in Assam. Further, the team will go to Jaigaon and reach Zuluk via Nagarkantha at the border of West Bengal and Sikkim. From there the expedition will traverse through Sikkim from Nathang Valley, Nathulla pass to Gangtok and cover Chitrey, Kala Pokhari and Sandakphu (11,930 ft) in Singalia sanctuary. The team will then move into Nepal, where the route enters Dhaulagiri range and cover Salpa Pass, Lamajura Pass (11,500 ft), Deorali Pas (9,240 ft / Mali Pass AL (7,900 ft) and also cross Thorang la (17,769 ft) around Annapurna Massif. From Western Nepal the trail goes from Jumla and enters Kumaon district in Uttarakhand through Darchula (Nepal). From there the expedition will pass through Kauri Kal (12,00 ft), cross Lamkhaga Pass (17,320 ft) one of the toughest passes, which connects Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh with Harshil of Uttarakhand.

The team will then traverse to Himachal. From there they will trek through Spiti, cover Bhabha (16,000 ft) to cross Kaza, Kibber and cross Pharang la (18,300 ft). The expedition will be concluded in Leh-Ladakh where the team will cross Namshang La (15,900 ft), move through Kargil and Drass

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through Hambutling La (13,209 ft), reach Tiger Hill base and will finish at Tiger Hill Top 16,608 ft, in the Drass-Kargil area of Ladakh. The highest pass covered by the team during the course will be Parang la, a high-altitude pass at 18,300 ft connecting the high desert of Spiti to that of Ladakh