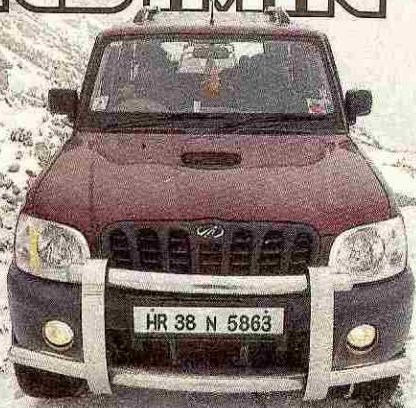
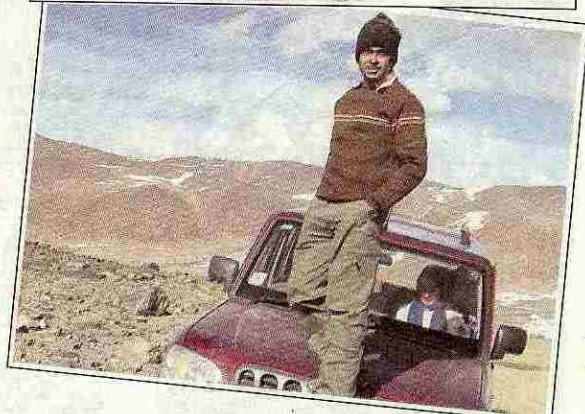
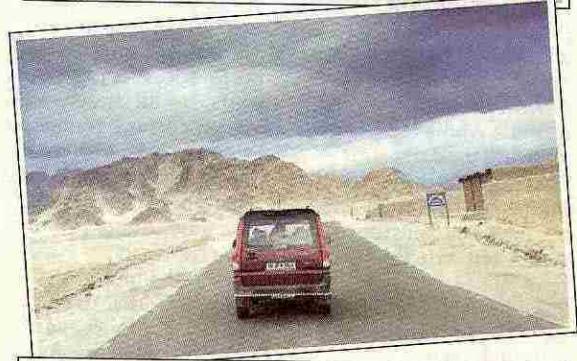


CONQUERING MARSIMIK LA!



PHOTOGRAPHY: KUNAL KHADSE / VIKRAM GOUR



KHARDUNGLA IS PASSÉ'. BRAVE ZIGWHEELERS VIKRAM AND KUNAL SET TO SURMOUNT LEH'S HIGHEST PASS

Ajay Kumar Singh had only one agenda for his trip when he set out from Mysore towards Leh, and that was to reach Marsimik La in his Mahindra Scorpio. Marsimik La is the highest pass in the Ladakh region, even higher than the famous Khardung La, however there is no tarmac road leading there, so it isn't in the record books. Kunal and I caught up with Ajay in Leh and accompanied him on his epic journey to Marsimik La.

Speaking of record books, Ajay is no stranger to them. Two of his trips are recorded in the Limca Book of Records, the first is for being part of the troupe where the maximum number of motorbikes gathered at Marsimik La, and the second is for covering the maximum number of mountain passes in a single day—a total of eight in under 24 hours!

Our journey to Marsimik La began from Leh from where we headed off towards Chang La, the third highest motorable pass in the world. Our convoy consisted of two Mahindra Scorpio CRDe vehicles. Snowfall and slippery roads played havoc, yet our Scorpios managed to make it up the narrow mountain road. After a hot cup of tea at

Chang La we set out for Pangong Lake. By early noon we reached Pangong Lake, where we managed to get a boat ride on this unique saline water body that extends into China. Post the boat ride, we found ourselves plying across towards Phobrang, the base from where we would climb up to Marsimik La. Phobrang stands at around 14,000 feet above

considerably thinner and the vehicles were finding it harder to breath. Not to mention, it was getting hard to breath for us too! Nevertheless, we pushed on and the Scorpios didn't let us down despite the ever increasing incline, rough terrain and lack of oxygen. We finally made it to the summit and Ajay had managed to achieve what he set out for. Standing tall at 18,632 feet above sea



The Mahindra Scorpio blazing through the Moraine plains - blue skies above, brown dust below

sea level and from here to the peak there is no tar road, just a dirt track. Kunal wasn't feeling well, so we left him back at the Indo Tibetan Border Police checkpoint at Phobrang to recuperate, and we continued our ascend.

The climb up the mountain was rather tricky for the air was getting

level, Ajay was definitely a happy man, for his journey across India to Marsimik La turned out to be as adventurous as he had imagined. We were just happy to be there to celebrate this occasion with him and get a taste of adventure ourselves. Vikram Gour

The Scorpio at the various checkpoints and photo-ops on the way - at the Chang-La pass, along the stunning Pangong-Tso lake, through snow, slush and tarmac all in the name of adventure. (Bottom): Ajay Kumar Singh - the certified adventurer