



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday met the surviving members of India's first successful expedition to Mount Everest and their kin. The 15-member team scaled the summit on May 20, 1965. TWITTER

# Conquering the unforgiving heights of Mount Everest

**UNDETERRED** Major HPS Ahluwalia was part of the team that successfully scaled the peak 50 years ago

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**NEW DELHI:** He has told the story many times before, but it still sounds like it is the very first time. It has been 50 years since HPS Ahluwalia, retired major from Indian Army, climbed to the top of Mount Everest. It was in May 1965 that India had its first successful expedition to the world's highest peak. While he recalls the tale of the historic climb of the team of 15 mountaineers, he takes a few pauses each time to come back from the memories that lay fresh before him.

At 78, Major Ahluwalia is fit and talks with the energy of a young soldier. He lost his legs later that year in the Indo-Pak war and has been confined to a wheelchair since. However, that has never bound him. He sports a pair of stylish sunglasses as he meets us in the sprawling lawns at his residence on the campus of Indian Spinal Injuries Center (ISIC) in Vasant Kunj. He set up the centre in 1983 to help people with such disabilities. He lives here with his wife and daughter. The house walls bear pictures and paintings of the expedition.

Before settling down to narrate the story inside the house, he excitedly tells us about his passion for gardening. From the humble guava to pineapple, oranges, mangoes and plums, the lawns are full of fruit-bearing trees. As we step in, he also tells us about his love for dogs. He has two—Pashu and Sultan—that can be spotted lazing around in the backyard.

"I was 26 during the time of the climb. The two and a half months of the expedition are unforgettable. Just above the Sun Kosi river, on the trek up towards Namche Bazaar (11,300 ft) in Nepal, we got our first glimpse of the Everest," he said. A team of 30 climbers, 800



Major Ahluwalia (above, left) calls the climb a very humbling experience. In 1965, he suffered an injury resulting in his confinement to a wheelchair (top right). TRIBHUVAN SHARMA & HANDOUTS

porters and 60 sherpas set up for the ascent. After a few weeks of uphill trek, the climbers settled at the base camp at 17,800 ft in the snow-covered glaciers. "The base camp has a kitchen with six to eight cooks and a head cook. Our cook Thondup, who had come to be known as General Thondup would treat us every day with aloo parathas and poori subzi during the approach road," said the retired major. However, just before the final

climb, there was an avalanche and they were told that they may have to return due to bad weather. "We got tea in our tents. The attendant told us everybody should head back, as our equipment and supplies got were buried in the avalanche. We could not have gone up without oxygen cylinders," he recalled.

But the bad weather did not deter the summiteers. They threw their walkie-talkies away and prepared for the climb. They



had managed to locate some oxygen cylinders. Ahluwalia along with his two teammates were the first Indians to reach the summit at 9.30 am on May 20. "It was such a clear sky and we could see mountains one after the other. I could see Tibet and Central Asia clearly and I thought I would go their sometime. It was the most humbling experience for us, as there was nothing higher to reach. We stood on the peak stunned, in awe of nature as much as of our

making to this point," he said, as he took a long pause.

He also recalled about his passion for photography and how the film in his camera was breaking in the cold. "We had to take pictures to show we were there. In those days one had to adjust the speed and fix the lens. I somehow got all the shots right. Surprisingly enough, everything just worked in that moment," said Ahluwalia. They ran out of oxygen cylinders by the time they climbed down.

## AGAINST ALL ODDS

Major HPS Ahluwalia is originally from Punjab and has lived his early life in Lahore. He studied at schools in Dehradun and Mussorie and went to the College of Military Engineering in Pune.

He trained at the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute in Darjeeling. He climbed extensively in Sikkim, Nepal and later climbed Mount Everest in 1965.

He has received the Arjuna Award (1965), Padma Shri (1960), National Award for the Welfare of People with Disabilities (1998), Tenzing Norgay National Adventure award for lifetime achievement (2009).

During the 1965 Indo-Pak war, he suffered a bullet injury, which resulted in his confinement to a wheelchair.

After rehabilitation, he continued to pursue his love for adventure by organising events such as a ski expedition to Mount Trisul, the first Trans-Himalaya Motor expedition in 1983.

Realizing the needs of persons with spinal injury, Ahluwalia, with the support of his friends, set up the Indian Spinal Injuries Centre in Vasant Kunj in 1993.

In 1994, he took a Central Asia Cultural Expedition following the Silk and Marco Polo's route through Uzbekistan, Kirghistan, Kazakhstan entering China and returned via Tibet and Kathmandu.

There were celebrations all through their way back and the team was received by the then prime minister at the airport.

Ahluwalia, poised in his chair, said, "Climbing was a passion then. Now, it has all become too commercialised. People are going away from nature. I would advise all schools to organise trekking expeditions every summer so that young minds know the world beyond its limitations."

## thousand words



**READER'S CONNECT:** Faisal Husaini Falahi, of Jamia Nagar, clicked this photo in Sakhdev Vihar. This picture of Christ the Redeemer and the cross portrays extreme pain and passion that seems to penetrate the sky. This church in south Delhi is a symbol of religious diversity of the people of the city and India at a larger level.

# Siddhartha Ext opposes loop of Barapullah II

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**NEW DELHI:** The ongoing construction of Barapullah Phase II—connecting Sarai Kale Khan and Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium—has left those living in Siddhartha Extension colony in a tizzy. The residents of the neighbourhood claimed that the upcoming elevated road will block the only access road between the colony and the Ring Road. Phase-II will see extension of the elevated road from Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium to INA Market. As per the plan, the loop will cut away from the elevated road near the AIIMS flyover.

Residents demand that the planned loop (to ascend the flyover) must be shifted to Ring Road, as once built, it will block nallah road, the only access road to their colony. The residents recently had a meeting with the local MLA and the public works department (PWD) minister in this regard. While work on the loop has been stalled temporarily, in the mean time the residents are in talks with the government agency to find a permanent solution. The residents have constituted an 18-member core committee to address the situation.

Blocks B and C have one access from gate number 7 of the colony to reach the main road, which will be blocked with the construction of the elevated road. The PWD is supposed to complete the work in a month.

"We had a meeting with PWD minister Satyendra Jain recently to discuss the issue. He has asked

**BLOCKS B AND C HAVE ONE ACCESS FROM GATE NUMBER 7 TO REACH THE MAIN ROAD, WHICH WILL BE BLOCKED WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ELEVATED ROAD.**

his officials to stall the work for a while till consultations on the same are done. We are again going to have a meeting with the minister and the officials this week to work out a plan," said, AS Lamba, president, local RWA. He added, "Nallah road is the only approach route to get out on the Ring Road. It will become extremely difficult to commute, as there is no facility for a right turn as well. One has to take a long U-turn from Sarai Kale Khan to go to Ashram and take the Ring Road."

Raising concerns over the situation, residents claimed that it will not be possible for school buses, emergency vehicles such as fire tenders and utility trucks to enter the colony.

According to a PWD official, the loop will not obstruct the road. He said, "Presently the carriageway (9 metres in width) is broad enough to accommodate two buses at a time. Considering their request, we have proposed to widen the road further by 11 to 11.5 metres. The plan has already been discussed with the local MLA and will be presented with further improvement to the PWD minister."



Work on the loop has been stalled temporarily and residents are in talks with PWD to find a permanent solution. TRIBHUVAN SHARMA / HT PHOTO

# From movie posters to vinyl records: Hot spots to buy vintage baubles

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**NEW DELHI:** For fanatic Bollywood fans and collectors of unique Hindi cinema memorabilia, south Delhi is the right place to be. Shops selling old film posters and records here take us back to the era of movies of Raj Kapoor, Rekha and Amitabh Bachchan. Browsing through the treasures, it is a delight to find movie posters of smiling actresses and your favourite heroes in action.

If you are a movie buff or an avid collector of antique items and a big fan of old Bollywood movies from 1950s or 1970s, then these stores in Hauz Khas and Vasant Kunj can be your favourite spots for buying very old movie posters, cinema stills and large size posters of Bollywood actors and actresses.

From original hand-painted posters of Mother India (1957), Mughal-e-Azam (1960), Mera Naam Joker (1970), Seeta Aur Geeta (1972) to the most popular movie poster of all time—Sholay (1975)—every kind of Bollywood memorabilia are available here. These shops are also the favoured destination for

**I ALSO STOCK OLD FILM BOOKLETS. THESE WERE VERY USEFUL AND HAD A SUMMARY OF THE FILM'S PLOT. THEY ALSO HAD LYRICS OF THE SONGS. THESE ARE NO LONGER AVAILABLE IN TODAY'S MULTIPLEXES.**

BALKISHAN SOROT,  
Indian Popular Art

avid collectors of lithographs, engravings, old books, original paintings and tin advertisements and metal boxes.

These vintage items have been collected over a period of time after the shop owners travelled extensively to different parts of India. They met old film distributors, theatre officials, descendants of royal families and old-time collectors. Some of the posters available with them are priceless. Some of these vintage items like lithographs, vinyl records and cinema stills offer a rare sight.

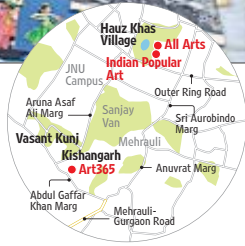


Raghav Kohli is a passionate collector of old things and considers these vintage items as treasure. TRIBHUVAN SHARMA / HT PHOTO

Those who like to collect old things keep coming back to these shops, while some come to just browse the items on display.

If you wish to go back in time and enjoy the memories

of watching old Bollywood movies of Guru Dutt, Raj Kapoor, Rekha, Vinod Khanna, Hema Malini or Amitabh Bachchan, these are the shops worth a visit.



**ART365**  
Kishangarh, Vasant Kunj

## Nostalgia is now just a click away

Ever imagined buying old film posters, vinyl records, cinema stills, engravings or lithographs from your home? These collectibles and visual arts are now just a click away. Now you can buy these vintage items online through Art365, whose warehouse is in Vasant Kunj.

In order to reach more collectors and old Bollywood film lovers, this website was founded by 26-year-old Raghav Kohli. Thanks to Kohli, now a diverse collection of old collectibles ranging from steel engravings to old Hindi posters and enamel board advertisements is available online.

"These items are like old treasure. We ship items across the world. Some come to our warehouse and then place their orders," said Raghav.

The prices, starting from ₹1,000 vary, depending upon how old the items are.

**ALL ARTS**  
HAUZ KHAS VILLAGE

## Taking you back to older times

Started by Deepak Jain in 2001, a die-hard fan of Guru Dutt and Amitabh Bachchan, this shop came up after he travelled across the country and bought old Bollywood posters from film distributors and traders.

"There are more than 3,000 movie posters in my shop, all 30x40 inches. I am interested in collecting everything that takes me back to old times when Bollywood was different," said Deepak, 46. It all started when his friends asked him to sell them some posters from his personal collection.

These collections frequently attract locals as well as foreigners, who come here and take back with them old Bollywood memorabilia. Movie posters are priced between ₹700 and ₹2,500.

The shop has a vast collection of old lithographs, maps, paintings, old advertisements and books.

**INDIAN POPULAR ART**  
HAUZ KHAS VILLAGE

## For the die-hard bollywood fans

If you want to buy original hand-painted posters of Dev Anand's super-hit film Johnny Mera Naam (1970) or Meena Kumari's blockbuster film Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam (1962) or V Shantaram's classic movie Do Aankhen Barah Haath (1957), then this shop will cater to all your demands.

It was started by Balkishan Sorot, 44. Sorot travelled all across the country to collect them. These posters are priced between ₹500 and ₹5,000, depending upon how old a movie is and which actors were in it. However, you need to book an appointment before visiting.

Indian Popular Art also has a unique collection of rare lobby cards—mini-posters carrying photographic stills of a film and hand-painted show cards. These cards were showcased in the interiors of theatres in yesteryears.