

## 7th Giritra Convention: July 12 and 13, 2008

The central theme of the 7th Giritra Convention was 'Preservation Through Trekking'. IMF, the apex body of Indian mountaineering organisations was completing 50 years, while Himalayan Club was completing 80 years. Hence, on July 12, the eve of the convention, a special programme was organised. It started with two short films on the two organisations, followed by an interaction with their officer-bearers. Colonel H. S. Chauhan, Secretary, IMF and Colonel Narinder Kumar, the leader of the first successful Indian expedition to Kanchenjunga, were the two guests who had come from Delhi. Also, there were Harish Kapadia, Divyesh Muni and Tanil Kilachand of the Himalayan Club. Dilip Lagu and Vasant Ghag interacted with them. This special programme threw light on the contribution of IMF and Himalayan Club to the mountaineering. It also started a new tradition of on-the-eve programmes for hard core mountaineers.

The morning session of July 13 began with inauguration of photography exhibition. Chandrashekhar Vaze, the president of Maharashtra Sewa Sangh, explained the purpose of the gathering. This was followed by distribution of Giritra awards, at the hands of Colonel Chauhan and other dignitaries.

In his presidential address, Colonel Chauhan appreciated the Convention. He said he hadn't ever seen such a neat gathering in Delhi. He also assured help from IMF. The president of IMF, Major H.P.S. Ahluwalia could not attend the convention because of ill-health, but he interacted with those present over cell-phone. Maharashtrian turbans on guests' heads added colour to the meet, literally.

In the afternoon, historian and researcher Ninad Bedekar delivered a lecture about sad condition of forts and other historical edifices in Maharashtra. He highlighted the efforts of trekkers to preserve the forts, the preservation of relics in a country like Italy on one hand, and the apathy of the government here, on the other.

Vasant Ghag then made a presentation on this year's theme. It contained a slide show on local organisations which are engaged in preservation efforts.

Accidents during treks are on the rise. A short film 'Dongaratil Shala' (a school in the hills) was screened during this Convention. Charuhas Joshi, Dr. Milind Chitale and Shantanu Pandit were the experts who contributed specially to the film. This was followed by screening of award-winning short films.

Dinesh Thosar of Nature Lovers was the organising chief[???]. Ramakant Gurav, Rajan Bagwe, and Jitendra Ashtekar deserve a special mention, among other volunteers, for making the meet a success. A souvenir put together by Nitin Jadhav and Vasant Ghag was published at the end.

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