

KEEP OFF THE ROAD

They search for the roughest terrain available to drive. Meet the offroaders' club



DIPANITA NATH

WHAT do you call a person who deliberately and repeatedly drives his car into the roughest terrain available — hillocks, ditches and rocky riverbeds? Loony isn't the word, he is an off-roader — a car fanatic for whom the best road isn't straight or tarmacked. Far from the city's ribbon routes, his fun lies in driving over mounds, pits and drains and negotiating hairpin bends; throw in a couple of thorn bushes and rivers in spate and he's got the perfect stretch. The NCR boasts almost 100 offroaders, who are part of the Gurgaon-based Northern India Offroaders Club.

At the end of this month, the club will roar down to Behrampore, on the outskirts of Gurgaon, in their Jeeps, Pajeros, Fords, Marutis and, in one case, a BMW X5. "Driving a vehicle offroad is not the same as driving on the road. It isn't about speed, it's about skill," says Rabinindra Singh, a 52-year-old with

Unilever, who founded the club two years ago with businessmen Laxman Vishwanath, 55, and Sarvinder Singh, 44. With more than half their lives spent offroading, the trio instinctively know the speed and gear with which a certain vehicle should approach an incline, how hard to push the accelerator while fording a stream and, most importantly, when to hit the brakes.

And even then, there are "incidents". Like the time, Vishwanath tried to leap over a yawning pit and had to give up midair or when another member tried to scale the top of a hill and found his front tyres had lost contact with the ground, leaving him stranded on a sharp incline with the bonnet in the air. "Behrampore also boasts a vicious thorn forest, where it's a lucky tyre that doesn't get a puncture," says Vishwanath. Nonetheless, he is fond of Behrampore, "Especially after rains, when tracks turn into gushing streams and elephant grass looms overhead. It's a river of slush which sucks in everything, coats tyres and

causes them to lose traction." Rabinindra prefers Hisar, with its acres of broken ground and sudden depressions in the land, though Manesar and Sakatpur — where the terrain changes after every monsoon — also score high with them.

The club includes 25 permanent women members. Spouses, friends, children and newcomers swell the numbers during outings. "We have a strict code of conduct, among them is that a newcomer must be accompanied by an old hand for the first few outings before he attempts an obstacle on his own. Another important credo is no littering. And no disturbing the wildlife. We travel to Hisar only after harvesting so as not to damage crops," adds Rabinindra. The club never "leaves a disabled vehicle" and the trio are full of stories about the times they had to push cars out of knee-deep slush or winch vehicles out of a river that turned out to be deeper than anticipated or when a car's steering came off in the middle of the night. "We travel with emergency kits and carry out a

NEVER TYRE OF ADVENTURE: The Northern India Offroaders Club in action

rece before offroading begins, but nature always throws up surprises and tests our ingenuity. We cover everything except the hefty repair bills after each outing," says Vishwanath, who spends almost half the year in the US where offroading is a major outdoor sport with dedicated parks pitted with artificial obstacles. "After a slow start in India, our membership has shot up in the past few months as news about the club spreads on online forums and through word of mouth," he adds.

A typical outing lasts four hours, generally during the day though there have been midnight drives too, and covers several acres of land. The speed, adds Rabinindra, seldom exceeds 10 kmph. "During those four hours, my cell phone is switched off and I am lost to the world. It is only me, my Jeep and the rough road in front," he says.

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Art Direction

A new art management firm provides maps of galleries along with investment advice



GEORGINA MADDOX

ONE has often wished for a comprehensive map that would lead art lovers to the important galleries in Delhi. Now Japa Arts Initiative provides maps that makes gallery hopping easy not only in Delhi but in Mumbai as well. It also takes care of the business of documenting, showcasing and evaluating one's art collection for a handsome fee.

"Apart from being curated, an art collection must be well-documented, maintained and showcased. Bearing these factors in mind, we offer customised end-to-end solutions for Indian art collectors," says its 35-year-old CEO and a former director of Bodhi Art Gallery, Arvind Vijaymohan.

Japa Arts will bring out maps on a monthly basis, and these will also be e-mailed to select art collectors on Vijaymohan's mail-

ing list. It also plans to launch a Corporate Art Campaign, where it will advise high-profile corporate collectors like HDFC and Deutsche Bank on building a powerful image of their collection. "Keeping in mind the slump in the economy, Japa will also advise on downsizing and de-accessioning," says Vijaymohan, whose online presence reaches out to Indians across the subcontinent. The Japa website,

japaarts.in, provides an overview of the activities of the art initiative; while his blog, indianartblog.blogspot.com, gives readers his view on the developments in the Indian art scenario. He shares his experiences of international art ventures, like the much-hyped Damien Hirst and Levi Strauss apparel tie-up. Next, he chronicles the ongoing work at the National Gallery of Modern Art's new wing and takes stock of the auctions.

"Apart from our input as art evaluators, we also provide

advice on conservation of art works and we are working on a loan and donation programme wherein Indian collectors can show significant art works at museums worldwide. After all, what good is a fabulous art collection if it's not shared with the rest of the world?" asks Vijaymohan.

LIBERTY DASHAVTAR
Daily: 11.45 A.M., 3.00 P.M., 6.30 P.M., & 9.45 P.M.
Starring: Kamal Hasan, Asin, Malika Shehrawat, Jay Prada

RELEASING TODAY



PVR Saket	PVR Select City Walk	PVR Naraina
PVR Vikaspuri	PVR Prashant Vihar	PVR EDM
BIG CINEMAS Vaishali	BIG CINEMAS Kaushambi	BIG CINEMAS Greater Noida
SPICE Noida	FUN Karkardooma	FUN Laxmi Nagar
MOVIEPALACE G.bad	MEENAKSHI Loni	MOVIEWORLD G.bad
SILVERCITY G.bad	PVR MGF Gurgaon	PVR SAHARA Gurgaon
PVR CROWNPLAZA Faridabad	BASHESHAR PICTURES RELEASE	



Dancing to His Tune

The original disco dancer, Mithun Chakraborty, on his second innings as a reality TV judge

DEBESH BANERJEE

It's not easy to shed an image, if you've been part of a cult movie like *Disco Dancer* that came out way back in 1983. Mithun Chakraborty, somehow, despite playing vastly different roles in his other films, like a press photographer in *Pyaar Jhukta Nahin* (1985) or a coconut seller in *Agneepath* (1990), never shook off the disco tag. At 59, however, Chakraborty is enjoying his stint watching others dance, as a celebrity judge of a reality television show called *Dance India Dance*.

"Now, being a good dancer is essential for any mainstream actor. When I started in films, disco dancing was just being recognised, and I worked hard on my skills," he reminisces,

reclining on a sofa in a Noida studio, dressed in jungle camouflage and ankle-high black boots. "The show selects a deserving dancer from among the common man. Since I have also struggled in life to reach where I am, I feel close to the theme of the show," he says.

Chakraborty continues to occasionally perform impromptu jigs on stage and at TV shows, inspired by *Disco Dancer*. "My inspirations have been Elvis Presley and John Travolta. Dancing, for me, is spiritual," he smiles.

Commonly referred to as Prabhujii in the show for his fatherly advice to participants, Chakraborty says he sometimes finds the show stressful and disturbingly competitive. "They're so desperate to outdo each

other. Some aspirants perform very dangerous moves. I want to put some rules in place," he says. Apart from reality TV, Chakraborty will be seen a lot more in films this year. In the Imran Khan starrer *Luck*, which releases in June, he plays a retired major and in *Veer*, he essays the role of Salman Khan's father, and chief of a warring clan. "Both are different roles and close to my heart. Salman is like a younger brother to me because his father Salim helped me during my struggling days," he explains.

As for his son, Mimoh, whose debut *Jimmy* in 2007, flopped miserably, Chakraborty, describes it as a "battle that he must learn to wage himself". Like father, like son?



In Conversation

Diya Mirza, Shaan, Javed Jaferi, Anjan Dutt, Shubha Mudgal.

Multimedia

Youtube and Universal join hands. The evolution of DVD players.

Television

HDTV hits India. Embedded advertising. Rakhi Sawant looking for true love.

Hollywood

Hollywood in grip of remake fever. Jackman condemns *Wolverine* leak. *Fast & Furious 4* speeds to No.1 worldwide.

Regional

Rural landscape fascinates Shekhar Das, Geethu Mohandas moves towards direction.

Business

SRK and Amir solidarity meet. India TV quits regulatory body, alleges bias.

Telescope

Maa behenji insults.

Music

Durga Jasraj lives for music.

Bollywood

Sunset Boulevard. Star Trek. Bollywood debuts at Hollywood.