



Anu Rana (left) with sister Poonam Rana with their white Gypsy

Powering the inner drive

'Raid de Himalaya', one of the Top 10 toughest rallies in the World? Not for these three ladies. Delhi-based Shuchi Thakur and Chandigarh's Anu Rana and Sarah Kashyap are all set to charge through the treacherous Himalayan terrain at the 'Raid de Himalaya' 2018 which will be flagged off from Leh on 8 October 2018 and will finish on 14 October, after covering approximately 3,000 kilometers.

"Everything that I do in life is a means to this end - rallying. I am in top form and am confident of putting up a good show once again," Shuchi said. "I am there to compete, not for a fun drive in the hills," she added.

The rally traverses past torturous mountain roads, hairpin curves and dangerous drop-offs at a height of almost 4,900 metres above sea level in Kargil, Zaskar and Ladakh.

Indeed, Shuchi Thakur is regarded as one of the world's leading cross-country high-altitude racers among women and she has competed in the 'Raid' an astounding 12 times.

Shuchi, who works in the advertising industry on the creative side, tries to compete in as many events a year as possible. She has been seen in the 'Maruti Suzuki Desert Storm' and the 'SJOBA Sub-Himalayan Rally' as well. "Seat time is crucial in motorsports. The more time

Delhi's Shuchi Thakur and Chandigarh's Anu Rana and Sarah Kashyap are all set to charge through the treacherous Himalayan terrain at the 'Raid de Himalaya 2018'

you spend behind the wheel, the better you get at your craft," she said as the countdown for the 'Raid' begins.

Sarah Kashyap is also an accomplished rider as she was the first Indian woman to finish the 'Xtreme Moto Category' at the 'Raid de Himalaya' in 2015. The only other woman biker to finish 'Raid Xtreme Moto' has been the Austrian, Klaudia Honeder, who achieved the feat in 2008. Sarah was the first Indian woman to complete the race in the 'Desert Storm' 2017, competing in the 'Xtreme Moto' category.

Anu has no hesitation in saying that the 'Raid' is her favourite motorsport event. "I love the challenge of driving for

long hours at high altitudes. It requires a completely different set of training and conditioning of your body," she said.

In 2015, Anu finished second in the T2 category at the 'Raid'. She bagged the 'Coup de Dames' trophy, given to the all-women team that performs best at the 'Raid', in 2015 and 2016. Anu was second in the T2 category at the 'Dakshin Dare' 2015 too, and first in the women's category at 'Dakshin Dare' in 2016 and 2017.

Anu, a financial consultant, will compete at the 'Raid' with her sister Poonam Rana as navigator.

The duo has won various trophies together.

The 'Raid de Himalaya' 2018 will run its first stage on the never-before traversed section from Lamayuru, called the moonland of Ladakh, to Photoksar. It will then go to the newly-upgraded road leading to Zaskar that was earlier a mule track.

They will also take the road leading to Umba La, a high mountain pass at an elevation of 4,496 meters above sea level.

This is one of the most spectacular stretches globally and is listed on dangerousroads.org. Crossing the Sirisir La at a height of 4,805 meters above sea level, the '20th Raid De Himalaya' is going to enter totally uncharted territory.

D SHREYA VERONICA

Singer Sravana Bhargavi has been quite a multitasking person, and has come a long way since her first big hit film song from the film, 'Simha'. From having been a host at 92.7 Big FM to a playback singer, dubbing artiste and then as a host of a popular show on Gemini TV, she has donned many roles with aplomb.

Last week, she was at Galleria Mall in Hyderabad where she pepped up the showcase of new festive collection at Max store. In an exclusive interview the 'Bol Baby Bol' show host shares, "I have been associated with Gemini TV for a very long time, just before I got married we started off this show. We are hosting the 11th series right now and are continuing to do good work."

The singer co-hosts the show with her husband and popular singer Vedala Hemachandra. "Working with my husband was no new feeling for me," she says.

On the possibility of getting back to hosting a radio show she says, "I believe I have a radio-friendly voice."

I might consider it if there is something interesting that will come up to me."

Talking about the changes that are seen in the film industry for playback singers she says, "Now, if I look at playback singers, they are emerging at this point, they are trying different kinds of music and independent music."

Right now I can see this kind of trend and new comers or singers are more inclined towards this."