

Hard work pays off for Arindam after four years

Leh: For most rallyists, preparation for the extremely challenging Raid de Himalaya, considered among the top ten toughest rallies of the world, begins some months in advance.

For Raid winner 2018 Arindam Saikia, the preparation to win the Raid started four years ago, when he turned 21, and booked a Polaris to fulfill his dream.



ON TOP: Arindam Saikia with his Raid winner Polaris.

Raid de Himalaya, the world's foremost high-altitude motorsport battle, started from Kargil on October 10. It concluded at Leh on October 14, with Saikia as the undisputed winner in Raid Xtreme 4X4.

Saikia, who hails from Golaghat in Assam, says that since he was 16, he had dreamt of winning the Raid de Himalaya, India's top off-road motorsport challenge. "I bought the Polaris to fulfill

this dream," said Saikia, who owns tea gardens in Assam.

Saikia first competed in the Raid in 2015. "I had an accident on Day Three of racing. I was heart-broken. I came back for Raid 2016 with hopes and expectations. That year, a biker lost his life racing at the Raid, and the event was called off," recalls Saikia.

The motorsport champion, who is now 25, took a year off from rallying in

2017 to hone his skills. The practice stood him in good stead at Raid de Himalaya 2018, when he was first in start order for the race over snow. "The whole stage was snow and black ice. My vehicle was the first one to enter the stage, and it was the most dangerous stretch I have ever done. At a point my vehicle slipped, but I managed to save the vehicle and also myself. I got goosebumps that day," remembers Saikia.