



THE ART OF RALLYING

The Himalayan Rally made its first trip across international borders to Bhutan

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THE 4TH edition of the JK Tyre Himalayan Drive organised by JustSportz, made its first

international voyage to Bhutan. Run to a T.S.D (Time, Speed, Distance) format, the cross-country rally was set to make 27 competitors from across India fight for the championship over five days and a total distance 1050 km.

An early morning ceremonial flag-off from the City Centre mall in Siliguri started the 350km long drive to Paro in Bhutan. The first half of the day was spent squeezing through city traffic until we reached Hasimara – the last post of the Indian Air Force. From there we headed to Jaigaon, the last village on the Indian side before entering Phuentsholing in Bhutan. The 160km drive from Phuentsholing to Paro was a 'Free Zone' giving the drivers a chance to have some fun. The day ended at Ola Thang hotel in Paro and the brother duo of Sudip and Arindam Ghosh finished first with 64 penalty seconds followed by Rajiv Sarkar and Chandu Sekhar in second with 102 penalty seconds.

The next day was a short drive to Chele La pass at 13,408ft, the highest point on the road from Paro to Haa — a place on the Bhutan-Tibet border. From the hotel, the rally headed down to the banks of Paro Chhu river, after which began a 60km climb to Chele La. The

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Ghosh brothers built a sizeable lead with 146 penalty seconds followed by Rajiv Sarkar and Chandu Sekhar with 426 penalty seconds and Pratik Sirkar and Debasish Ghosh with 550 penalty seconds in third.

On day three, the rally made its way back to India, driving 320km from Paro to Murti a small town amidst the Gorumara national park. The day started with a little off-roading by the ParoChhu River. The boulder-laden path was a bit of a hassle for the smaller cars but the SUVs managed to glide past without any trouble. Leaders Arindam and Sudip slipped to sixth position and Jogendra Kumar Jaiswal and Prasenjit Roy finished first.

Day four was a challenge to begin with. The rally was ready and set to go, when the marshal's car came back, because it could not get to the assigned post because of an elephant in the way. After waiting for an hour, the elephant did not move and the rally route had to be chopped by 8km to avoid disturbing the animal. The rally started from the entrance of the Chapramari forest which then ended at the queen of the hills, Darjeeling.

The drive from Darjeeling back to Siliguri was the shortest route of the rally. A 93km

drive would decide the third and fourth place in the rally. The Ghosh brothers had won the championship despite their fallback in the last two days, but the lead they built earlier on had them in top spot. Finishing second was the team of Jogendra

Kumar Jaiswal and Prasenjit Roy with a total of 576 penalty seconds and the duo of Pratik Sirkar and Debasish Ghosh finished a close third.

Overall, the fourth edition of the JK Tyre Himalayan rally ended on a high and happy note back at the city centre in Siliguri, with every one safe and sound, the rally crossed over international borders successfully. ❏

