

Hong Kong rickshaw riders hit road for educating Indian girls



The team Education Explorers in Kochi before their journey was kicked off. (From left) Paul Niel, Clare Wong, Phillipe Angst, Sofia Ramirez and Thomas Boarder. —DC

T. SUDHEESH | DC
ALAPPUZHA, JAN 1

They are on a mission to collect funds for the education of girl children in India. For that they are making a 3,000-km road journey by two glorified autorickshaws from Kochi to Jaisalmer, Rajasthan.

The team members came from Hong Kong to Kochi early this week and started their journey on the vulnerable 7-hp engine autorickshaws on Thursday.

The team called 'Education Explorers' comprises Clare Wong, a Hong Kong teacher; Phillipe Angst, a Swiss

banker; Thomas Boarder, an Australian filmmaker; Paul Niel, an Australian-born explorer and Sofia Ramirez, a Chilean civil servant and is accompanied by about 90 other members.

The team plans to raise USD 50,000 for Indian charity, 'Educate Girls,' with the support of Switzerland-based education charity UBS Optimus Foundation. The combined target is USD 100,000 which will help send 10,000 Indian girls to schools.

Mr Paul Niel, team leader, who spoke to Deccan Chronicle over phone from Kochi, said that they had already raised USD 8,000.

● The team members came from Hong Kong to Kochi early this week and started their journey on the vulnerable 7-hp engine autorickshaws on Thursday

"The education of Indian girls especially in North is still a daunting task due to the dearth of resources and the impact of social taboos. In rural India, girls are often subjected to child marriages without providing proper education. If they are from poor families, they are forced to quit the school for mar-

riage. Our effort is to fight for their education. The trip is part of 'Rickshaw Run' organised by The Adventurists, charity fundraisers," he said.

The entire money raised from the adventure will go to 'Educate Girls,' a Mumbai-based charity. They had set up a monitoring system along with UBS to check the proper use of the funds. They would visit schools en route to Jaisalmer to create awareness about education.

"The local pupils helped design the exterior of the autorickshaws with messages about the importance of education," said Mr Neil.