

SOUTH POLE EXPEDITION

I had the opportunity of being a part of Indian Navy's Team which skied to the North and the South Pole. With an intent to complete the 'Three Poles Challenge' (Mt Everest, South and North Pole), the Indian Navy decided to undertake a ski expedition to the



South Pole in December 2006. Preparations for the expedition started in April 2006 with selection of potential candidates followed by Physical Conditioning and training expeditions to Greenland and Manali.

The team learnt arctic navigation and camping and Nordic Skiing at Greenland over a period of 21 days on the ice-cap. Following this the team undertook intensive physical training at Manali and Delhi.

The team departed for the final expedition in Dec 06 from Delhi. While flying from Delhi



to New York, en route to Santiago, Chile, a medical emergency was attended to onboard the aircraft. A female co passenger who was 34 weeks pregnant had developed labor pains and was in an advanced stage of labor. In flight breech delivery was conducted by me assisted by two of my medical assistants who were also a part of the expedition.

After spending 10 days at Punta Arenas, Chile, the team arrived on the icy continent of Antarctica and set off for their expedition which entailed skiing the last 100 nautical miles to reach the Geographic South Pole. The team used to ski 10 hrs a day pulling approx 60-70 kg load



of their food, fuel, clothing and tent equipment, in boat shaped carts called pulkas, tied around their waists in temperatures as low as -60 deg C with added wind chill. By the second day almost all members of the team exhibited some form of cold injury, yet pressed on with the expedition. After 11 days of intense skiing in the cold hostile environment, the team successfully reached the South Pole at



0200 hrs (IST) on 28 Dec 2006.

The team then undertook an expedition to the North Pole in April 2008. On this occasion the team had to face similar hostile environment in the Arctic region with the added problem that we were skiing on a floating chunk of ice which sometimes used to drift in a direction opposite to the one that we were skiing in. That was primarily the reason why we took 9 days to ski just from the 89th to 90 degrees N.



The team finally

arrived at the North Pole on 08 Apr 2008.



The fact that even though none of us knew how to ski before the conception of the expeditions yet we managed to successfully complete the most daunting activity in the field just reiterates the fact that once one sets his mind to doing something, nothing is impossible.