

On Way to Boomla



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In 1962, this is the route through which the Chinese soldiers entered India, almost unchallenged, to invade. This year too they have entered, but this time with gifts and sweets. On August 15, the Indian Army and Chinese Army held a border personnel meeting on the Himalayan heights of Bumla along the Sino-India border to celebrate the Independence Day. I was one of the media persons who attended the memorable function organized by the Indian Army. It was my first trip to Boomla, 15800 ft above the sea level.

The BPM, hosted by the Indian side at the Maitrey Sthal to celebrate the 61st eve of our Independence Day, was led by Brigadiar Sanjay Kulkarni, the Indian Sector Commander under the flagship of Maj Gen DS Sindhu GOC. The BPM began with the Indian delegation receiving their Chinese counterparts led by Col Zhang Wei Guo, at the Hap of Stones followed by the hoisting of national flag and a formal interaction at the Maitrey Sthal. Talking to this reporter, Kulkari said: "Both the sides once again reaffirmed their resolve to strengthen friendship and to maintain peace and tranquility along the border."

We started our journey from Guwahati on August 13 and had our lunch at Tezpur Army officers' mess. We knew the weather would not be a problem. We were right. The road was open, but just enough. We spent the night and Tenga, a picture-postcard landscape. The hills around were green, the roads were bumpy and we were driving ahead, keeping faith on our Arunachali driver. You had to just leave behind your fear of heights and enjoy! The next day, we started again and on the road we stopped at Shella Pass, 17000 ft above the sea level. We could feel the shivering cold and, the whining wind and freezing cold made us almost frozen. At Jaswant Garh, the story of heroism of some Indian soldiers is retold. This is where Jaswant Singh of the 4th Battalion Garhwal Rifles held off the Chinese enemy in 1962 for 72 hours single-handedly. He ran from bunker to bunker- firing and creating an illusion of many soldiers present. Later, the Chinese Army came to know that only one soldier was holding them off for hours and so, they attacked him from backside. He sacrificed his life for the country. Any Army convoy on the way to the border make it a point to stop and pay homage at the beautifully maintained memorial.

We arrived Boomla on August 14 around 8 pm and stayed the night at Kaziranga mess. The Army Major briefed us about the programme. The next day, we began our journey at 5 am. The road to Boomla is terrible. The steepy road with stones was dangerous. We had to get down from our vehicle several times and pushed that as the vehicle was not able to move in 70 degree ups. The hills were full of yellow and red flowers as it was a flower field. At Boomla, we had our breakfast and then moved to the Heap Of Stones. The programme was nice, some of our friends had to take Oxygen because of high altitude. To sum up, the journey was nice, despite several hiccups.

Photo: Col Zhang Wei Guo (Delegation Leader of Chinese Army) Brig. Sanjay Kulkarni (Delegation Leader of Indian Army) exchanging the confidence building measures during the India's 61st Independence Day celebration in the Indo China Border at line of actual control (LAC), Bum La in Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh on 15-08-07 . Pix by UB Photos.

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