

One of the first of its kind graduation ceremony of mountain youth took place at NIM (Nehru Institute of Mountaineering) on September 25 at Uttarkashi. Informs Sunil Kainthola, spokesperson of the Nanda Devi campaign that is promoting the cause of the unique biosphere sur-

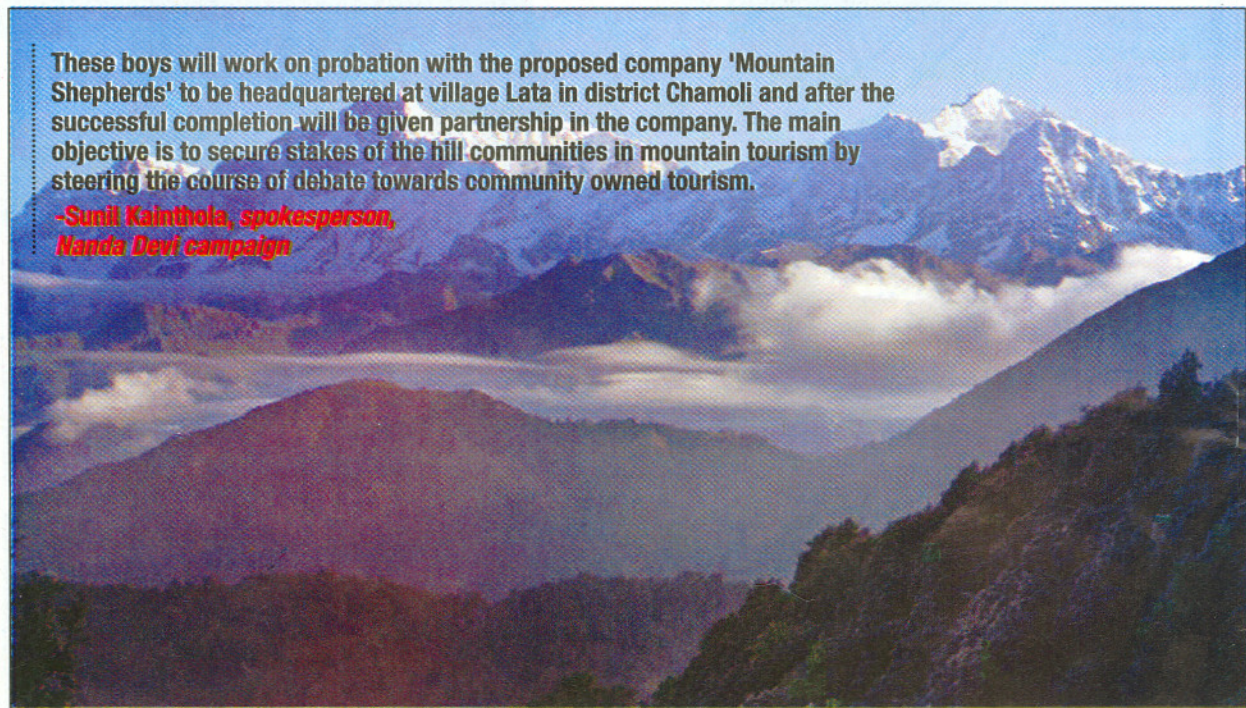
dropouts or rural unemployed youth who are already working as porters and guides in their area. The selection process was based on consultation with the Gram Sabhas and reference from the Nanda Devi Campaign workers. The selected youth were asked to take a pledge that they will develop tourism as envisaged in the Nanda Devi Declaration and will be available for work un-

Apart from the chief guest, Dr. Harshwanti Bisht and Nanda Devi International representative Rajiv Rawat, eminent mountaineer and social worker Padmashri Chandraprabha Aitwal was also present during the graduation ceremony along with Dr. Brij Mohan Sharma, the secretary of SPECS.

One of the special features of the training programme was orientation on

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-Sunil Kainthola, spokesperson, Nanda Devi campaign



Trained for the mountain

Forty boys from Niti Valley were given basic mountaineering training at NIM, Uttarkashi, as part of a drive to involve local people in mountain tourism

rounding the famous Nanda Devi peak: "It was basically a 38 days programme with 35 days basic plus mountaineering training at NIM, Uttarkashi. The programme included rock climbing training at Tekhla and snow and ice craft at NIM base camp near the Dokhrani glacier."

Initially there were 40 boys selected from the Niti Valley in Uttarkashi district, Munsiar in Pithoragarh and from the villages around Dodital in Uttarkashi district. However, two of the boys were sent back due to injuries and health related complications.

The training was organized by the Dehradun-based Society of Pollution and Environmental Conservation Scientists and sponsored by the US-based Winterline Foundation.

Most of the boys were either school

der the proposed company - Mountain Shepherds. Further, they also took the pledge that they will never practice female foeticide in their personal life and always oppose such inhuman practices.

After the successful training at NIM, the boys were given a three days interaction and exposure at the prestigious Hanifl Center for outdoor environment education at the Woodstock School.

Says Kainthola: "These boys will work on probation with the proposed company 'Mountain Shepherds' to be headquartered at village Lata in district Chamoli and after the successful completion will be given partnership in the company. The main objective is to secure stakes of the mountain communities in mountain tourism by steering the course of debate towards community owned tourism."

the special needs of the physically challenged persons and senior citizens. For this purpose experts from the National Institute of Visually Handicapped and National Institute of the Orthopedically Handicapped also sensitized the participants.

Apart from this eminent scholars from Uttarakhand also gave their blessings by orienting the participants on various aspects of Uttarakhand. Prominent among them were Dr. Shekhar Pathak, Harish Chandola, Berendra Kumar Tyagi from Vigyan Prasar, Bidhan Chandra from Green Peace, etc.

These boys will manage the inaugural women's trail which is starting from the first week of Oct. They will also lead the next stage of the Nanda Devi Campaign fighting to give back to this unique biosphere its identity.