

# Business Standard

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## India's Harshwanti Bisht wins Hillary Mountain Legacy Medal

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Kathmandu, March 11 ( IANS) Eminent Indian conservationist and mountaineer Harshwanti Bisht has been selected for this year's prestigious Sir Edmund Hillary Mountain Legacy Medal for her environmental and community work in the Gangotri Himalaya area.

Peter Hillary, the son of late Sir Edmund Hillary, will award the medal to Bisht March 17 at the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) headquarters in Kathmandu, said a statement issued by Mountain Legacy here Tuesday.

ICIMOD works with eight regional member countries of the Hindukush Himalayas for environment protection.

The award was instituted in the memory of Sir Edmund Hillary who successfully scaled Mt Everest May 29, 1953, along with his Sherpa friend, Tenzing Norgay, to become the first climbers to ascend the world's tallest peak.

The medal was initiated in 2003 by unanimous resolution of the 'Namche Conference: Parks, People and Mountain Tourism', held in the lap of Mt Everest.

"The Hillary Medal both recognises Sir Edmund's lifelong commitment to the welfare of mountain people and their environment and also encourages the continuing emulation of his example. It is awarded for remarkable service in the conservation of culture and nature in mountainous regions," read the statement.

An accomplished mountaineer, Bisht, based in Dehra Dun, India, along with Rekha Sharma and Chandra Prabha Aitwal, was among the first three women to summit the main peak of Nanda Devi (7,816m).

Bisht was also a member of the Indian expedition to Mt. Everest in 1984. However, the Hillary Medal is awarded for philanthropic achievements, not for sports achievements.

For 25 years, since 1989, Bisht has laboured to improve conditions in the Gangotri area of Uttarakhand, at the headwaters of the Ganges in northern India. Her Save Gangotri project has planted tens of thousands of saplings, organised eco-awareness campaigns, propagated endangered medicinal herbs, and introduced ecotourism standards to an area that had been ravaged by climate change and unregulated pilgrimage.

Bisht and Mountain Legacy are currently initiating a project to promote establishment of a network of women's mountaineering clubs at institutes throughout the Himalayan region.