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Operation Blue Freedom: Team CLAW

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Why in News

Recently, the Government of India has accorded sanction to **Team CLAW** to lead a team of people with disabilities to scale Siachen Glacier and create a **new world record for the largest team of people with disabilities**.

- This is the land world record expedition part of '**Operation Blue Freedom Triple World Records**' being undertaken.
- Triple Elemental World Records is a series of world records being attempted by the team in 2021 of collectives of people with disabilities achieving great feats on land, in air and underwater.

Siachen Glacier

- The Siachen Glacier is located in the **Eastern Karakoram range** in the Himalayas, just northeast of Point NJ9842 where the Line of Control between India and Pakistan ends.
- It is the **Second-Longest glacier** in the World's Non-Polar areas.
Fedchenko Glacier, located in Yazgulem Range, Tajikistan is the Longest glacier in the World's Non-Polar areas.
- The Siachen Glacier lies immediately south of the great drainage divide that separates the Eurasian Plate from the Indian subcontinent in the extensively glaciated portion of the Karakoram sometimes called the "**Third Pole**".
- The Siachen Glacier is part of Ladakh which has now been converted into a Union Territory.
- The Siachen Glacier is the world's highest battlefield.
- The entire Siachen Glacier has been under the administration of India since 1984 (Operation Meghdoot).



Key Points

- **About the Expedition:**

Initially, a team of **20 people with disabilities** would be selected to undergo training, after which the final expedition team shall be selected.

- Final expedition team (including a minimum of 6 people with disabilities), who will trek from the **Siachen Base Camp to Kumar Post**.
- Kumar post is located at an altitude of about **15,632 feet**.

- **Team CLAW and Operation Blue Freedom:**

- **Team CLAW:** Team CLAW (**Conquer Land Air Water**) is a team of ex-Indian Special Forces commandos.
 - Generally, all are either from **Indian Army Para Commandos** or the **Naval Marine Commandos, also known as the MARCOS.**
 - These veterans have **multiple specialisations** - not just in combat but also in other elite skills such as **skydiving, scuba diving, mountaineering, emergency medical response** and all-terrain survival amongst others.
 - The initiative was **taken by Major Vivek Jacob**, a Para (Special Forces) officer.
- **Operation Blue Freedom:** Operation Blue Freedom is a **social impact venture** aimed at **rehabilitating people with disabilities through adaptive adventure sports.**
 - It aims to **shatter the common perception of pity, charity and inability associated with people with disabilities** and recreate it to **one of dignity, freedom and ability.**
 - Further, their focus is to **'design and implement sustainable large-scale employment solutions'** for people with disabilities, especially in the **'Environment conservation and Sustainability'** space.
 - It was **launched in 2019 by Team CLAW.**
- **CLAW Global:** Team CLAW is in the process of **setting up centres across the globe where-in Special Forces Veterans** and People with Disabilities are merging in action for creating a better life experience, for not only persons with disability but the non-disabled as well.

- **The Disability Problem:**

- Disabilities is an **umbrella term**, covering **impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions**.
 - An impairment is a problem in body function or structure;
 - An activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action;
 - A participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations.
- As per **Census 2011**, in India, out of the total population of 121 crore, **about 2.68 crore persons are 'Disabled'** (2.21% of the total population).
 - Out of 2.68 crore, 1.5 crore are males and 1.18 crore are females.
 - Majority (69%) of the disabled population resided in rural areas.
- Globally there are 1 billion people with disabilities, which is 15% of the global population.
- They face a lack of **holistic rehabilitation, inadequate skilling, lack of seamless mobility and lack of suitable employment**.
- These factors combined together largely confined persons with disabilities to their homes, leading to inaccurate awareness on their issues and wrong perceptions about their abilities.
- Thus, their **productive potential is largely untapped** leading to global exclusion from mainstream life.

Source: TH