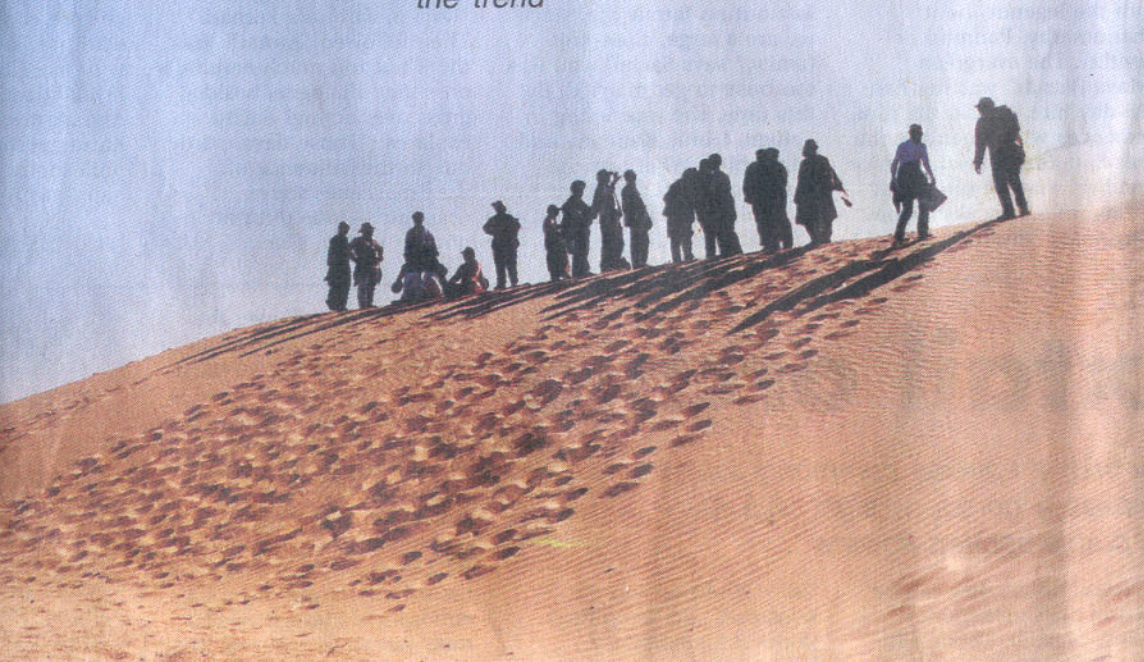


# CORPORATE GAMES

*Business houses are turning to adventure activity to strengthen bonding and improve performance at the workplace.*  
**PRASSANA SRINIVASAN** examines the trend



**M**ORE AND more corporate houses in the city are organising outdoor activities in informal settings. The aims are diverse — to strengthen bonds between employees and employers, to improve self-confidence and sharpen managerial skills. Adventure activity is the new corporate buzzword and a number of specialised clubs have begun catering to this need.

"Initially, only top-level executives participated in such adventure activities. Now companies sponsor even middle-level and new inductees for such trips," says Major (retd.) S.R. Roy of Adventure Zone (24424580). Adventure facilitates learning, he says, adding, "The programmes not only help employees unwind, but also improve their overall performance at work." He calls his sessions Outward Bound Training (OBT).

Rock climbing, rappelling, parasailing, trekking, camping, horse riding, hang gliding and water sports are some activities offered. The duration of the camps varies according to the time they are willing to spend. "Normally, they prefer overnight and three-day trips during the weekend. Costs depend on duration, size of the group, location, mode of transport and activities selected," says Kalyani Candade of Wilder Trails Adventure Club (26442729).

She says their corporate leisure programmes are custom-designed to suit the requirements of clients. "A typical programme would involve a wilderness location, tent or cottage type accommodation, some trekking or wildlife trails, climbing or rappelling, water sports if possible and campfire activities," says



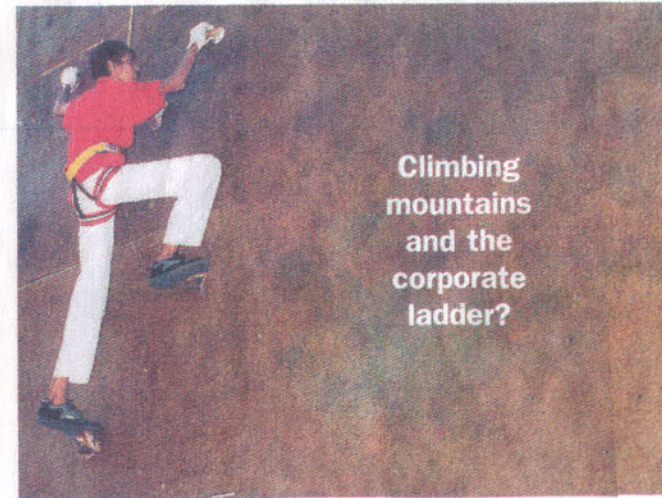
Kalyani. She adds that these trips foster team spirit.

"We were bored of visiting the usual tourist spots. When we heard of this, we were excited and wanted to try it immediately," says Hema Hari of Covansys, who recently took a trip to a forest near Satyamangalam.

"It was a memorable trip

because we became close as a group and this has enhanced our productivity at work."

"Every activity has been re-worked to suit the client's requirement. We are dealing with people who, by and large, lead a sedentary lifestyle. Hence the activities are modified to suit their level of fitness," says Major Roy,



**Climbing mountains and the corporate ladder?**

into introduced Chennaiites to parasailing. "It was not just a matter of having fun. The games were designed to enhance leadership qualities and team spirit. The training was so subtle that we did not realise we were attending a workshop. We were in a forest — it was our group against Nature. It was amazing," says an employee, who just returned from a weekend trip.

Initially, people are hesitant to participate in the camps, but increased awareness about fitness has added a new dimension to these activities. "For the first part of the trek, we can hear many of them say, 'No I can't walk that far'.

However, by the end of the programme, at least a couple of them want to try it again. There is an attitudinal change and they feel rejuvenated," says Squadron Leader (retd) Unni Nair of Excel Adventure and Entertainment (22462696). "Such trips where we are close to Nature for a couple of days — climb trees, walk on ropes, swim with life jackets, climb a small mountain or just walk a couple of miles in dense forest — are exciting," says Padmaja, who attended such a camp.

A trip could cost about Rs. 1,500 per head, but pricing depends on duration, location and the kind of activities chosen. However, cost does not seem to be a factor with corporate houses. They seem to have discovered that such things like clambering over mountains, traversing forests or cantering on horses are not merely fun. They also make good business sense. ■