In wheelchair, paraplegic Lai Chi-wai climbs up skyscraper in Hong Kong

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The 37-year-old climber, whose car accident 10 years ago left him paralyzed from waist down, could not make it to the top of the 300 metre-tall Nina Tower on the Kowloon peninsula.

Tai Chi-wai, a paraplegic climber, attempts to climb the 320-metre tall Nina Tower using only his upper body strength, in Hong Kong, China January 16, 2021. (REUTERS/Tyrone Siu)Â Â Â

Lai Chi-wai became the first in Hong Kong to climb more than 250 meters of a skyscraper while strapped into a wheelchair as he pulled himself up for more than 10 hours on Saturday to raise money for spinal cord patients.

The 37-year-old climber, whose car accident 10 years ago left him paralyzed from waist down, could not make it to the top of the 300 metre-tall Nina Tower on the Kowloon peninsula.

â€œI was quite scared,â€• Lai said. â€œClimbing up a mountain, I can hold onto rocks or little holes, but with glass, all I can really rely on is the rope that Iâ€™m hanging off.â€•

The event raised HK$5.2 million ($670,639) in donations.

Lai, prior to 2011, was crowned Asia champion four times for rock climbing and at one point ranked eighth globally.

After his accident, he resumed climbing by attaching his wheelchair to a pulley system. Five years ago he ascended the 495-metre high Lion Rock mountain, a local folk culture symbol of Hong Kongâ€™s strength and grit.

â€œApart from just living, I wondered what drives me? So I began to chase that, knowing that there was a possibility I could climb mountains, even in a wheelchair,â€• Lai said.

â€œIn a way, I forgot that I was a disabled person, I could still dream and I could still do what I liked doing.â€•

Although he did not make it to the top of the skyscraper, due to safety concerns, Lai hoped to send a message.

â€œSome people donâ€™t understand the difficulties of disabled people, some people think that we are always weak, we need help, we need assistance, we need peopleâ€™s pity,â€• Lai said.

â€œBut, I want to tell everyone, it doesnâ€™t have to be like that. If a disabled person can shine, they can at the same time bring about opportunity, hope, bring about light, they donâ€™t have to be viewed as weak.â€•

- Reuters