

EXPEDITIONS TO THE INDIAN HIMALAYA IN 2008

Compiled by Harish Kapadia

New ascents, high peaks, exploration of new areas and most importantly, challenging climbs by Indian mountaineers- all were part of the 2008 season in the Indian Himalaya. This year will be remembered for some energetic climbs and a rather settled weather.

Totally 65 foreign expeditions climbed in India. Since IMF has opened a liaison office at Leh to collect fees locally, Stok Kangri has become their most profitable peak- with 21 official ascents. Counting this with Indian teams and unofficial team climbing, this peak will be in record books for the most climbed peak above 6000 m! Three French guides climbed Rangrik Rang, a high peak in Kinnaur. They wanted to repeat the Indo-British route of 1994 on this peak. But when they found plenty of fresh snow that made the route difficult they traversed over the summit of nearby Mangala peak, reached the summit of Rangrik Rang late in the evening. Spending 10 hours night on the summit they reversed their route. Will this be what you can do if you are 22 years as they all were, have trained in the Alps and have drunk French wine! The original route, now with settled snow, was their next aim. But bureaucracy intervened and LO refused for two routes to be climbed at same rates!

Kishtwar area, once a paradise for challenging mountains was closed due to terrorism in Kashmir. The routes from the valley were too dangerous to approach from. A British-Canadian-American team tried to approach Kishtwar-Shivling from north, crossing Umasi la. But a small incident en route scared porters and they refused to descend into the valley. According to their observation terrorists were watching them and they do not like any nationalities- three above or Indians! So Kishtwar will have to wait till things improve.

Another show of energy was on Chong Kumdan II. This virgin 7000 m peaks had beaten two expeditions previously, both from the east. The Indian-French team approached from south over high pass and finally reached the long summit ridge. After a camp on the high ridge they traversed to summit and back making it a long day. Perhaps this was, both, the longest approach and longest climb in recent years.

There were worthy climbs in Garhwal too. Conrad Anker and friends climbed Meru Shark's Fin despite bad weather, Mick Fowler challenged Vasuki Parvat by a daring route and the Japanese climbed Kalanka by north face. But the iconic climb was on the high and well known peak of Kamet by a two member Japanese team. They acclimatized on the 'normal' route and established supplies for return. Then in one push they climbed the steep southeast face to the summit and returned by the normal route. With most of climbing above 7000 m this expedition too can enter the fitness race with others as above.

With a total of 57 expeditions during the year, the Indian teams were not too far in terms of excellence in climbs. Thalay Sagar, up to now preserve of strong foreign teams, received Indian climbers for the first time. A small team from Bengal reached the summit. Similarly Tirsuli West was climbed for the second time by an Indian expedition. This high peak in earlier years had defeated several strong teams. Maiktoli south face, Srikanta and Manirang were other high peaks climbed by the Indian teams. This is a very welcome sign and it is hoped that new breed of young mountaineers in future will explore climbing without fixed ropes and support by Sherpas, as it was done this year.

Along with climbers there were teams which either climbed in new areas and opened new valleys for the future. The Irish teams explored Gramang Bar in Kinnaur and climbed in the Debsa valley of Spiti. Two Indian teams took on challenges of Nya Kangri and Plateau Peak. Both are challenging peaks in the Eastern Karakoram region and will take some strong teams to challenge it in future.

On the historic trail was British team, exploring to reach the Zemu Gap and planning for its first crossing. Their route from high Guicha la to the Talung valley was not without difficulties. But ahead lay the icefall and the approaching bad weather stopped their movements. However this needs to be done and hopefully some team will return here to reach the Zemu Gap, a first after H. W. Tilman.

This list covers important expeditions to the Indian Himalaya in 2008

UTTARAKHAND

KUMAUN HIMALAYA

Nanda Devi East (7434 m)

Team: Indian

Organisers: Parbat Abhiyatri Sangh, West Bengal

Leader: Shyamal Sarkar

A team of 12 members with eight high altitude supporters attempted the peak in June 2008. Due to bad weather and onset of monsoon they could reach only up to Camp 3 (6250 m) on 22nd June before calling off the attempt.

Changabang (6866 m)

Team: Czech Republic

Leader: Michal Bernard

From 7th to 17th September 2008, six members of the Czech team attempted the west face of the peak. They reached up to 6100 m but had to give up because heavy snowfall made further climbing hazardous.

Kalanka (6931 m)

Team: Japanese

Leader: Fumitaka Ichimura

The team consisting of the leader (30 years), Yusuke Sato (27 years) and Kazuki Amano (31 years) completed a new route on Kalanka's north face. After enduring a short spell of bad weather, they started from base camp on 14th September. They had to stay three nights at 6600 m on the face due another spell of bad weather. They finally reached the summit on 22nd September and returned to base camp on 24th September.

They had the permission to climb Changabang (6866 m) also, but abandoned it, as they were exhausted after climbing the Kalanka north face.

Tirsuli West (7035 m)

Team: Indian

Organisers: Indian Mountaineering Foundation

Leader: Gautam Dutta

The team of 12 climbers with some high altitude supporters followed the same route of the first ascent. by team from Nehru Institute of Mountaineering in 2001. They fixed the entire route from base camp till near the summit. They established four camps and the highest camp (Camp 4) was at 6630 m. On 12th June 2008, Amresh Kumar Jha, Debraj Dutta, Goutam Saha, K Wallambok Lyngdoh, Mohan Lal, Subrata Chakraborty and three high altitude supporters Phurba, Tashi and Dorjee Sherpa reached the summit. It was second ascent of the mountain, which has been attempted several times earlier.

Maiktoli (6803 m)

Team: Indian

Organisers: Indian Mountaineering Foundation

Leader: Col Vijay Singh, VSM

As Maiktoli lies on the southern rim of the Nanda Devi sanctuary and it can be attempted only from outside the sanctuary walls, i.e., the south face. A Japanese team first climbed this route in 1977. On the same route in 1992 four climbers from an Indian expedition from Almora, Uttarakhand died by a fall from the ridge. The Almora team again attempted the route in 1995 without success.

The Indian Mountaineering Foundation team of nine climbers followed the same route. and. They totally fixed 880 m of rope but the route they found to be very steep. In bad weather reached 6200 m on 10th September. Knowing the history of the deaths on the south face, the leader very wisely called off the expedition.

GARHWAL HIMALAYA

GANGOTRI AREA

Thalay Sagar (6904 m)

Team: Indian

Organisers: Mountaineers' Association of Krishnanagar, West Bengal

Leader: Basanta Singha Roy

This was a team of 9 members with four Sherpas from Darjeeling that attempted this high and challenging peak. Proceeding from Gangotri to Base camp at Kedar tal was established. From here they followed the west ridge and they established Camp 3 (summit camp) at 6400 m with fixing ropes en route. The summit camp was the junction of snowy west ridge which connects Jogin group of peaks and vertical rock wall of Thalay Sagar. On 29th August they fixed ropes for 550 m ahead towards the summit, almost within 100 m of the summit. After sitting out snowfall on the 31st they started for the summit at 4 am on 1st September. They followed the fixed ropes and climbed the final 100 m of steep gradient snow slopes to reach the summit at about 8 am.

This was the first ascent of Thalay Sagar by an Indian team. Summiteers were Basanta Singha Roy and Sherpas Pasang, Pemba and Phurba Gyalgen.

Meru (6660 m)

Team: Korean

Leader: Se Joon Kim

The Korean team of three climbers climbed a new direct route on the north face of Meru in the month of July 2008. On 13th July, the leader with Wang Jun Ho and Kim Tae Mam reached the summit at 6.40 p.m.

Meru Central (6550 m)

Team: American

Leader: Conrad Anker

The peak is also known as Shark's Fin due to its peculiar shape. The American team of three climbers reached just 100 m below the summit on 3rd October and had to turn back because of further difficulties and exertion. They sat out heavy snowfall from 18th to 24th September.

Shivling (6184 m)

(1)

Team: Swiss

Leader: Nellen Michael

All the three climbers of this Swiss team successfully reached the summit by the traditional west ridge. On 28th May 2008 the leader with Simon Schydrig and Wellig Diego climbed to the top at 5.00 p.m.

(2)

Team: Korean

Leader: Boun Hyun Park

The five members Korean team climbed the traditional west ridge. The leader with Young Jik Yoo and Seon Tae Jang reached to the summit on 31st May, just three days after the Swiss expedition. The Koreans also attempted Meru but could reach up to 5900 m. Because of heavy snow they could not climb further on Meru.

(3)

Team: Iceland

Leader: Arnar Emilsson

The Iceland expedition of five climbers attempted the west ridge but was unlucky with the weather. They reached up to Camp 3 (6000 m) after fixing ropes all the way from Camp 2. There was heavy snowfall and they could not climb the overhanging route ahead. There were avalanches on both sides of the route so they backed out. Returning in bad weather conditions, they insisted on clearing all the ropes fixed by them.

Sudarshan Parvat (6507 m)

Team: Japanese

Leader: Toshio Yamagiwa

The Japanese team followed the east ridge route, which was pioneered by the Indian French expedition in 1981. They established two camps on the way and the top camp was at 5800 m. S. Kazama, N. Suzuki and K. Hirano with guides Laxman and Wallambok reached the summit on 19th August 2008.

Vasuki Parvat (6792 m)

Team: British

Leader: Mick Fowler

Two alpinist, Mick Fowler and Paul Ramsden, attempted the west face of the “King of Serpents” (*Vasuki*). It was a new route but they could reach up to 6400 m only. Mick describes his experience as follows: “We tried the buttress line catching the sun and reached a point about two-thirds of the way up just at the foot of the snowy section catching the sun. I think we might have completed the technically hardest climbing but earlier spell of bad weather meant that we did not acclimatise as well as I would have liked and we just ground to a knackered halt going slower and slower (and feeling we were getting more and more wobbly) at about 6400 m. It was also surprisingly cold to the extent that we could not use bare hands on rock.”

Srikanta (6133 m)

Team: Indian

Organisers: Giripremi, Pune.

Leader: Anand Mali

The expedition approached the mountain from Jangla village near Uttarkashi on the Gangotri road. They established two camps on the mountain at 5200 m and 5600 m. On 12th September 2008, five climbers reached the summit of this sparsely visited mountain. The last successful attempt was in 1997. Anand Mali with Tekraj Adhikari and Krishna Dhokle and two high altitude supporters Gyalbu and Pasang reached the top after 16 days of efforts. Kalyan Kadam, the fourth member reached up to summit camp. They fixed about 1100 m of rope between their top camp and the summit.

CENTRAL GARHWAL**Kamet (7756 m)**

(1) Team: Japanese

Leader: Hazuya Hiraide

The Two member Japanese team of Hazuya Hiraide and Ms Kei Taniguchi climbed the formidable southeast face of Kamet in the autumn of 2008. They set up their base camp on 1st September. They acclimatized by climbing till Mead's Col on the normal route. There was heavy snowfall between 18 to 24 September. Climbing a direct line on the southeast face from 29th September, they reached the summit at 10:00 a.m. on 5th October and they descended to Camp 3 (6600 m) on the normal

route. On 6th October, they were down to Camp 2 (5500 m) and reached base camp on 7th October. This was the first ascent of the southeast face (commonly called east face) and they are the first Japanese summiteers of Kamet. Just before this expedition, Hiraide had summited Gasherbrum II and Broad Peak in Karakoram.

(2)

Team: Japanese

Leader: Isao Hidehiko

Just before the above mentioned spectacular ascent, another Japanese team of seven climbers attempted Kamet in the pre-monsoon season. They took the normal route but bad weather and many crevasses defeated them. On 12th June, they could reach Camp 4 at 6050 m, which was their high point.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

KINNAUR

Rangrik Rang (6553 m)

Team: French

Leader: Ferron Odilon

Three young mountaineers (all 22 years) from France completed the second ascent of this beautiful mountain in Kinnaur. They followed the long route over Mangla peak to the col with the main peaks and followed it to the summit. The leader with Rumebe Jeremy and Audibert Slvoïn reached the summit. The climb was completed in only two days reaching the top on 1st October in the late evening (7.30 pm). They bivouacked on the summit for 10 hours, and returned to their top camp on 2nd October late in the evening.

The original route, followed by the 1994 Indian British expedition led by Sir Chris Bonington and Harish Kapadia, climbed directly from the glacier to the co, This was the intended route of the French alpinists. But because of heavy snowfall, they found this route dangerous and hence followed the alternate longer route to the summit. All three French climbers are mountain guides by profession.

Gramang Bar (6248 m)

Team: Irish

Leader: Seamus O'Hanlon

Gramang Bar is located towards northwest of peak Sesar Rang and east of Morang village in the Kinnaur Himalaya. This Irish expedition of five members approached the peak from Morang and followed Paltha – Khokpa nala to Timchhe glacier. They experienced good weather and explored the valley thoroughly but did not climb the peak because water supplies at their base camp dried up. They had received information about the area from veteran Irish mountaineer Paddy O'Leary who had been to this area in 1993. Unfortunately this information was no longer valid due to terrain changes and approach to the mountain had now become dangerous. They surveyed northwest aspects of the mountain and thought that the west ridge would be possible for future attempt. They reached a high point at 4800 m during the expedition.

Manirang (6593 m)

Team: Indian

Organisers: Climbers Circle, Kolkata, West Bengal

Leader: Dr. Anjan Choudhury

This high peak is situated on the border of Kinnaur and Spiti areas of Himachal Pradesh. A 10 member team climbed it after establishing three high camps. They climbed via Manirang pass and placed the summit camp at 5734 m. Shushanto Mondal, Tapan Mukherjee with two high altitude supporters reached the summit on 12th September 2008.

SPITI

Kanamo (5975 m)

Team: British Royal Navy

Leader: Andrew Wagstaff

The name of this peak implies 'White Hostess' and this easy peak welcomed a large team of the Royal Navy. The peak is situated near Shilla and Chau Chau Kang Nilda peaks and now easily approached by road from Kaja.

On 6th September 2008, all members except one from this dozen strong Royal Navy team reached the summit of Kanamo. They climbed southwest ridge of this small but attractive mountain in the Spiti Himalaya. They had warm, sunny weather except on the summit day!

Lhakang (6250 m)

Team: British

Leader: Michael John Borroff

Six senior citizens (60+) from the Yorkshire Ramblers Club accompanied the leader to attempt this mountain in Spiti during the post-monsoon season of 2008. They established their advanced base camp on the lateral moraines on the west of the Dhun glacier, which allowed detailed reconnaissance of northwest face of Lhakang. But un-seasonal and wide spread snowfall on Lhakang and all peaks in the northern Spiti caused them to abandon the climb. They reached 5660 m while exploring the glacier.

Khhang Shiling (6360 m)

Team: Indian

Organisers: BEAS, Sodepur, West Bengal

Leader: Anath Bandhu Ghosh

In 2004, a team led by Mumbai climber Divyesh Muni, first climbed Khhang Shiling in the Khamengar valley of Spiti. The present team of six members followed the same route of the first ascent. They established their summit camp at 5950 m. On 1st August 2008 Raj Kumar Dhara with two high altitude supporters reached the summit.

P. 6135 m (Debsa nala)

Team: Irish

Leader: Gerard Galligan

A three member Irish team entered the Debsa nala in the western Spiti establishing base camp at Thwak Debsa. After exploring the surroundings. They climbed an Unnamed Peak of 6135 m, on Upper East Debsa glacier. They suggested the name Ramabang (peak of Rama) for this peak.. On 22nd June 2008 the leader with Darach O'Murchu and Paul Mitchell, climbed the southwest ridge to reach the summit. This is the first ascent of the peak. Later the expedition crossed a high pass at head of Bauli Khad (Debsa valley) to the Parvati valley.

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KULLU – LAHAUL-ZANSKAR

Mukarbeh (6069 m)

Team: Indian

Organisers: Behrampur Adventure Club, West Bengal

Leader: Santanu Chattopadhyay

Mukarbeh is located in the Beas kund area near Manali. This expedition of eight members decided to give up their attempt due to bad weather and heavy snowfall. They could establish Camp 2 at 5080 m before calling off the expedition in October 2008.

Menthosa (6443 m)

(1)

Team: German

Leader: Michael Reuters

This German team of six members attempted the east pillar route in the pre-monsoon period. Lots of snow and risk of avalanches stopped them at 5800 m. The high point was reached on 24th May 2008.

(2)

Team: Indian

Organisers: Vivekanand Institute, Abu.

Leader: Dr. Rajal Patel

Bad weather did not allow this 11-member team from Gujarat to reach above Camp 1 (5330 m), which they established on 11th August 2008.

(3)

Team: Italian

Leader: Bruno Moretti

The Italian team of 10 climbers was not successful on Menthosa. But they climbed four other peaks in the area. The summits of P. 6046 m, P. 5770 m, P. 5760 m and P. 5577 m were reached in the month of September 2008.

Dharamsura (White Sail) (6446 m)

Team: Indian

Organisers: South Calcutta Trekkers Association, West Bengal

Leader: Barun Mazumdar

Dharamsura (Peak of good), located near Manikaran in the Kullu valley of Himachal Pradesh, is also known as White Sail due to its shape. The four member team followed the normal route and established four camps. Their summit camp was placed at 6400 m, from where on 26th July 2008 Arindam Jana and Sujit Bag with high altitude supporters Pasang Phutar and Phurba Sherpa reached the summit.

Papsura (6451 m)

Team: Indian

Organisers: Bhadrakali Padatik, West Bengal

Leader: Prosenjit Mukherjee

This expedition consisting of seven members reached 200 m short of summit on Papsura (peak of evil), a higher neighbour of Dharamsura. On 11th June 2008 they stopped their climb due to verglass on rock. They were also short of necessary rock anchors and fixed ropes thus decided to give up.

Sanakdank Jot (6044 m) (as per survey of India 6360 m)

Team: Indian

Organisers: Snout Adventurers Association, Kolkata.

Leader: Dr. Ujjal Ray

The seven member team reached Tandi situated on the confluence of Chandra and Bhaga rivers and entered Shipting nala. They approached this peak in Lahaul area from the Shipting glacier. On 30th August 2008, Rajib Bhattacharjee, Surajit Bhowmik and Bibhas Ganguly with high altitude supporters Madanlal Thakur and Neelu Negi started at 3.30 am from camp 2 at 5050 m and reached the summit.

KR II (6187 m)

Team: Indian

Organisers: Santragachi Shailo Sathi, West Bengal

Leader: Koushick Bhattacharya

This team of six members attempted this peak in the Kao Rang range of Lahaul area during the pre-monsoon season. On 3rd June 2008 they were stopped at 5700 m due to terrain difficulties.

Baihali Jot (6280 m)

Team: Indian

Organisers: Summiteers, West Bengal.

Leader: Alope Kumar Das

The ten member team attempted the peak from its east face. A bergschrund covering the entire face could not be crossed and thus they gave up their attempt on 2nd July 2008 at an altitude of 5550 m.

Shinkun East (6081 m)

Team: Indian

Organisers: The Himalayan Club, Kolkata Section

Leader: Subrata Chakraborty

A team of 7 members climbed in the area of Zanskar, near the popular trekking route across Shinkun la (formerly Shingo la). The base camp was at Chuminakpo at 4650 m. One more camp was set up at 5190 m. They reached top of an unnamed point 5912 m on 9 September and established their summit on this point.

On 10th September starting from the summit camp they carefully negotiated a cornice and two rock-bands (about 70 m each). Then they traversed another rock-band and reached the ice slope. The final stretch was of an easy gradient leading to the summit. The summiteers were leader with Debraj Dutta, Jayanta Chattopadhyay, Goutam Saha, Rudra Prasad Halder and HAP Harsh Thakur.

P. 6184 m (Jankar nala)

Team: British

Leader: Stuard Alexander MacDonald

The peak is located north of Gangstang. The nine member team approached the mountain from Jankar nala turning southwest from Kuddu for the base camp. Massive snowfall on 19th and 20th September made progress difficult. One of the members, Jamie Emberson, suffered multiple fractures in upper arm and shoulders

and was evacuated by helicopter on 26th September. The team reached the high point at 5900 m on 29th September 2008 before calling the attempt off.

CB – 13A (6240 m)

Team: Polish

Leader: Pawel Krawczyk

The peak is situated in the Chandra Bhaga range of Lahaul area and is often visited by the climbers. The Polish team consisting of three members was unsuccessful in reaching the summit. On 13th August 2008, one climber, Mariusz Baskurzynski reached the junction of north and east ridges at 6000m, which was the high point of the expedition. The northeast ridge was complicated due to loose rocks and they decided to turn back.

Shib Shankar (6011 m)

Team: Japanese

Leader: Shoji Sakamoto

The Japanese team of five members successfully climbed this mountain in the Pangi valley. The peak is located at the head of the Dharwas in the Lujai nala. The peak stands near Sersank pass on the Pangi-Zanskar divide. It was attempted by a British expedition in 2006. The mountain is surrounded by many hidden crevasses. On 19th July 2008, Kazuo Kozu, Hidetaka Lizuka and Miss Reiko Maruyama with three high altitude supporters reached the summit.

LADAKH AND EASTERN KARAKORAM.

Rimo I (7385 m) CORRECTION

The Indian Mountaineering Foundation organised an expedition to high peak of Rimo I in the east Karakoram in 2007. The team leader Major K. S. Dhami reported that the team, including himself, reached the summit in poor weather. They had followed the same route as of first ascent by the Indo-Japanese expedition in 1988. However on examination of details and photographs the IMF Authentication Committee concluded that the summit of Rimo I was not climbed by them.

Hence record of ascent of this peak should be corrected.

Kishtwar Shivling (6000 m)

Team: American- British- Canadian

Leader: Kevin James Alfred Thaw

This international expedition of three climbers could not even reach the base of the mountain as their porters refused to carry loads over Umasi la and they had to turn back. Despite desire by climbers to visit this area it still remains a difficult destination, and sometimes dangerous place to visit.

Pologongka (6632 m)

Team: Indian

Organisers: Sonarpur Arohi, West Bengal

Leader: Karuna Prasad Mitra

The team reached Pologongka pass and followed the south ridge. It was the same route as followed by the 1998 British expedition. The three member Indian team achieved the first ascent of the mountain. On 27th August 2008, Dipankar Ghosh and Bhagwan Singh Thakur reached the top.

Chalung (6546 m)

Team: Indian

Organisers: Sainik School Kunjpura, Karnal

Leader: J S Gulia

The team approached this mountain in the Rupshu valley from Sumdo Ribil. After establishing base camp at 5200 m and a high camp at 5900 m they decided to tackle the west ridge to reach the top. On 29th June 2008, the leader with Gaurav and Amardeep along with two high altitude supporters Fateh Chand and Pyare Lal reached the summit at 1.00 p.m. This was overall second ascent of the peak and first by the west ridge. A Japanese team achieved the first ascent of this mountain in 1997.

Z 3 (6184 m)

Team: Japanese

Leader: Masato Oki

Three Japanese veteran mountaineers, Masato Oki (69) and two others (69 and 64 years) attempted this peak located on the east wall of Durung Drung glacier in the Zaskar region of Jammu & Kashmir. Unfortunately, after reaching 5300 m on the south ridge through the west face on 4th July, the leader fell sick and the team had to return.

Nya Kangri (6480 m)

Team: Indian

Organisers: The Himalayan Club

Leader: Divyesh Muni

Nya Kangri is a beautiful pyramid shaped peak of the Arganglas valley in the Eastern Karakoram range. It dominates the entrance to the valley. A four-member team attempted the peak in June–July 2008. The team established base camp at Phonglas on the right of the Argan nala at 4600 m. The attempt was made from the southwestern side. A higher camp was established on the south slope at 5400 m. The approach to the south ridge was from a 700 m gully flanked by a rocky ridge on one side and a huge hanging glacier on another side. On 26 June, the team opened a route through the gully and fixed four rope lengths till height of 5800 m. Next two days it snowed heavily and the entire region was plastered with snow. Since the snow remained loose and unconsolidated, the slope became prone to slab avalanche and the attempt was called off.

(Divyesh Muni)

Mamostong Kangri

Team: Indian

Organisers: Ordnance factory's Sports Control Board, Kolkata

Leader: Ashim Ghosh

This big team of 26 members attempted the peak during July August 2008 unsuccessfully. The attempt was by normal route. They could not reach high on the mountains. Further details are expected.

Saser Kangri IV (7410 m)

Team: Indian

Organisers: Nilkantha Abhijatri Sangha, Kolkata

Leader: Samir Sengupta

From Panamik this 26 members team approached the Phukpoche glacier to their base camp. Ahead they placed two camps on the west ridge of the peak. They reached up to 7000 m on Saser IV on 5th August. Terrain difficulties defeated further movements. The team has left heavy amount of equipment at their Camp 2.

Chong Kumdan II (7004 m)

Team: Indian- French

Leader: Chewang Motup Goba and Paul Grobel

The joint team comprising of 12 members approached the mountain by a more direct route. First they entered the Mamostong valley and crossed the northwest ridge of the Mamostong Kangri across a high col to reach the South Terong glacier. From the glacier they climbed to Nup Col overlooking the Chong Kumdan glacier. They gained the south ridge of Chong Kumdan II and reached the summit. They accomplished the first ascent of one of the last unclimbed seven thousand meter peak in the Eastern Karakoram. On 20th August, the main peak was climbed by Konchok Thinless, Samgyal Sherpa, Maurine Bernard, Raiot Dominique, Paul Grobel and Sebastiano Audisio.

(Motup Goba)

Plateau Peak (7287 m)

Team: Indian

Organisers: Indian Mountaineering Foundation

Leader: Wing Commander N. K. Dahiya

IMF organised an expedition of 11 members to this virgin seven thousander in the Eastern Karakoram. The team approached the mountain from Panamik in the Nubra valley in northern Ladakh. Base camp was set up on the Phukpoche glacier at 3950 m where they reached on 26th July 2008. The members had to ferry loads between road head and advanced base camp (4875 m), as very few porters were available.

From ABC they climbed the southwestern slopes to reach the west ridge and established Camp 1 at 5650 m. They continued on the west ridge fixing ropes on the way. Camp 2 was to be established at 6400 m from where they had planned to attempt the summit. They fixed 1100 m of fixed rope which was not sufficient, so 7 climbing ropes were also fixed. Bad weather and unconsolidated snow defeated the attempt. They reached 6900 m on 3rd August 2008 before turning back.

Zemu Gap (5891 m)

The expedition's objective was to link together two treks – the 'Goecha La' trek which leaves from Yuksom and terminates at the Goecha La, and the 'Green Lake' trek, which follows the Zemu Chu from Lachen to the eponymous Green Lake, and back. To make the connection it would be necessary to cross the Talung Glacier, gain the Tongshiong Glacier and cross the Zemu Gap (Zemu La) – a *breche* on the South-East ridge of Kanchenjunga, before descending down to the Zemu Glacier and thus to the Green Lake.

The Zemu Gap (5891m) has a remarkable place in mountaineering history. The northern approach, via the Zemu Glacier, is relatively straightforward, and documented visits include Dr. A. M. Kellas (May 12th, 1910), John Hunt (November 18th 1937) and H. W. Tilman (July 9th 1938). Tilman then crossed the gap, experiencing some interesting adventures on his descent from the Talung Glacier.

The Gap only really sprung to prominence when H. W. Tilman became suspicious about a claimed ascent from the southern (Talung) side by Captain Boustead on May 8th 1926. Tilman went to investigate and failed to climb it from the southern side on May 13th 1936. His suspicions seemed justified as Captain Boustead's account did not fit with his experience. However, unbeknown to both there was a prior claim to the first ascent from the south by Mr N. A. Tombazi, in 1925. He had mounted a photographic expedition to the area. Regrettably he had not taken any photographs as the weather had been unfavourable. However none of these protagonists had gone on down to the Zemu Gap, so the first true South to North crossing of the La was still awaiting. Since that time the only other documented visit to the La from the south was by a group from A. J. S. Grewal' Talung Expedition in 1975. They, like Tilman, warned of the difficulties to be faced -they were prevented from crossing the Gap 'by two big open crevasses approx. 40 ft in width' just 200ft short of the col. '...it is clear that the Gap can be reached if one goes prepared to bridge the two crevasses.'

The expedition members were Adrian O'Connor from Leicester, and Colin Knowles and Jerzy Wiczorek from Bristol, all of whom are members of the Red Rope Club.

(Colin Knowles)

The Burma Hump

During World war II, flights that took off from Assam for Kunming in China had to cross the high ridge in the eastern Arunachal Pradesh, nicknamed as the 'Burma Hump'. These non-pressurised old planes had to fly at night and in a circuitous route to avoid attention by Japanese. More than 1000 planes crashed on these high mountain areas. Not many crash sites are located as yet. An American team with support of Indian Air Force was permitted in this border area of the Siang valley. After many difficulties they located one of the crash sites at high altitude. These eastern areas are likely to see more such expeditions in the future.

(Group Capt. V K Sashindran)