



# E-LETTER

Volume 31 • January 2015

Ales Cesen and Luka Lindic cross the ridge from north summit of Hagshu to its main summit (6657m). [Photo] Marko Prezelj

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## From the Editor's Laptop

Dear friends and fellow members,

*Times they are A changin'*

I am happy to share with you the 31<sup>st</sup> Volume of the Himalayan Club E-Letter. Besides the news, climbs and explorations, club events, obituaries and other regular columns, I have introduced a column which would cover a topic of current relevance.



For mountaineers, explorers and inhabitants of mountains, the weather and climate are quite central to their existence and safety as well as to their success or failure. It is reasonably well accepted that climate change compared to 50 or 100 years ago is for real and is mitigated by anthropogenic activities (human created activities). In last 150-200 years, mankind has extracted fossil fuels from earth and burnt them. It has exposed the environment to more than a million chemical entities which the environment had not experienced before. As a consequence, the effects on environment are inevitable and sadly, quite disastrous. This in turn has led to extremes and sudden changes in climates with disastrous results. The tragedy on Kedarnath last year and recurring accidents on Everest route are partly attributed to climate change.

This issue captures some of the effects of climate change. I have covered the disaster due to a freak cyclone Hudhud which claimed more than 40 lives on the Annapurna circuit – a huge disaster by any standards. I also have a note on the dangers to glacial lakes due to climate change.

Any changes which bring new findings is always of interest to the scientific community – I have addressed that with three interesting articles on glaciers and watershed studies in the Himalaya. Human ingenuity has no bounds and that is captured in a lovely BBC show about emerging wilderness in Himalaya due to geological effects and climate change - *The Dangerous Beauty of the Himalaya* and lastly the ingenuity of mankind – Sonam Wangchuk's approach to solve the emerging water crisis in Ladakh - *Ice Stupas*.

I must also mention that the Himalayan Club's 2015 annual seminar is also packed with some very interesting talks, so do not miss it! It will be held on February 14 and 15, 2015 in Mumbai.

It is the stories which make mountains memorable. In this connected age, members want to be connected and hear stories. So please email your experiences, I would be happy to share them with fellow mountain enthusiasts through the Himalayan Club e-letter.

Yes, *Times They are A Changin'*. Yes, climate change is real. Let's accept it as a new dimension of our future adventures and learn to enjoy and deal prudently with it.

Warm Regards,

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## Climbs and Explorations

### Sikkim and Nepal Himalaya

#### Kangchenjunga - North Ridge – 2014

Dennis Urubko reached the summit of Kangchenjunga via the North Ridge, climbing solo above 7650m. The expedition did not use supplementary oxygen, but used fixed ropes on the difficult face that gives access to the North Ridge, and also on a short section of the ridge.

Kangchenjunga is the 3rd highest mountain in the world and was climbed for the first time in 1955. The North Ridge was first climbed in 1979 by Pete Boardman, Doug Scott and Joe Tasker. It has been climbed a number of times since then. Many of these ascents have followed variations to the 1979 access route to the ridge, generally involving greater objective danger but lower technical difficulty.

Denis Urubko (Russia) made his lone ascent as part of a team that also included Adam Bielecki (Poland), Artem Braun (Russia), Dimtry Sinev (Russia) and Alex Txikon (Basque Country, Spain). They had initially intended to attempt an alpine-style ascent of a new route on the North West Face, and to use the 1979 route for acclimatisation. On reaching the mountain they found that conditions were unsuitable for the North West Face, and decided not to focus entirely on the 1979 route.

The team established a new variation on the access route to the ridge, involving 18 pitches of technical climbing, with Camp 2 on the face at around 6600m. They gained the ridge above the North Col, establishing Camp 3 at 7050m. They then established Camp 4 on the ridge at 7650m. On 18 May they set out on a summit bid.

Urubko and Braun turned back at about 7850m, having decided that conditions were too dangerous. Sinev, Bielecki and Txikon continued upwards, fixing a rope in a difficult section up a steep couloir.

At 4.30pm they reached an altitude of around 8400-8500m and decided to turn back, thinking it was too late in the day to continue to the summit safely.

On the following day, 19 May, Denis Urubko set out again from Camp 4 and reached the summit in just four and a half hours - an exceptional performance. All the climbers descended safely.



Kangchenjunga NW face, with 1979 route (red) and projected 2014 route (blue) Photo: <http://polakpotrafi.pl/projekt/kangczendzonga>

*Adapted from Himalayan Masala*

## Climbs in Rolwaling Himal

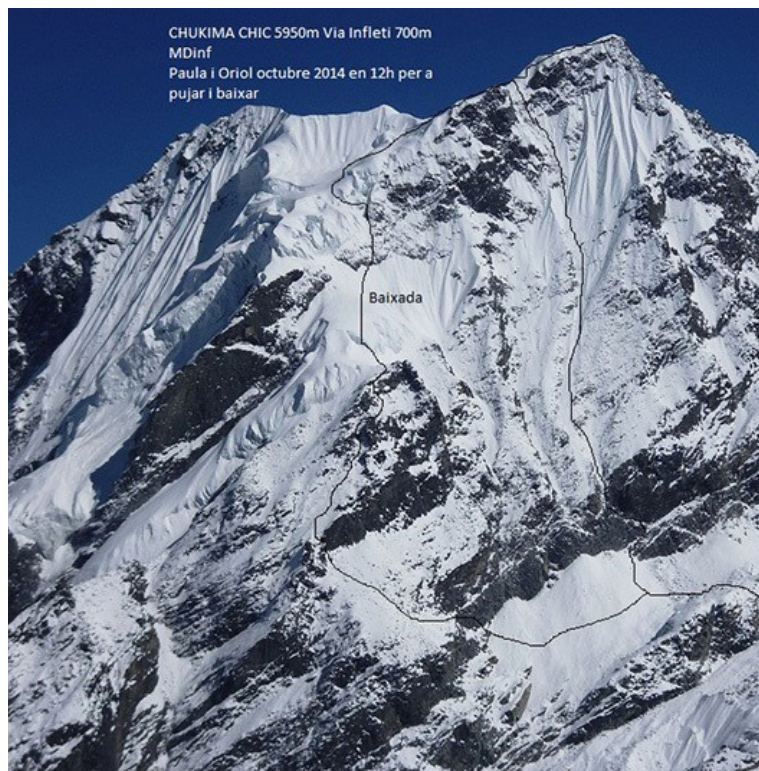


The Hennessey-Kastelic, on Chukyima Go (6258m). [Photo] Domen Kastelic collection

Located near the border of Tibet, the Rolwaling Himal of eastern Nepal has drawn climbing teams in pursuit of new routes and first ascents of its abundant 6000m summits for decades. Even now, the region remains uncrowded. This autumn, several teams converged on the region to climb new routes in alpine style.

Slovenian Domen Kastelic and American Sam Hennessey arrived in the valley in late September, aiming to make the first ascent of Chukyima Go (aka Chugimago; ca. 6258m). They acclimated, waited for their weather window and then began climbing the west face of the peak on November 11. After a full day of climbing, they bivied and reached the summit the following morning. To descend, they reversed their route. Though a 1952 ascent of Chukyima Go has previously been reported, Lindsay Griffin of the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) suspects that team instead ascended Peak 5794m. “While Chugimago’s location makes it likely to have received one or more unauthorized ascents, none appear to have been reported, giving Kastelic and Hennessey the first official, if not the first absolute, ascent,” Griffin writes.

In October, Spanish climbers Oriol Baro and Paula Alegre ascended a sub-peak (ca. 5950m) west of the main summit



The line of Infletí, and Alegre and Baro’s descent from Chukyima’s west summit (ca. 5950m). [Photo] Oriol Baro collection

of Chukyima. They named their route Infleti, a 700m climb rated MD- (French TD), after Baro's swelling face, a sign of the oedema he suffered on their ascent. Baro reported to desnivel.com that the route began on rock, but consisted mostly of snow, ice and mixed climbing. They followed the line of least resistance to descend and made five rappels. On October 31, they then attempted a 1200m line up the taller Chekigo (6257m), but retreated several hundred meters from the summit.

In November, after repeating Infleti to acclimate, Manu Cordova, Jordi Corominas and Jonatan Larranaga reached the summit of Chekigo by following a more direct path than had Baro and Alegre. The first half of their route passes under a large hanging serac. Cordova described the route, Shiva: Straight to the Top, as having several distinct cruxes. The first was poorly protected M5, the second and the third consisted of difficult alpine ice. Above 6000 meters, sustained M6 terrain brought the climbers to a final 300 meters of inconsistent sugar snow along a ridge. Here the team had to swim through the snow, careful not to fall off either side, to reach the summit. In approximately 22 hours they completed their 1200m route, rated AI5 M6. Cordova described the climbing as aesthetic, comparing it in quality to Grandes Jorasses but at a much higher altitude.

*Adapted from Alpinist.com*

### **Attempts on Nuptse South Face**

Ben Gilmore, Kevin Mahoney, Cory Richards and Freddie Wilkinson imagined this Zorro route up the thin ice runnels crisscrossing the Cobweb Wall on the South Face of Nuptse in 2010. A slew of obstacles — unexpectedly difficult terrain, dangerous snow conditions — and the deaths of Chhewang Sherpa and Joe Puryear ultimately shut down their attempts on the west ridge, but “we still found the space to daydream,” Wilkinson wrote on his blog afterward. “On the right hand edge of the Cobweb Wall, a small rib protrudes just far enough from the main face that it might be protected. This feature connects the opening snowfield to the final couloir in an elegant diagonal zig-zag, a masterpiece of alpine aesthetics which we dubbed the Zorro Line. In perfect conditions, holding the perfect hand, was this line climbable? We left basecamp without a real answer — and that, more than anything, is the most frustrating aspect of a trip such as ours. The cards were so bad, we never really got the chance to place our bet.”

It was this line that Canadian alpinists Ian Welsted and Jason Kruk sought to climb this autumn, supported by the Mugs Stump Award. From September 6 through November 7 Jason Kruk and I, Ian Welsted, were lucky enough to be away from Canada attempting to climb one of the truly legendary big walls of the Himalayan mountains, the south face of Nuptse (7861m).

The trip was highlighted by good acclimatization, time spent at altitude, both good technical climbing and scary and dangerous snow climbing, a very good rapport with our local crew, a general familiarization with the Khumbu climbing scene and a realization of the inherent difficulties of alpine-style climbing on this, one of the bigger

alpine faces in the world. In all, we climbed approximately 3000 vertical meters of terrain. Unfortunately, this was spread over three different attempts on three facets of the face. Our team topped out at approximately 6400 meters. If only all three attempts had been stacked on top of each other, we might have gotten close to the summit!

For Himalayan alpinists the face does not require an introduction. The southeast pillar is legendary. Jeff Lowe, Mark Twight, Jim Elzinga, Pete Arbic, Barry Blanchard, Steve House, Marko Prezelj, have all tried it. Early attempts on the pillar employed alpine-style climbing tactics.

After his two failed attempts, solo in 2002 and with Vladimir Suviga in 2003, Valeriy Babanov theorized that, on a face of this size and technical nature, climbers would almost inevitably run out of steam before summiting. This is what happened on the alpine-style attempt to a highpoint of 7500 meters, 350 meters shy of the summit, over nine days, by Jim Elzinga and Peter Arbic. Before they could finish the climb, they ran out of food fuel and stable weather. Babanov finally summited Nuptse East (7804m) in autumn 2004 with Yuri Koshelenko by fixing line to 6400 meters, taking five days to ascend. They spent two of those days just on the unclimbed section from 7450 meters to the summit.

In 2008, Frenchmen Stephane Benoist and Patrice Glairon-Rappaz travelled the least technical terrain, over ice and snow, in a three-day push. They descended from the summit ridge at 7700m. Several strong American teams have considered the face, but no major alpine-style attempts have been made in recent years.

Jason and I were aware of this history before proposing our trip. In fact, it was its legend that drew us to this face. It is essentially one of the standing problems of high-altitude mountaineering: how to climb in alpine style, without leaving behind fixed lines as trash, on these highest of peaks, on something more than an easily travelled snow route. Although we did not solve the riddle on this trip, Jason is young and eager to return and apply the lessons learned on this trip. I, on the other hand, ended the trip in the hospital in Kathmandu and will need to reassess my climbing activities after consulting with friends and doctors.

By late September, we had established our base camp and hiked to 5900 meters. We trekked to the base of the wall to scope our route options. Four kilometres from the base, we both felt a very distinctive, sudden shock through the ground. Looking up, trying to ascertain what had caused the shock, we saw a puff of snow being released from approximately 7000 meters on the Cobweb Wall. We were both stunned to realize that the shock had come from that far up on the wall and had been felt so clearly through the ground. With this in mind we were confirmed in our belief that any route on this southwest aspect of the face would have to remain clear of the Cobweb Wall.

Over the course of the next week we would come to decide that the Zorro ridge itself was unsafe. What we came to name "Barry's Pillar" after Barry Blanchard, who first proposed it to us as a possibility, seemed much more technically difficult ground, but also safer. On October 10, six inches of snow fell on base camp in six hours during

a windy and violent thunderstorm as part of Cyclone Hudhud. Although we did not receive as intense a storm as the Annapurna area, where many fatalities occurred both due to avalanche and exposure, we were very glad to have accurate forewarning of the event. We spent the days in base camp, occasionally having to shovel out our tents.

A week later, we were turned around on Barry's Pillar by delaminated ice on smooth, south-facing granite at 6100m. Jason strained a finger pulley, an injury he thought might take a month to heal. We began to look for the easiest way up the mountain. A much talked-about snow line rises from the eastern Lhotse Nup glacier. Only the final 300 meters involves technical mixed climbing. Upon viewing the face, we saw that this proposed route was subject to unacceptable objective hazard. Its low-angle slopes were exposed to huge, 1000m rock walls. It was a terrain trap with a massive crown line leftover from the recent snows of Hudhud. Our chances of being able to climb it were much higher than anything on the southwest aspect, but our chances of dying on the ramp were equally high. We decided the risk was too great for us. We returned to Barry's Pillar on October 27 with summit winds of 40-50 mph in the forecast and just 10 days left before we had to leave. We were of two minds. Jason believed that, with a heavier rack, he could overcome the delaminating ice pitches we deemed unsafe on our last attempt. I believed we should head up less steep snow slopes leading to the southwest ridge. Jason relented.

We enjoyed some moderate snow and ice climbing on the first day, choosing a line that was minimizing our exposure to the snowy terrain above by sticking to a ridge on our left. The snow was deep and faceted, making for very tiring, insecure snow climbing. We found a snow scoop under which we put our tent.

By traversing under a huge dormant serac, we came close to gaining the ridge the next day, but we opted to camp in a protected cave at 6300m. As we climbed out of the cave in the morning, on October 29, we saw several large avalanches pouring off the upper south face. The first pitch of the day was vertical snow. We were lucky to find screws by digging. By 2:00 p.m. we'd reached the ridge, and were faced



Welsted takes in the view of the upper southwest ridge from their highpoint at 6400m. [Photo] Jason Kruk/Ian Welsted





(Red) Moonlight Sonata (ED 5.8 WI3 M5 90 degrees, Babanov-Koshelenko, 2003). (Purple) 2002 Blanchard-House-Prezelj attempt. (Yellow) 2008 Tozas attempt. (Blue) British-Nepali Route (Bonington-Brown-Davis-Pemba Sherpa-Tashi Sherpa, 1961). (Green) Are You Experienced? (M5 90 degrees, Benoist-Glairon-Rappaz, 2008). (Brown) Proposed new routes on the perimeter of the Cobweb Wall. [Photo] courtesy Ian Welsted

with a bleak prospect. We were at 6400 meters, still 1100 or 1200 meters below the western summit, and separated from the top of Barry's Pillar by a very difficult, if not impossible, ridge traverse. As this type of snow reaches a certain angle, it will no longer hold body weight and is simply unclimbable. It had taken us two and a half days to get this far, and the snow was getting deeper. The upper part of the route is a huge couloir of snow, which was not safe looking considering the amount of storm snow present,

the high winds were forecast to increase to 50 miles per hour, and we were wary of the large avalanches we'd witnessed that morning. Without actually discussing the question we both realize we are not going to be able to complete the route.

We spent the majority of the following day rappelling, finding heaps of old fixed rope, some of which we salvaged to use as rappel anchors. After descending to base camp, we realized that we had repeated the attempt made by Wilkinson et al. To their highpoint. We had not researched sufficiently to know this prior to our attempt. It is likely that if we'd known this in advance, that information would have influenced our decision making process on our last attempt.

As a strange postscript to the expedition, on our first day of casual downhill hiking out of the Khumbu I experienced a loss of consciousness. Luckily, we were covered by rescue insurance through Global Rescue, and there is excellent helicopter rescue service in the Khumbu. I was evacuated to Kathmandu after walking downhill for approximately an hour to the next available heli pad. The medical care I received was excellent, and a few days later we flew to Canada.

This incident reveals to me both the physical and mental fatigue that this trip involved. At no time on any of the three routes were we on terrain which one could consider objectively safe. This being our first trip to Nepal, it is difficult to understand whether this was a particular feature of this season, or whether it is the nature of the face. In the end we managed to get to slightly under 6500 meters on the unclimbed southwest ridge of Nuptse. It is a great, unclimbed challenge. Whether it would be climbable with different conditions or a more concerted effort remains to be seen. We both climbed for our first time on one of the giants of the Himalaya. Jason has mentioned

that he is eager to return to the mountain. We gained considerable experience on a huge face, which will aid in future climbs.

*Adapted from Alpinist.com by Ian Welsted December 9, 2014*

### First Ascent of Sakathon

A Spanish team finished a three-year mountaineering course with the first ascent of a 6000er in the Kyasar valley, Nepal, last month. Mikel Zabalza, Mikel Ajuria, Juan Jose Cano, Roger Cararach, Alberto Fernandez and Faust Punsola summited Sakaton (6325m) by way of Pura Vida (MD+, 1300m).

Zabalza lead the group on their Kyasar trip already a seasoned alpinist. At 22 years old, Zabalza climbed his first 7000m peak in alpine style, establishing a new route on Lempo Gam (7083m) in the Langtang Valley of Nepal. In 1995, he authored a new route on the Northeast Face of the TrangoTower with Spanish teammates Antonio Aquerreta and Fermin Izco. The trio named their route Insumisioa (VI 5.11 A3+, 915m), a Basque term referring to the act of dodging the Spanish military draft, which they were all doing at the time. This July, Zabalza, Alberto Inurrategi and Juan Vallejo climbed



Sakaton [Photos] courtesy Mikel Zabalza

the south pillar of Payu Peak in the Karakoram. On that ascent, Zabalza wrote afterward, "We climbed to the very limit, the limit of our strength."

Zabalza and his students set up base camp in the Kyasar valley, a two-day march from Lukla on unmarked paths. "It is a very nice place where you have guaranteed solitude," Zabalza told Desnivel.com. After talking with locals and finding no name had been assigned to the peak they intended to climb, they began calling the mountain "Sakaton."

Zabalza and his students began their ascent on September 25 after climbing various small peaks to acclimatize. They were met with steep,

committing terrain with difficulties up to M5 and 80-degree ice. Their progression was slow because of poor snow conditions in the late-monsoon season, made worse by the tail end of Tropical Cyclone Hudhud. "I witnessed the unstable snow. You take one step up and two back down," Cano told Desnivel.com. Cano cited Zabalza's experience as key to their ascent.

The group named their new route Pura Vida, Spanish for "pure life," in honor of Inaki Ochoa de Olza, who died in 2008 on an attempt to climb an unidentified route up Annapurna (8091m) in Nepal. He is remembered as a purist, and once asserted, "If you use oxygen, you are not an alpinist, you are more of an astronaut or a scuba diver."

For Zabalza and his team, Sakaton "remains an inexhaustible source of motivation, the perfect place to feel alive, to share, to love and keep dreaming," Zabalza wrote on his website. "These places have set the stage for one of the most beautiful things in life: the unconditional friendship of many friends to whom I am eternally grateful for sharing those moments with me."

*Adapted From Alpinist.com: Posted by Joe Robinson*

Sources: 1996, 2011 and 2012 American Alpine Journals, [alpinist.com](http://alpinist.com), [desnivel.com](http://desnivel.com), [e-climb.com](http://e-climb.com), [explorersweb.com](http://explorersweb.com), [mikelzabalza.net](http://mikelzabalza.net)

## Kumaun and Garhwal

### **Explorations in journey through Eastern Girthi Ganga valley and Janti Gad valley of Garhwal.**

Patha Mitra and his team's objective was to explore veiled Eastern Girthi valley as well as Janti Gad valley and cross the virgin pass with an eye to establish a connective route between these two pristine valleys.

They started from Kurkuti village of Eastern Girthi Ganga valley. After many challenging climbs and descends, they finally hiked up to Janti Gad valley which had no visitors. In this trail they located, visited and recognized the two hidden valleys - Chubag and Mucham. Subsequently, the untrodden highland of Mucham were reached, Chubag Nala negotiated and reconnaissance the unknown Lala Saisani Glacier and Barmatia peak (6041m) done. The team crossed the virgin Thali Dhura pass and unnamed pass (not in map). After a stupendous climb in an incessant hostile weather and they came down to exquisitely hidden veil - Janti Gad valley. Here they found the stream of Janti Gad - after taking bearing with compass and contour maps, they concluded this stream would emerges from the Lala Saisani Glacier. The unnamed pass was named as Janti Dhura. Finally they reached Joshimath via Gamsali.

*Report by Partha Pratim Mitra*

## Himachal Pradesh

### **Meanderings in Great Himalayan National Park: Jiwa Nal – Parvati Valley Trek**

An overview of the Jiwa Nal - Parvati Valley trek undertaken in GHNP during September 2013

Team Members: Parth Joshi, Karan Bharti, And additional Support: 3 porters

The Tirthan Valley region of the park receives many visitors and offers a greater number of trekking options, the Sainj Valley is relatively less explored. There have been not many mountaineering expeditions in the park as well, the only instance we found was of that of Chakri and Yashe peaks<sup>1,2</sup>, and a 2010 expedition which included the Sentinel Peak. Apart from the notes of Sanjeeva Pandey, the park director from 1998-2006 and an active proponent of GHNP's sustainable future, Payson R. Stevens, an avid guardian of the park, and a summary of an Alpine Club Expedition<sup>3</sup>, there was very little data available, but Karan, a local from the Tirthan Valley, was confident of the trail. September was the best time of the year as well, with little snow expectancy and weather holding out well. No mules also imply relatively quieter and cleaner climes and campsites.

The trek permit is issued at Neuli, from where one can drive up to the village of Shanshar, the last motorable point. From Shanshar to Bhagi Kashyari is a short but steep climb, a preview of the undulations to come. The village itself is a compact, with not many camping spots. An old primary school building provided good shelter.

Leaving Bhagi Kashyari at 8 am to the chirps of Rose Finches, Long Tailed Minivets and Scaly Breasted Wren Babblers, the undulations hit us soon. Ascending and descending rapidly all through the day, it was almost dark by the time we hit the Kandi Galu notch (3627m), the first pass. Cold and winded, we caught the last speck of sunlight to locate a fallen roof portion of Subli Thatch. The hour long descent, through in pitch darkness, was not very strenuous, though we could sense very little human activity looking at the vegetation on the trail.

The first rays of dawn revealed the magical canopy that surrounded the thatch, the conifers aping triangles in perfect symmetry. We were in *jogini* country now, between the deities of Kandi Galu and Phangchi Galu, and every morning presented itself with a *roti and halwa* ceremony. Huffing up for half a kilometre, we immediately started descending into the Jiwa Nal valley, the trail now a jamboree of loose gravel and slippery rock. Dwarf rhododendrons on either side of dry stream beds constantly, and we hit the gorge after a swift half an hour descent.

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1. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBV1OnaDswc>

2. [http://www.greathimalayannationalpark.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Media\\_EscapadesoftheGHNPJeffSalz.pdf](http://www.greathimalayannationalpark.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Media_EscapadesoftheGHNPJeffSalz.pdf)

3. [http://www.alpine-club.org.uk/meets/2010/Jiwa\\_Nala.htm](http://www.alpine-club.org.uk/meets/2010/Jiwa_Nala.htm)



Alpine Meadows in Greater Himalayan national Park



Climb from Sarthu Pond to Khandedhar

The Jiwa Nal gorge is steep and narrow, with broken and interspersed trails that can become very confusing to the untrained eye. The river, which eventually meets Sainj, was at its frothing best in September, and bridge hunting became an exercise, with the trail now virtually invisible. Thrashing for an hour through flowers and rocks, certain sections involved twenty foot climbs. Technically unarmed as we were, experimenting with the tensile strength of the flora was the order till noon, when we arrived to find the much sought after bridge too brittle. Backtracking a couple of kilometres after trying a couple of water crossings unsuccessfully, we eventually crossed over to the other side. Climbing hard for about an hour, it was a sheer delight stumbling at Dada Thatch at 3pm when we'd been expecting another moonlit walk.

We were more or less above the tree line now. The regular itinerary prescribed a hike to Sarthe Pond and back as the rest day followed by a gruelling 23 kms the next day. A group of locals sauntered by on their way back from collecting wild garlic, and we were able to get an idea of what lay ahead. Wanting to avoid the hike back from Sarthe pond, we decided to try our luck ascending directly to Khandedhar top, from where the access to Phangchi Galu would be a lot easier.

The bright clear morning made the walk ahead from Dada Thatch a sheer bliss. Having starved for scenery during the last two days traversing though narrow gorges and barren rocky massifs, the meadows literally brought the swagger back into our stride. The landscape was now ethereal, with Jiwa Nal bisecting through the glacial slopes. A relatively gentle 4 hour walk led us to Sarthe pond, a small glacial pond trickling into the raging river below. Loitering around the lake for an hour, a cool gust of wind reminded us of the fading daylight, and we scrambled up ahead.

The next few stages were the trickiest, with no clear trails visible on the sharp ascent. Fifteen minutes of binocular hunts led us to a couple of *burjis* (small stone markings left by shepherds). *Burji by burji*, we scrambled up the slopes. One of the sharpest ascents on the trail, we were able to spot a small herd of Himalayan Blue Sheep (*bharal*). The sight had us scampering up breathlessly with the telephotos, and it was almost 4 pm by the time we reached Khandedhar Top (~ 5000 mts), the swaying grass on one end complementing the scree on the other. The glacial winds could be felt strongly now, and with a thick mist rolling in, we hustled down to the nearest flatland and camp. Aided by easy availability of wood during the past three days, this was the first and only time when we had to take out the kerosene stoves. The valley offered some interesting mountain shapes, and should see deeper explorations in the future.

We woke up to a frosty morning but the mist started clearing out around 9 am. Merging back into the trail towards Phangchi Galu was the next challenge, and about



Khandedhar top (~4400m), the meadows emptying out into the mild scree on the other side

half an hour of trail hunting, punctuated by silhouettes of an Ibex on the far mountaintop, found us in the familiar company of *burjis* and unoccupied shepherd encampments. The climb up to the pass is arguably the toughest on the trail, the narrow, constant uphill punctuated with numerous stream crossings.

Phangchi Galu (4636 m) is the highest point on the trek, and it opened up to a vast river of scree on the other side as the winds lashed the pass. The region was almost completely snow free at this time of the year, which made the descent a bit easier as compared to snow, though traversing the sharp rocks with rock falls all around was a spooky experience. The descent into Parvati Valley saw us entering into a thick layer of fog, and the weather gods, having heeded our daily offerings of *roti* and *halwa* between the two passes,



Sarthu pond, a little gem of a lake, trickling into the frothy Jiwa Nal below

finally let the rain roll. We reached our campsite at 5 pm, the gushing Parvati at the other end signalling the entry back into civilization.

The walk down to the village of Pulga next day was an easy downhill. The hot springs at Manikarn offered cleansing in the arms of divinity, and one starts wondering how to measure every corner of these vast mountains before hydropower muzzles in that paradox of sustainability and progress once again.

## Trek Facts

### 1. Itinerary

Day 1: Shanshar, 2100 mts – Bhagi Kashyari, 2600 mts; 8 kms, 3 hours

Day 2: Bhagi Kashyari, 2600 mts – Subli Thatch, 3300 mts, 20 kms, 11 hrs; begins with undulations followed by a very steep ascent that can be technical in stretches. The descent is modest, but better to have an early start and wrap it up in daylight

Day 3: Subli Thatch, 3300 mts – Dada Thatch, 3150 mts; steep descent and ascent with 'hard to make out' trails... the shortest day of hiking in terms of distance, but the descent and river crossings can be tricky

Day 4: Dada Thatch, 3100 mts - Sarthe Pond, 3500 mts – Khandedhar Top, 4400 mts – Lalbatti campsite, 4000 mts, a gentle first half followed by steep ascent in the afternoon.

Day 5: Khandedhar/ Lalbatti Campsite, 4000 mts – Phangchi Galu, 4600 mts – Chippi, 3400 mts: Steep ascent and descent as usual, the downhill is easier after the moraines though, the route, though made tough by the fog, is actually pretty distinguishable, but one has to keep persisting towards the left once on the glacier's tongue as the moraines can mislead

Day 6: Chippi, 3400 mts, Pulga – Barshaini – Manikarn, a very steep descent, but a relatively easier day as the woods and patched of civilization refuse to leave you at the mercy of the elements, the sulphur at Manikarn is a divine concoction for the aching disposition

2. Avifauna: GHNP is boasts of hosting five pheasants, a feat rare for any national park, viz. Western Tragopan (of which the park has the highest number), Cheer Pheasant, Himalayan Monal, Kokla and Khaleej Pheasan, the first two being endangered species. Snow Partridge, Snow Cock and Hill Partridge are other key high altitude birds.
3. Fauna: The Park is home to the Snow Leopard, which benefits from contiguousness to Pin Valley National Park, Himalayan Black Bear, Tahr and Musk Deer.
4. Flora: The region is home to a diverse variety of lichen, from highly medicinal species growing out of the glacial frost to the *mehndi* plants.

5. Seasonality: September is by far the best month to see the valleys in all their colours, but May-June and October would also offer a challenging terrain

*Report by Parth Joshi*

## Exploration and Climbs in Spiti

### 2014 British Spiti Expedition

Until relatively recently the region to the north-east of the Spiti Valley in Himachal Pradesh was closed to non-Indian nationals, and even today its proximity to the



Dave Broadhead, Derek Buckle and Mike Cocker on the first ascent of Fossil Gully (Photo Geoff Cohen)



Dave Broadhead descending from the summit of Chota Sgurr (Photo Mike Cocker)

border with Tibet makes it a sensitive area to visit.

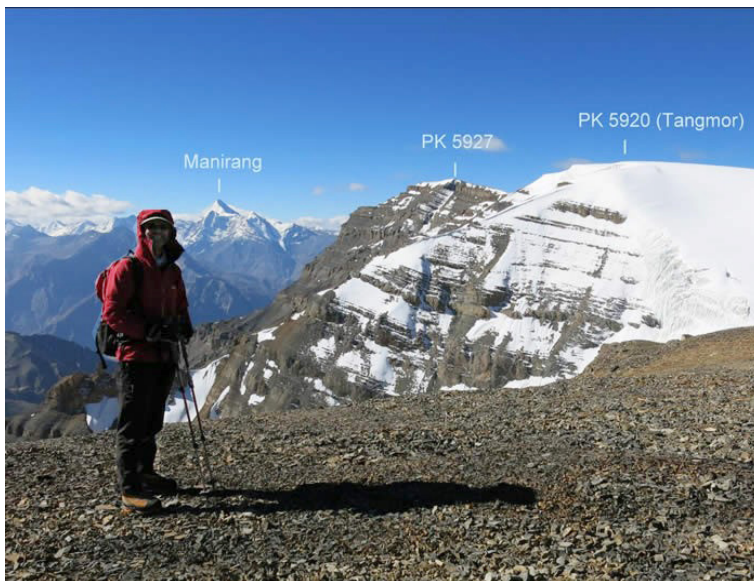
Encouraged by Harish Kapadia, who was the leader of the only two teams known to have explored east of the Lingti nala<sup>1</sup>,

<sup>2</sup> Derek Buckle (leader), Dave Broadhead, Mike Cocker and Geoff Cohen subsequently received permission to enter this area in September 2014.

Unfortunately, a fifth member, Hamish Irvine, failed to receive his permit before leaving the UK and was not allowed to go above base camp. In addition to extending the earlier exploration, the team planned to attempt one or more of the unclimbed 6000m peaks that lie close to the head of the Talung nala.

From information provided by the earlier parties, it was known at the outset that access to these higher peaks would be problematic, and that this might in fact present a greater challenge than the climb itself.





PK 5927, Tangmor (5920m) and Manirang from the summit of Lagma (Photo Derek Buckle)

After acquiring Inner Line permits at Shimla, the team drove to the road-head at Lalung. From here they trekked for five days north-east of the Lingti nala, over arduous and complex terrain, before eventually establishing a base camp at 5130m. From this camp the team explored and mapped the extensive Lagma plateau and climbed a subsidiary top (PK 5782) via a short, steep couloir (WI2) on its north-west face. After

establishing a high camp at 5807m they then successfully made the first ascents of Tangmor (5920m), and PK 5927m by way of their north ridges.

After two intermediate camps a further high camp was then established at 5476m. From here the first ascent of PK 5924m (Chota Sgurr), lying to the eastern extremity of the high cirque at the head of the Talung nala, was successfully made via its sharp north ridge. Members of the team also made the second ascent of the rounded Lagma (5796m) by its broad north ridge.

The expedition gratefully acknowledges support from the Mount Everest Foundation, the AC Climbing Fund and the Austrian Alpine Club.

1. H. Kapadia, *Himalayan Journal*, 40, 96-107, 1983

2. H. Kapadia, *Himalayan Journal*, 44, 96-101, 1987

*Report by Derek Buckle 10 November 2014 from Alpine Club.com*

## Kishtawar

### **Climbs on Hagshu**

The two Slovenians, along with veteran alpinist Marko Prezelj, made the first ascent of Hagshu's north face in late September of this year. In October, Mick Fowler and Paul Ramsden climbed Hagshu's northeast face. "There has been a small increase [in expeditions to the Kishtawar] but the number of teams operating in Kishtawar is still very small," Fowler wrote in an email. "I think the increase is down to publicity about activities in the area in recent years and easier access."

Slovenian climbers Ales Cesen, Marko Prezelj and Luka Lindic spent nearly a month in the Kishtwar Himalaya of India this autumn in search of, writes Prezelj, a “pristine experience in an unknown area.” After extensive back-and-forth, as late as one week before the Slovenians’ departure for India, officials at the Indian Mountaineering Federation (IMF) agreed to issue the climbers a permit for Hagshu. This 6657m



Slovenian’s’ new route on the north face (ED, 1350m), Hagshu. The peak behind is Hana’s Men, which they summited on an acclimatization trip by a new route, marked here in yellow. [Photo] Marko Prezelj

summit is, by the most recent calculations, the tallest peak in the eastern Kishtwar, a prominence that perhaps explains its long history of attempts. It was first climbed, illegally, by a small Polish team on their second attempt in 1989 via the southeast ridge. A permit-holding British team summited Hagshu a week later, and their three-day, alpine-style ascent of the east face was declared the first official ascent. Despite the persistence of British climber John Barry, who journeyed to the peak at least four times in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the mountain’s cleanly defined north face, some 1300 meters tall, had never been ascended. It was this unclimbed face where Cesen, Lindic and Prezelj sought their adventure.

Days after they’d finally settled on an objective and days before they were scheduled to flight out of Slovenia, the climbers learned that the IMF had issued a second permit for Hagshu to the British duo Mick Fowler and Paul Ramsden, who also intended to climb the north face. Prezelj says they also ran into Americans Jared Vilhauer, Tim Dittmann and Seth Timpano who held the same permit, but were headed for Barnaj II (ca. 6300m). IMF rescinded their permission to the British, who instead climbed Hagshu’s northeast aspect.

Over six days in early October, Fowler and Ramsden climbed an ED route in their usual alpine style, descending from the summit by the southeast ridge. Regular visitors to the Kishtwar, the Brits seem to adopt a new project each time they climb there. Fowler told [ukclimbing.com](http://ukclimbing.com), “We spotted Kishtwar Kailash during our ascent of Shiva in 2012, and then were reminded of Hagshu’s presence while on Kishtwar Kailash last year. Now we have spotted something else of interest while on Hagshu. The Himalaya just keeps on giving.”

Meanwhile, the Slovenians were wrapping up their own Kishtwar trip, during which they'd made the first ascent of Hagshu's north face, and added new routes to nearby Lagan (5750m) and Hana's Men (6300m). The following is an excerpt from their report on the Alpine Association of Slovenia's website.

*At the briefing at the IMF in New Delhi we were authorized for climbing Hagshu between 7 September and 14 October. After flying to Leh, we received a message from the IMF while we were finalizing the expedition with the agency; the message urged us to leave the base camp on 26 September at the latest, which would mean only 10 days in the base and truly a very slim chance of success. Most probably they had realized just then that we were given a permit for the same objective as the English team (Mick Fowler, Paul Ramsden, Steve Burns, and Ian Cartwright) and found themselves in an uncomfortable situation. Their request was of course unacceptable. We drove further to Kargil. The number of soldiers in the area was terrifying. Already the next day we drove to Akshow, a friendly village, strongly reminiscent of Tibet. There began our two-day hike to the base camp. In the morning, on the first day of access, we met two Americans in the village, and they surprised us with the news that their team, including the third member who had to descent due to health problems, also had a permit to climb Hagshu, despite the fact that they were having no intention of climbing this mountain in particular.*

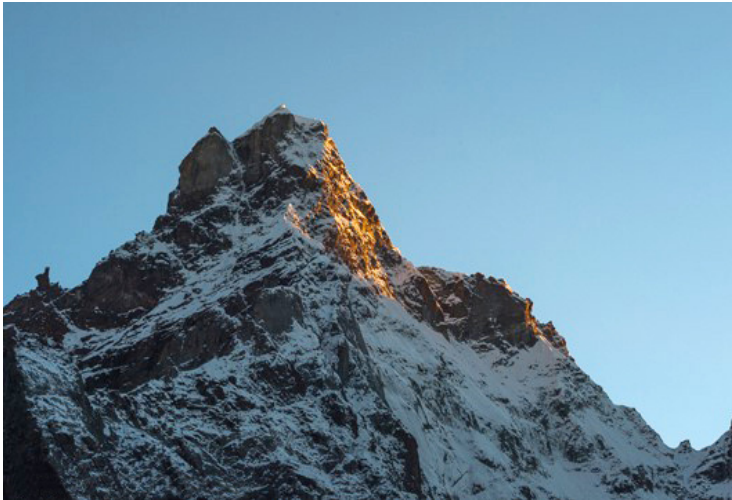
*After crossing the river Doda, we continued the access along the gravelly bottom of the Hagshu river valley, and on the second day, at the beginning of the Hagshu glacier, we first spotted the eponymous summit in live. After heavy precipitation, which resulted in catastrophic flooding in Srinagar, the steep pyramid was covered with a thick blanket of snow. We were immediately captivated by the sight of it. Steep strips of ice in the north wall, which could be observed throughout the remainder of our access, began to clearly form into logical lines. After a few days in the base, the line that appealed to us the most was the one drawn right down the middle of the northern wall. The goal was clear.*

*Adapted from Alpinist.com. Posted by Gwen Cameron November 3, 2014*

### **First ascent of Shiepra, Kharagosa and a new line on Kishtwar Shivling east**

Swiss climbers Andreas "Dres" Abegglen, Thomas Senf and Stephan Siegrist executed three notable climbs in the Himalayan sub-range of India's Kishtwar region this autumn. They made the first ascents of Shiepra and Kharagosa, and added a new line to Kishtwar Shivling's east summit.

Dick Renshaw and Stephen Venables first climbed Kishtwar Shivling in 1983. It took them five days to reach the base of the mountain. They climbed from their advance base camp at 4300 meters to the nearly 6000 meter summit in a single five-day push through difficult and varied face climbing. "Like its Garhwal namesake, this Shivling has no obvious easy routes. The same is true for most of the Kishtwar peaks. There



Kharagosa, Kishtwar, India. [Photos] visualimpact.ch | Thomas Senf



Stephan Siegrist climbing Maaji (IV WI3 75 degrees), a new route that marks the first ascent of a 5885-meter peak his team called "Shiepra." [Photo] visualimpact.ch | Thomas Senf

is an enormous scope for demanding technical climbing at comparatively low altitude," Venables wrote in the 1984 *American Alpine Journal*.

Abegglen, Senf and Siegrist arrived in Kashmir amid late-season monsoons and set up their first base camp on September 13. They then climbed the 700m south face of Shiepra, bivying once at 5100 meters. The trio reached the 5885-meter summit on September 16, and descended the exposed west ridge. They named their route Maaji (IV WI3 75 degrees), meaning "mother" in Hindi. Their Liaison Officer, Ran Jan, named the peak Shiepra after the wife of the Hindi God Shiva.

The party continued in good weather to Kharagosa (5840m). From the base of its east face, they climbed three pitches of tricky mixed terrain to reach the southeast face, where less demanding

climbing brought the team to the summit on September 21. "We were into the second rope length on the pillar when we arrived at a steep and very beautiful section of rock with great friction," Siegrist told *Alpinist*. "It was such a bummer we had our alpine boots on and no soft climbing shoes with us!" They named their route Pinky (6a [5.10] M4, 1000m) after a beautiful woman in the nearby village of Sumcham, and the peak Kharagosa, "rabbit" in Hindi, after a rock structure they thought looked like the Playboy bunny.

Abegglen, Senf and Siegrist moved their camp closer to Kishtwar Shivling after descending Kharagosa and established a second base camp. From there, the trio followed a 50-degree ramp up to a saddle at 5400 meters on Kishtwar Shivling. Ten pitches of WI5 led them through a hidden couloir, which Siegrist compares to the famous Supercanaleta on Fitz Roy. They then climbed tricky mixed terrain that dead-

ended in a crown of powdery cornices along the 5895m eastern apex of the mountain's three-pronged summit. "After wracking our brains to find a way to get to the summit, we saw a hole in the cornice that was big enough to climb through... luckily it led us straight to the summit!" Siegrist wrote. They named their line up the east pillar Challo (WI5 M6, 600m), meaning, "Let's go." The Swiss team made 14 rappels that night to reach their camp on the saddle and arrived at base camp October 2.



"What's important for us is the beauty of a mountain and an interesting line," Siegrist told planetmountain.com. "What remains is the experience of discovering and climbing mountains hitherto unknown."

Kishtawar Shivling [Photo] visualimpact.ch | Thomas Senf

Sources: Annette Marti, Rahel Schelb, Niki Siegrist, Stephen Siegrist, 1984, 1994 and 2012 American Alpine Journals, Encyclopedia of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency: A New Era of Modern Warfare, [bbc.com](http://bbc.com), [redbull.com](http://redbull.com), [planetmountain.com](http://planetmountain.com), [bbc.com](http://bbc.com), [stephan-siegrist.ch](http://stephan-siegrist.ch), [thomassenf.ch](http://thomassenf.ch)

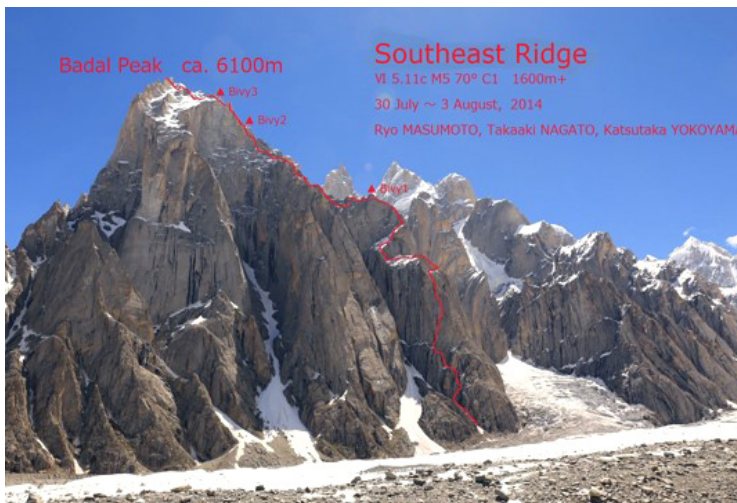
*Adapted from Alpinist.com. Posted by Joe Robinson, October 27, 2014*

## Climbs in Karakoram

### **Ascent of K7 West and Badal Peak in Charakusa Valley**

The line, located in Charakusa Valley, ambles almost 60 pitches up the west end of the K7 massif. This summer, Giri-Giri Boys Ryo Masumoto, Takaaki Nagato and Katsutaka "Jumbo" Yokoyama pushed up the southeast ridge for four days of convoluted route finding, aiming for the 6615-meter summit of K7 West. They descended from the top of a sub-summit they refer to as Badal Peak, still one kilometer and 515 vertical meters short of their goal. Still, their 1600-meter line made them the first to reach the top of Badal's historically sought-after apex.

Though Badal is not a well-defined summit on the ridgeline to the top of K7 West, it has garnered attention from numerous climbers over the years. It presents a climbing style distinct from that found on the upper portions of K7 West, with very few sections of mixed terrain. Additionally, when viewed from the ground, Badal presents a significant bump along the ridge, Kyle Dempster explained in an email to Alpinist, pointing out the prominence of the Badal highpoint in the Charakusa skyline. As a result, the sub-summit has received attention over the years. In 2007, Nicolas and Olivier Favresse and Sean Villanueva established Badal Wall (5.12+ A0, 1200m), which topped out below the sub-summit. Then, in 2010, Italians Lorenzo Angelozzi and Daniele Nardi completed eight pitches before rockfall ruined their portaledge. That same year, a



A Giri-Giri Boy route-finds while attempting to reach the summit of K7 West in Charakusa Valley. After 58 pitches, Ryo Masumoto, Takaaki Nagato and Katsutaka “Jumbo” Yokoyama topped out on a sub-summit. [Photo] courtesy Katsutaka “Jumbo” Yokoyama

Russian team comprised of Vjacheslav Ivanov and Oleg Koltunov made an attempt on K7 West below Badal, climbing in capsule style to the left of Nardi and Angelozzi, but retreating before reaching the summit.

This July 25, the Giri-Giri Boys began working their way up the ridge towards K7 West on mild terrain. Prior to their summit push, the team climbed the first eight pitches of their line, fixing six ropes along the way. “Before starting this expedition, we

hadn’t thought [of] doing such a long fixing.... As we checked this ridge, this looked [to be an] extremely long way. So we decided to fix all our ropes on the way to save the time,” Yokoyama told *Alpinist*. “Although [we were] following a fairly gentle ridge, the ridge itself was totally complicated, so we had to rappel six times to find correct way.”

Having fixed the first eight pitches, the trio set off for their push, carrying two ropes and five days of food. After climbing 58 pitches over four days, they hadn’t drilled a single bolt and had reached the Badal highpoint and mixed terrain that would have led them to K7 West’s summit. But with poor weather, dwindling food supplies and unstable ridgeline conditions, they elected to descend, a choice that was solidified by a festering knee injury incurred by Masumoto when he slammed into the wall while jumaring.

Speaking to the climb’s grade, Yokoyama commented that they “estimated the grade of each pitch as lower than we felt [to factor in] high altitude.” Although the 58 pitches involved many moderate sections, the “the lowest nine pitches are pretty steep,” Yokoyama said. “Pitch 42 was excellent C1 following a perfect splitter on a very clean face--I’m sure it will go free at 5.12+.”

The line produced many dead ends that forced the trio to backtrack, Yokoyama said, “But I believe this kind of trickery [is] the fun of ridge climbing.” The trio, who has climbed and worked together for several years, maintained an air of positivity. “[W]e know very well each other, [and are] always equal,” Yokoyama wrote. “[O]n this trip, we had no stress, always laughing, enjoying even just being at BC. [We] fixed the order of lead by playing Janken (rock-paper-scissors).”

Sources: Kyle Dempster, Jon Griffith, Katsutaka “Jumbo” Yokoyama, [alpinist.com](http://alpinist.com), [thebmc.co.uk](http://thebmc.co.uk)

*Adapted from alpinist.com Posted by Gwen Cameron and Shey Kiester  
Posted on October 8, 2014*

## Mountains and Climate Change

### Effect of Hudhud

News out of Nepal these past few days have been bleak. Avalanches and blizzards in a northern mountainous region of the country have claimed the lives of at least 26 people. According to some reports, as many as 100 people still may be missing. Most of the trekkers killed or currently unaccounted for were caught in a blizzard on Tuesday while walking the Annapurna Circuit, a popular trekking route roughly a hundred miles northwest of Kathmandu. October is prime trekking season in Nepal, when more than 100,000 international trekkers head into the country's Himalayan foothills, hiking well-worn interconnected trails and eating and sleeping at the small hotels known locally as teahouses.

Normally, weather in the region is clear and calm this time of year. Earlier this week, however, an unusually strong storm system, the remnants of Cyclone Hudhud, which wreaked havoc on south eastern India a few days earlier, sent a powerful snowstorm rolling across the Himalaya. How so many people ended up in the middle of such a serious and well-documented storm isn't entirely clear.

The bulk of casualties came in the area around Thorong La or Thorong Pass, the gateway to the Mustang region of Nepal and the high point of the Annapurna Circuit. At 17,769 feet, it's 300 feet higher than Mount Everest Base Camp but still the lowest place to cross the mountains between the 8,000-meter Annapurna chain to the south and 6,000-meter Damodar group to the north. Thorong La connects the villages of Manang and Jomsom.

The entire Annapurna Circuit, the country's classic destination trek, generally takes two to three weeks to complete. While a few trekkers were being guided by international outfitters, most people prefer to travel more independently. It's more common for trekkers to hire local help for the duration of the trip. Some hire full-service guides, while others opt to simply hire a porter, sometimes as young as 12 or 13, whose sole job it is to help carry gear. Generally, a porter will set off at a faster pace, leaving his clients to explore and navigate the mountainous trails on their own.

By the time trekkers reach the foot of the pass, Thorong Phedi, a tiny outpost with a few bare-bones lodges at 14,600 feet, most have been hiking for more than a week but haven't been higher than 12,000 feet, the elevation of the Rocky Mountains. Many people head straight over the pass from Thorong Phedi, hoping to beat altitude sickness by getting over the pass and descending before symptoms set in. Others spend the night at Thorong Phedi High Camp, at 16,240 feet, to give their bodies an extra night to adapt to altitude before making the final push over the pass. But even with that extra night, trekkers are ascending Thorong La far quicker than they typically hike up to Everest Base Camp. The general rule of acclimatization above 10,000 feet is that you're supposed to sleep only 1,000 feet higher than you slept the night before. Regardless of where trekkers start, heading up and over Thorong

Pass in a day or two puts them at serious risk for altitude sickness. At a minimum, movements and judgement are impaired.

From Thorong Phedi High Camp, it's still 1,500 vertical feet to the top of the pass. A small stone teashop marks the high point, but it's little more than a rock hut where people can get out of the wind. The trail and surrounding hillsides are barren rock and scree with few landmarks even in fair weather. The other side of the pass is just as rugged. The closest village, home to the sacred holy site of Muktinath, is some seven miles and 5,000 vertical feet beyond the pass.

Even for someone in good shape, humping it over the pass is a big day, with most opting to start their hike well before dawn. On well-established routes like this, trekkers will typically send their overnight gear with porters, who go ahead of the group, walk fast, and arrive early at the next night's lodge. Trekkers generally carry only food and water for the day plus a few extra layers and rain gear.

According to Michael Fagin, a popular meteorologist and lead forecaster at [EverestWeather.com](http://EverestWeather.com), "The brunt of the storm hit Annapurna Tuesday morning at around noon. When you get those storms coming out of the Bay of Bengal and you get the orographic lift from the mountains, it's something else."

That "something else" would have hit the majority of trekkers just as they were reaching the higher slopes of the pass in an area where the trail is defined by lines of jumbled scree that's packed and trampled by yaks. The route is clear and visible in fair weather, but with blowing snow accumulating by the foot, the trail disappears and the landscape offers few hints at the direction to go.

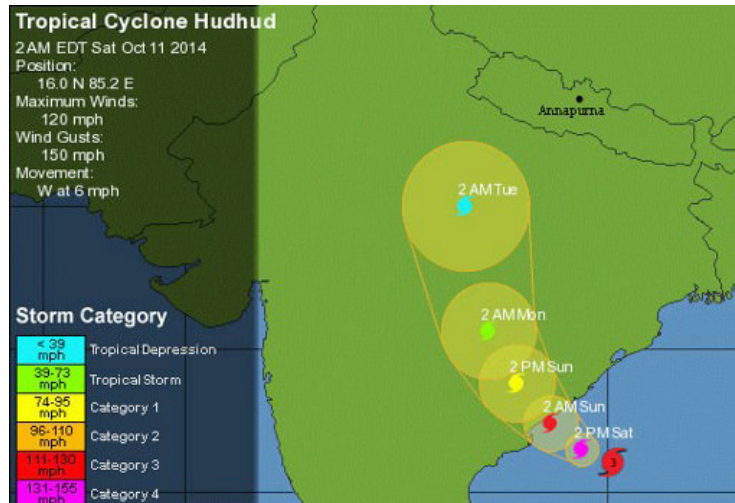
According to Fagin, radar data for the storm showed that the equivalent of seven inches of rain fell in some parts of the Himalaya. "You do the math for the snow," he says. As a rough index, one inch of water is about 10 inches of snow. That means as much as six feet of snow likely fell in some places, though it would no doubt have been distributed unevenly by drifting.

That kind of snowfall would reduce visibility to nearly zero. And on the steeper beginning and end sections of the trail, powdery spindrift avalanches would have begun shortly into the storm. Spindrift avalanches are the least threatening sort, except they can still sweep you off your feet and over whatever terrain or cliffs happen to be below you. They can also bury the trail, making forward progress like postholing through oatmeal.

For casual trekkers who thought they were heading to Nepal during the dry season, all of this would have presented itself very quickly with only bad options to choose from. Hunkering down near the top of the pass and waiting out the storm would have created a severe risk of hypothermia and altitude sickness. Descending is the best option, but only if you know where you're going. Given the weather and visibility, many of the dead likely wandered off the trail or descended blindly and got lost, bogged down, and exhausted by drifting snow and froze to death that way.



One group of trekkers that included three Israelis was stranded with many others in the herders' hut at the top of the pass. As they told a crowded room of reporters after being rescued, many of the other trekkers believed their lack of acclimatization gave them no option but to descend. As Israeli medical student Yakov Megreli told the New York Times, a dozen people stayed huddled in the shack



Path of Hudhud

above 17,000 feet, taking their chances with altitude sickness, while 40 to 50 others followed the proprietor of the teashop into the storm in an attempt to descend to Muktinath. Their whereabouts remain unclear.

After the storm, cellphone reception was knocked out in much of the region, making it difficult to confirm who made it out and who didn't, although rescue teams have managed to reach many of the trekkers pinned down by the bad weather. The Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal (TAAN) has reported that it rescued 77 trekkers from different parts of Manang District on Thursday, including 29 Nepalis, 17 Israelis, five Indonesians, 10 Germans, five Spaniards, four Indians, three Canadians, two Russians, and two Poles. A complete list of the individuals rescued can be found on TAAN's Facebook page. Another Facebook page, the Annapurna Nepal Avalanche and Blizzard Info Share, has been set up for friends and relatives to share information with one another.

In addition to the deaths on the Annapurna Circuit, several yak herders perished in the area, and many locals are among the missing. More Nepalis than usual were out on the trails ahead of several local festivals. At least two avalanches in the region have also claimed lives. A slide on Wednesday killed eight people in the Nar Phu Valley, to the north, and another avalanche reportedly killed five climbers who were hunkered down at the base camp of Dhaulagiri, farther to the west. According to Gyanendra Shrestha, of Nepal's mountaineering department, two Slovaks and three Nepalese guides were killed while preparing to climb the 26,800-foot peak, the world's seventh tallest.

Despite all the confusion about how many people may have been killed and how many are still missing, one thing that is clear is that even though many news reports, have called the weather event a "freak snowstorm," it was anything but. Cyclone Hudhud was a Category 4 hurricane with a storm track that was predicted by multiple weather services.

"I had several clients doing climbs, and I notified them a week to 10 days ago," says Fagin. "People were saying that the storm was unusual, but it's not out of the ordinary."

“They’re calling it freakish, but it’s not uncommon, and it’s not unheralded,” says Athans, noting that he’s seen the monsoon last later and later into the fall over the past decade. “We still see these monsoonal burps coming up the valley in October now.”

That a hurricane in the Bay of Bengal would produce a blizzard over much of the Himalaya was a certainty at least two days in advance. And as crazy as it sounds, the Nepalese Himalaya have surprisingly good cell service and Internet. Most of the young trekkers traversing the circuit still find time to check their email and update their Facebook pages. That so many of them blundered into a Category 4 hurricane–spawned blizzard means that either the information didn’t reach them or nobody heeded the warnings. Unlike this spring’s Everest avalanche that killed 16 Sherpa’s, this was a major meteorological event with plenty of lead time.

There’s no excuse for so many trekkers getting caught by surprise. Maybe they didn’t get the information they needed. Or maybe strong warnings went unheeded. Either way, 26 lives should not have been lost.

### Why Did So Many Die on the Annapurna Trail?

On the last count it appears 43 people perished in the recent blizzard on the popular Annapurna Trail. This is the second serious mountain-related incident to hit Nepal this year. Earlier in April, 16 Sherpa’s and climbers were killed in the Khumbu Ice-Fall on Mt. Everest as they were making their way to Camp One. This tragedy included mountaineers and it is well known that mountaineering involves some level of risk. Incidents such as being hit by an ice avalanche, which caused the deaths, do occasionally happen. However, the Annapurna incident hit trekkers, who normally are not risk-seekers but people wanting to enjoy nature and add an element of adventure to their lives. Considering the high casualty figure, this is possibly the biggest incident ever involving trekkers in Nepal and as more information is surfacing, there is a serious need to introspect on some issues related to this unfortunate tragedy.

One of the issues that possibly contributed to the scale of the tragedy is the *complete absence of early warning systems* in the Himalaya coupled with the fact that the storm hit in October. This is a very busy trekking period as it offers a clear window, post-monsoon, before the winter sets in. Whilst the weathermen have conjectured that the snow blizzard was an outcome of the Hudhud Cyclone of a week earlier, it is not clear if an advisory had been released. Unfortunately, even if this was the case, currently there is no process followed by local authorities for stopping or warning trekkers. Instead, it is left to each team or individual trekker to take that decision.

Another issue of concern, is how trekkers join the Annapurna circuit, which involves crossing a 5400m pass. A trek of this nature should ideally be offered to experienced trekkers who are well equipped and have strong fitness levels. I have been climbing since 1977 and being ‘old school’ I am well aware that a high pass crossing is a serious business: trekkers must set out early morning; they need to be well equipped; to be a part of a team; have the group led by someone familiar with the route; and

ensure that there is a good weather window. In today's world, it is common for trekkers to apply online to join a trek of their choice and I believe trekking companies do little due-diligence before confirming. The ideal solution is to guide people with low/moderate fitness level instead to participate in the Annapurna base-camp trek, which is easier than the full Annapurna circuit.

In Nepal, teahouses line the trekking route offering accommodation and food. This encourages some trekkers to go solo, hire an ill-equipped porter (generally) for their gear and then trek from teahouse to teahouse. Some porters walk with their client while others take off, leaving the trekker to either manage on his own or connect with other trekkers enroute. This aspect of solo trekking is again manageable in routine treks but certainly should not be considered on high-altitude mountain passes.

Another concern in modern commercial trekking is the increasing trend of pushing the boundaries of acclimatisation by trekking quickly or, by trekking higher than the recommended level after taking Diamox, a drug that assists in the acclimatisation process. On the Annapurna circuit, some trekkers avoid the slow, tough process of acclimatisation that involves ascending only 500m per day and staying a night. Instead, they try to shoot up the Thorong La (5416m) and quickly descend to the other side. Again, this might work in fair weather but if hit by a blizzard at high altitude there will undoubtedly be serious issues. Many trekkers feel if they are on Diamox they are insulated against altitude related sickness. This is not the case. In this particular incident when the blizzard hit, it immediately impacted the movement of trekkers on the trail and the cause of death was a combination of hypothermia, coupled with the ill-effects on the body due to high-altitude.

Based on the information available, about five feet of snow fell in the Annapurna region in just a few hours on Tuesday, 14th October, 2014. On a high pass, where people have been walking hard for several hours, this is indeed a challenging situation which can only be managed if you have prior experience of the mountains, are wearing the right gear, are acclimatised, and, most importantly, are part of a team that can support itself by supporting each other. Sadly, on Annapurna, many trekkers were left to fend for themselves and in that process either got lost or were eventually not able to deal with the sudden snow accumulation coupled with the high altitude.

I do feel that there is a parallel of the recent Annapurna tragedy and the happening in Kedarnath in 2013. Firstly, it is clear that early warning systems are weak across the Himalaya and even if the weather office predicts bad weather, it is difficult to get the communication out in time. Additionally, commerce is encouraging people to be in an environment for which they seem ill prepared. The Char Dham attracts more than 300,000 pilgrims to Uttarakhand each year and several pilgrims, many of whom are old and poorly clad, go on the 14km trek to Kedarnath (3600m). In Nepal, the Everest and Annapurna region pull in close to 100,000 trekkers every year of which many are non-trekkers looking to tick off a trip on their 'bucket -list'. This process, involving the movement of thousands of people, is still manageable in Uttarakhand and Nepal in fair weather but when the weather goes bad the system falls apart, thereby illustrating the need to exert caution when in remote mountain terrain.

It is important for the Nepal Adventure Tour Operators to reflect on this massive incident in the Annapurna region and take measures which could include restricting movement on the Thorong La, put into place early warning systems, ban solo trekkers and offer solutions to porters who carry heavy loads. On this occasion, porters also found themselves stuck on the pass during the blizzard and suffered casualties. Looking forward, trekkers should be cautious on what they are getting into before signing up and select an organized company with an experienced trek leader. Even though the blizzard was one of the severest to ever hit the region, the loss of life could have been avoided or reduced if the current system as it exists on the Annapurna circuit had not put so many trekkers in a most vulnerable situation.

*By Maninder Kohli, Local Secretary, New Delhi, the Himalayan Club*

### **A Himalayan disaster awaits India**

Many of the 200-odd glacial lakes in Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan are unstable and, in the event of an earthquake in the Himalaya, could burst and cause catastrophe in northern and eastern India. Celebrated mountain climber Maya Sherpa and Nepali environmentalist Kunda Dixit, while sounding this alarm, said that the lakes have been formed by receding glaciers and melting snow on the Himalaya. And more than climate change-induced global warming, it is the alarming increase in deposition of soot particles on the icy heights of the Himalaya that is causing the snow to melt.

The duo, who were on a visit to Kolkata to deliver a talk on mountaineering and climate change, said that rising vehicular pollution and emissions from thermal power plants, brick kilns and factories in north and eastern India are to blame for this dangerous phenomenon. "The soot particles are funnelled by winds to the higher reaches of the Himalaya from the north Indian plains and deposited on the snow. As a result, heat from the sun's rays is absorbed by these particles, causing the snow to melt and form lakes. Many of these lakes are held by fragile moraine (glacial debris) which, in the event of an earthquake, will give way and cause the lakes to burst," explained Dixit, who is the chief editor of Nepali Times that devotes a lot of space to environmental issues. He added that with rising affluence in India, vehicular and industrial emissions will also rise, thus causing more soot particles to get deposited in the Himalaya and expediting the process of the snow melting and forming more unstable lakes.

Many of these lakes, said Sherpa, are huge and hold enormous volumes of water. The Tso Rolpa, which lies northeast of Kathmandu, is for instance 2km long, a kilometre wide and more than 75m deep. Lake 464 near Baruntse Mountain in eastern Nepal is also as large and very unstable. If these lakes burst due to an earthquake, the Glacial Lake Outburst Flood would be devastating not only for Nepal, but also for India. Dixit said the danger of 'Himalayan tsunamis' hitting the Indian plains is real and present, and increasing by the day.

Sherpa, who started climbing in 2003, said the face of the higher reaches of the Himalaya is changing very rapidly. "Every time we revisit a mountain, we

see the stark difference. Even on the summit ridge of the Everest (which she summited in 2006 and 2007), there is less snow now. Camp 3 on the way to Everest was totally snow-clad even a few years ago, now it is all rock and boulders. More icefall is happening now and the whole Himalayan range, especially the eastern Himalaya, is thawing, and that's very dangerous," she said.

Maya and Dixit spoke on climbing and climate change at a lecture organized by the Kolkata section of The Himalayan Club in collaboration with the Consulate General of Nepal in Kolkata. The lecture, titled 'Lure of The Mountains', also featured member of The Himalayan Club Meher H Mehta and mountain lover Bhanu Banerjee. Nepal's consul general, Chandra K Ghimire, also spoke at the event.

*Adapted from Report by TNN | Sep 22, 2014, 12.00AM IST*

### **The Engineer Who Is Creating Ice Stupas to Solve the Water Problems of People in Ladakh**

Sonam Wangchuk had been inspired by Chewang Norphel's work of creating artificial glaciers. So when he saw people struggling to meet their basic water requirements in Ladakh, he came up with a solution of creating vertical ice stupas to store water for a longer time. The average stupa is 35 meters to 40 meters high and can store upto 16,000 cubic meter of water which is enough to irrigate 10 hectares of land.

Ask those who are permanently settled here and struggling in these dry and cold mountains, and you will learn of the day-to-day difficulties they have to deal with. The infertile land and lack of regular sources of water makes living even tougher for these communities. Water from the glaciers, which every farmer needs, comes as the only solution, but these glaciers are frozen for the large part of the year.

Many changemakers have tried to solve the issue by creating artificial glaciers. Though the solution looks feasible and has helped the people of Ladakh to a great extent, there were some challenges which these solutions faced. Sonam Wangchuk, a mechanical engineer from Ladakh, drew inspiration from Chewang Norphel's work of creating artificial glaciers and thought of helping to make the idea more successful.

*"I saw the problems these people were facing. The artificial glaciers were built at a very high altitude and villagers or workers were reluctant to climb so high. I wondered why we couldn't construct glaciers right there in the village. The temperature is low enough to keep the water frozen – we just needed a smart way to make these glaciers," says Wangchuk.*

To address the issue, Wangchuk along with the students of SECMOL Alternative School which he himself set up, started an interesting project called Ice Stupa. *"Our aim was to find a solution to the water crisis facing Ladakhi farmers in the critical planting months of April and May, before the natural glacial melt waters start flowing,"* he says. They named the project 'Ice Stupa' because the shape of the glacier resembled the traditional stupas of Ladakh.

Within two months, Wangchuk's team managed to build a two-storey ice stupa that could store around 1,50,000 litres of water. This prototype was put to test and was built at the warmest possible location and lowest possible altitude on the banks of the Indus River at a height of 10,400 feet. This was done to check if it works there, because if it did work there then it could work anywhere.

How does the ice stupa work?

*"I observed that for the spring sun and winds to melt the ice, they needed large surface areas. So if we reduced the area exposed to the sun and wind, then the ice could be stored in the village itself, thus eliminating the need for villagers to climb the mountains," Wangchuk says.*



Ice Stupa

Hence, he came up with an idea of constructing cones of ice vertically towards the sun, as then there will be very less surface area exposed to the sun and it will melt slower.

*"For example, one ice stupa of 40 m height and 20 m radius would store roughly sixteen million litres of water. If the same amount of water was frozen as a flat ice field 2 m thick, the area exposed to sun would be roughly five times more. Therefore, the sun and the warm spring winds would melt it roughly 5 times faster," Wangchuk explains.*

**The other amazing science concept is used in the fact that there is no electricity used to pump the water to a higher level.** To make the water reach the full height of the vertical stupa, a pipe is joined from a higher up-stream and adjusted manually according to the size of the stupa. As water always maintains its level, it reaches the tip of the pipe. As the fountain flows down from the tip, it converts into ice due to the low air temperature outside, freezing in a conical form.

Also, the water that melts from the tip of the stupa will flow down; and as it comes in contact with the cool breeze, it will freeze and will eventually increase the size of the stupa.

*"The water has to be cool enough that it freezes as it gets in touch with the outside air, and at the same time, it should be warm enough that it does not freeze in the pipe itself," says Wangchuk.*

The average stupa is 35 meters to 40 meters high and can store up to 16,000 cubic meter of water which is enough to irrigate 10 hectares of land. It costs approximately Rs.1.5 per cubic meter.

To understand the concept better watch

<http://www.thebetterindia.com/15896/artificial-ice-stupa-can-solve-ladakh-water-problems-sonam-wangchuk/#sthash.a9b9mAg1.dpuf>

*Adapted from Article by Shreya Pareek November 20, 2014, Changemakers, Ladakh, Science*

## The Dangerous Beauty of the Himalaya

Photographers in search of a dramatic landscape are often drawn to extreme regions of the planet. One of those is Neil White, whose latest project, *When the Wave Comes from the Mountain*, documents an area of the Himalaya in Nepal and across the border in India.

White's work focuses on three lakes, Imja Tsho, Spong Togpo and Tsho Rolpa, and the changing landscape that he believes is the result of a warming climate. The title is derived from an event known as a Glacier Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF), where the natural dam holding the water in is breached, with potentially disastrous consequences as a wave floods down the mountain.

"I first visited the Nepal region of the Himalaya in 1996 while travelling the world," says White. "The sheer beauty of the mountains towering majestically above me, with their snow-capped peaks and huge glaciers moulding around them, was simply breathtaking.

"Returning again after 15 years, I was no less overwhelmed, but it quickly became clear to me just how much the landscape had changed, and not for the better."

Scientists are continually monitoring the glacial lakes that are thought to pose the biggest threat to communities in the valleys below.

"Photographing the three glacial lakes was an intense and emotional experience for me," says White. "So many thoughts passed through my mind as I worked to capture the landscape. The only moment of real clarity and peace I found was under the dark cloth, looking through the viewfinder of my large format camera."

"Each lake has a different personality, which in turn created unique feelings and a distinct response from me," he adds.

"As I photographed the lakes, I was struck not only by their beauty, but also by the ugliness that had created them, and the utter devastation they could cause if they burst."

White cites the work of 19th Century Italian mountaineer and photographer, Vittorio Sella, who



Dangerous Beauty of Himalaya

he says, “captured a moment in history when the landscape was virtually undisturbed”.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/in-pictures-30112297>

### **Shrinking glaciers won't affect South Asia water availability**

The health of glaciers in the Himalaya is a closely-watched issue, as they supply vital meltwater to a region facing surging population growth and rising demands for food.

Scientists agree that the onward march of the greenhouse effect will shrink the glaciers, but there is little consensus on the volume and rate of ice loss and the impact on water availability.

In a fresh attempt at clarity, Dutch scientists led by Walter Immerzeel at Utrecht University carried out a high-tech computer simulation of what could happen to two glacial watersheds—the Baltoro, which drains into the Indus, and the Langtang, which feeds the Ganges—in the light of two scenarios for global warming, comprising a modest and a strong rise in temperatures.

The two glaciers will shrink badly: by 2100, they will lose roughly half their volume under the higher warming scenario.

But, at least as far as this century is concerned, water users will not experience scarcity, in part because the extra meltwater will help meet rising needs.

Glacier systems that feed two key rivers in South Asia will badly retreat this century, but demands for water are still likely to be met, a study predicted.

“In both cases, glaciers will retreat but net glacier melt runoff is on a rising limb at least until 2050,” according to the paper in *Nature Geoscience*.

“In combination with a positive change in precipitation, water availability this century is not likely to decline. We conclude that river basins that depend on monsoon rains and glacier melt will continue to sustain the increasing water demands expected in this area.”

Other studies have suggested a reduction in future runoff in the Indus and Ganges basins, but these have looked at the region on a large scale.

The new study is a more useful prediction because it deals with regional hydrology in much finer detail, say its authors.

They note that 70 percent of the rainfall that feeds the Ganges and Brahmaputra occurs during the monsoon season, which coincides with the main period for glacier melt and a wet downstream climate. This means a surge of water is available for capture in reservoirs, and can be released to meet later demand downstream, the paper says.

More information: [Nature Geoscience DOI: 10.1038/ngeo1896](https://doi.org/10.1038/ngeo1896) © 2013 AFP



## Researchers predict more runoff in High Asia due to increasing precipitation and glacier melt

A team of researchers with members from the Netherlands and Nepal has completed a study of the expected changes to mountain runoff in Asia due to global warming over the next half-century. In their paper published in *Nature Climate Change*, the team predicts warmer temperatures will mean more runoff due to melting glaciers and snowcaps, and likely more precipitation as well, at least in the near term.

As global temperatures rise over the next century, researchers across the globe are attempting to predict how their part of the world will be impacted. While most areas are expected to grow gradually warmer, some are expected to become wetter, and others drier. Also, some areas are expected to see different changes in the near term than farther down the road. One of those areas is High Asia, which the researchers with this new study predict, will see an increase in water flowing down from the mountains in the near term, and then a major decrease later on.

The research team constructed high resolution models to mimic what they believe conditions will be like in the mountainous regions of Asia, as global temperatures rise. Their models demonstrate the predicted impact of warming temperatures on five regional river basins: Indus, Ganges, Brahmaputra, Salween and Mekong, which they note, collectively support approximately 1.3 billion people in a dozen countries.

The models show a gradual decrease in the average extent of glaciers as they melt, which would quite naturally lead to a decrease in river runoff. That decrease would likely be more than made up, however, by an increase in water from the melting ice. The area is also expected to benefit from an increase in precipitation as temperatures rise, adding even more water to runoff. The people in the area, the team predicts, likely won't notice much change in water levels until at least 2050. One exception, they note will be runoff from the Indus, which their models show would experience more than average runoff over the next several decades, mainly due to glacial melting. After 2050, however, significant reductions in runoff appear likely in all of the studied river basins as glaciers slowly disappear, leaving little ice to melt and run down the mountains.

More information: [Consistent increase in High Asia's runoff due to increasing glacier melt and precipitation, Nature Climate Change \(2014\) DOI: 10.1038/nclimate2237](#)

*Adapted from article by Bob Yirka in Earth / Environment June 2nd, 2014.*

## Simulation explains why Asian glaciers are not melting

A team of researchers in the U.S. has built a model that appears to explain the Karakoram anomaly—where unlike other parts of the world, its mountainous glaciers are not melting. In their paper published in the journal *Nature Geoscience*, the team explains the factors that went into their model and why their simulation appears to explain the real world phenomenon.

As most everyone knows by now, the planet is warming, and because of that, glaciers across the globe are melting, with many expected to disappear over the next century, or sooner. One exception, however, is the Karakoram, it's technically part of the Himalaya chain. There, scientists have discovered that not only are the glaciers not melting, they appear to be growing, continually defying predictions.

To find out why glaciers in that part of the world are thriving despite a rise in global temperatures, the researchers gathered weather data dating back to 1861 on three major parts of the Himalaya chain—the southeast portion, the central portion and the Karakoram. The amount of data allowed them to create a much finer map of the area than prior efforts—down to an area of just 19 square miles.

After imputing the data and running the simulations—representing weather patterns right up to 2100—the researchers found that the central and southeast part of the chain received most of its moisture from the annual monsoons. The Karakoram, in contrast, got most of its precipitation in the winter, which of course meant more snow. The team notes that their model shows that the total amount of precipitation along most of the chain is increasing as the planet heats up, during the summer months. In the Karakoram, on the other hand, there is less snowfall in the summer, but more in the winter—thus the continued growing of the glaciers. Their model suggests that the glaciers are likely to continue to persist in that part of the world, right on up to 2100—after that, it doesn't appear likely—not if global warming continues at its current pace.

More information: [Nature Geoscience \(2014\) DOI: 10.1038/ngeo2269© 2014 Phys.org](#)

*Adapted from "Simulation explains why Asian glaciers are not melting."  
October 13th, 2014. <http://phys.org> By Bob Yirka in Earth / Earth Sciences*

## The Himalayan Club – Delhi Section

This year the Delhi section had a busy year of talks with 9 exciting and well attended talks. The efforts by Rama Goyal and Maninder Kohli from Delhi Section of the club are well appreciated for the effort.

Date	Talk	Speaker
February 2014	High altitude lakes of Kashmir	Mahmood Shah
March 2014	Adventure Movies	Banff Film Festival – New Delhi
March 2014	Speed Climbing Himalayan Peaks	Marc Batard
July 2014	Sailing Around the World	Doann Houghton - Alico
August 2014	Jhanavi Exploration – Neelang Region	Ashutosh Mitra
September 2014	Climb of Denali as part of 7 Summits	Ankur Bahl
October 2014	Hidden Ladakh	Viraf Mehta
November 2014	Climbs in Nepal	Cosmin Andron
November 2014	Becoming a Mountain	Stephen Alter

## News & Views

### Use of 'chalk' in rock climbing: *sine qua non* or myth?

"Magnesium carbonate, or 'chalk', is used by rock climbers to dry their hands to increase the coefficient of friction, thereby improving the grip of the holds. To date, no scientific research supports this practice; indeed, some evidence suggests that magnesium carbonate could decrease the coefficient of friction. Fifteen participants were asked to apply a force with the tip of their fingers to hold a flattened rock (normal force), while a tangential force pulled the rock away. The coefficient of friction--that is, the ratio between the tangential force (pulling the rock) and the normal force (applied by the participants)--was calculated. Coating (chalk vs no chalk), dampness (water vs no water) and rock (sandstone, granite and slate) were manipulated. The results showed that chalk decreased the coefficient of friction. Sandstone was found to be less slippery than granite and slate. Finally, water had no significant effect on the coefficient of friction. The counter-intuitive effect of chalk appears to be caused by two independent factors. First, magnesium carbonate dries the skin, decreasing its compliance and hence reducing the coefficient of friction. Secondly, magnesium carbonate creates a slippery granular layer.

We conclude that, to improve the coefficient of friction in rock climbing, an effort should be made to remove all particles of chalk; alternative methods for drying the fingers are preferable."

*By F. Li, S Maregetts and I Fowler, Journal of Sports Sciences, 2001, 19, p 427*

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/026404101300149375#preview>

## Commercialization of Mountains Reaches a New Height

Outfitter Offering Hot Air Balloon Ride over Everest. Daylong experience will cost \$5.2 million

If only, a luxury outfitter specializing in “unique and memorable experiences,” is now offering a hot air balloon ride that passes over the top of the world’s tallest mountain. The price tag for the two spots in the balloon is \$5,215,000.

“Join the ranks of pioneers from history like Shackleton, Livingstone, and Hillary,” reads the description on IfOnly’s website, “as you venture to rarely explored heights for an expedition that will capture imaginations and headlines around the world.”

The balloon will be piloted by Australian Chris Dewhurst, who flew the first hot air balloon over Everest in 1991 for a project that was the subject of a National Geographic film.

The two customers who land the one-time-only trip will be asked to sign an extensive liability waiver, commit several weeks for their travel and stay in Nepal, and be prepared to reschedule, at further cost, if the weather makes the attempt to cross over Everest impossible. Dewhurst will also be given free rein to judge the “physical and mental faculties” of prospective customers, who will work as active crew members for the duration of the flight. All customers will be asked to spend up to a month in physical and skills training in advance of their trip.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/in-pictures-30112297>

## A New Federation of Mountain Protected Area

A new global alliance of mountain protected areas, the Federation of Mountain Protected Areas (FMPA), has been announced at the sixth International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Parks Congress in Sydney, Australia, on 13 November 2014. Open to all organizations that work in mountain protected areas around the world, the FMPA will be a platform to share information, experiences, know-how and best practices to facilitate the management of mountain protected areas.

This initiative is promoted within the framework of the Mountain Partnership, a United Nations voluntary alliance dedicated to the sustainable development of mountains, and by the Ev-K2-CNR Association of Italy, which is one of the key players in the implementation of the Central Karakorum National Park.

The Federation was officially presented during the event “Mountain Protected Areas: a Worldwide Heritage”. The idea aroused great interest and very positive feedback from more than 100 attendees at the event, who represented mountain regions around the world. Speakers at the event included: Linda McMillan, a Deputy Vice-

Chairman of the Connectivity and Mountains Biome Network of the IUCN's World Commission of Protected Areas and President of Mountain Protection Commission of International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation; Franco Mari, Ev-K2-CNR Scientific Coordinator and Scientific Advisor to the SEED Project; Eduardo Mansur, Director of the Forest Assessment, Management and Conservation Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); and Ashiq Ahmad Khan, Ev-K2-CNR Representative Pakistan, who lead the final round table.

The Federation was also discussed on 18 November during the session called "Watershed management – modern approach to parks and protected area management," led by FAO.

*"In the 20th century, land managers focused their mountain protection efforts on finding ways to protect these special places FROM visitors and other mountain stakeholders. But In the 21st century, mountains face new huge global threats such as climate change, global warming, invasive species, and human population growth. Today, we now understand that long-term mountain protection is only possible when protected area managers focus their efforts on finding ways to protect these special places WITH visitors and other mountain stakeholders. That is the future of mountain protection, and I am impressed with the bold and realistic vision of the Federation of Mountain Protected Areas"* said Linda McMillan of IUCN.

For more information, contact FMPA Information and contacts: [evk2cnr@evk2cnr.org](mailto:evk2cnr@evk2cnr.org)

### Hundreds of Mountaineers Climb the Alps for Epic Photo-shoot

To celebrate the 150th anniversary of the first ascent of the Matterhorn ridge in the Alps by Edward Whymper and his team, Mammut, a Swiss mountaineering equipment company, asked Bösch to take a special photo to mark the occasion for the brand's 2015 ad campaign. A team of mountain climbers ascended the Matterhorn's Hörnli ridge and lit bright red lights that, at dawn, illuminated the path that Whymper took with his team to make the first successful ascent.

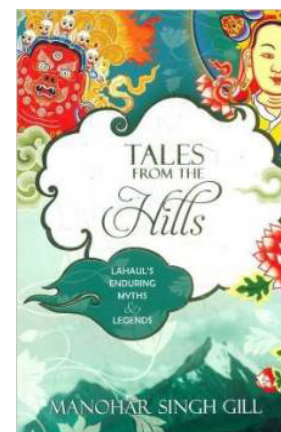
<http://www.boredpanda.com/alpine-mountain-photography-matterhorn-robert-bosch-mammut/>

**This site is worth seeing. It has some spectacular photos.**

### Another book from our President Emeritus' pen

**Tales from the Hills: Lahaul's Enduring Myths and Legends** by Dr. Manohar Singh Gill - The definitive collection of folk tales from the Himalaya.

In Tales from the Hills, former chief election commissioner of India, Manohar Singh Gill, who has had a lifelong affair with this Himalayan wonderland, brings into printed form the most enduring myths and folklore from Lahaul and Spiti. Narrated with the gentle prodding voice of a seasoned traveller and



Tales from the Hills

featuring thirty of the most enchanting stories about characters such as the Mulhila Rakshasini, the Barsi Nullah Bhoot and the Chandrataal fairy, this first-ever anthology is an important repository of culture and ancient history that deserves to be celebrated and passed on to coming generations.

### On Language Location.

The episodes cover languages of Bhutan and Burma/Myanmar.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04lpsbz>

A very interesting and informative podcast by Mark Turin.

### An Appeal for Anonymous Survey: Medication Use by Climbers on Mount Everest:

We solicit volunteers for a research study about climbing practices on Mount Everest.

As you likely know from your climbing experience, exposure to high altitude poses a risk of developing one of three forms of acute altitude illness: acute mountain sickness, high altitude cerebral oedema and high altitude pulmonary oedema. Medications are available to prevent these problems and are commonly used by travellers at moderate elevations (e.g., 3000-5000 m) for this purpose. Recent reports suggest that climbers traveling to extremely high elevations on Mount Everest and other peaks are also using these medications to improve physical performance and/or increase their odds of reaching the summit without developing altitude illness. Despite these reports, little is known about exactly how common these practices are.

We are conducting a research survey in order to estimate the number of climbers on Mount Everest who are using medications in this manner. People who have attempted to climb Mount Everest – whether they were successful in summiting or not – are eligible to participate. If you are eligible and choose to participate, you will find a link to the anonymous on-line survey at the bottom of this email. The survey will take less than 20 minutes to complete and does not require you to provide any personal information. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer any question in the survey. All of the information you provide in the survey will remain anonymous and no one will be able to identify you from the information you provide in the survey. Although you will not benefit directly from this survey, we anticipate that information learned from the survey will help guide medical practice with regard to climbers on Mount Everest and other large Himalayan mountains.

If you have any questions, feel free to email us at [aluks@u.washington.edu](mailto:aluks@u.washington.edu), although please be reminded that the confidentiality of emails cannot be guaranteed. We appreciate your time and effort in completing this survey and look forward to reviewing the information you provide.

Click here to complete this survey:

<https://catalyst.uw.edu/webq/survey/aluks/252982>

If the link does not work, you can copy and paste it in your web browser.

Please remember to click on “submit” at the end of the survey to ensure that your answers are all saved properly.

Andrew M. Luks, MD, Associate Professor, Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine, University of Washington

Luanne Freer, MD, Everest ER, Himalayan Rescue Association

Colin Grissom, MD, Professor of Medicine, University of Utah

Peter Hackett, MD, Institute for High Altitude Medicine, Telluride, Colorado

## Awards

### Indian Mountaineering Foundation Awards

On Saturday the 8th of November the Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF) announced winners of IMF Climbing Awards for the year 2014. Through the Climbing Awards the IMF would like to recognize exceptional climbing by Indian mountaineering expeditions and outstanding exploratory treks. The IMF would like to encourage technical and alpine style climbing in mountaineering expeditions as well as exploration across the Himalaya. Apart from excellence in climbing, award winners are expected to show importance to areas like ethics and ecology on an expedition reinforcing that the journey is as important as getting to the destination. Another requirement is expedition reporting which needs to be precise, accurate as well as include maps, coordinates and photographs.

The IMF Climbing Award 2014 for Excellence in Mountaineering in the Self Supported Category was given to the Himalayan Club’s Expedition to Rassa Glacier (J&K) for the explorations of the glaciers and doing two first ascents above 6000 M. The expedition in July – August 2014 extensively explored the Rassa Glacier and its subsidiaries, climbed two peaks - 6219 m (Tusuhm Kangri) and Peak 6250 m (Rassa Kangri) The team also visited the Shukpa pass (6110 m) and West Rassa la (5930 m) and crossed the East Rassa la (6000 m) into Sumur nala. Team consisted of Divyesh Muni (Leader), Rajesh Gadgil,



Divyesh Muni and Rajesh Gadgil receiving IMF award

Vineeta Muni and Atin Sathe. The team was also accompanied by 6 enthusiastic trekkers who visited their base camp.

The IMF Climbing Award 2014 for Excellence in Mountaineering - Institutional Category was given to ITBP Northern Frontier Division for the climb of Chaudhar (6511 M) in Kumaon Himalaya (Uttarakhand) during May-June 2014 when 10 climbers summited. This peak has been climbed only 2 times before and the last ascent was in 1989.

The 3rd and final award was given for Outstanding Exploratory Trek in the Indian Himalaya during 2014. The winner of the IMF Climbing Award 2014 was given to the ChainsawKhaki Expedition for the Exploration & Traverse over Chungakhaga Pass connecting the Chor Gad in Nelang and the Baspa in Kinnaur.

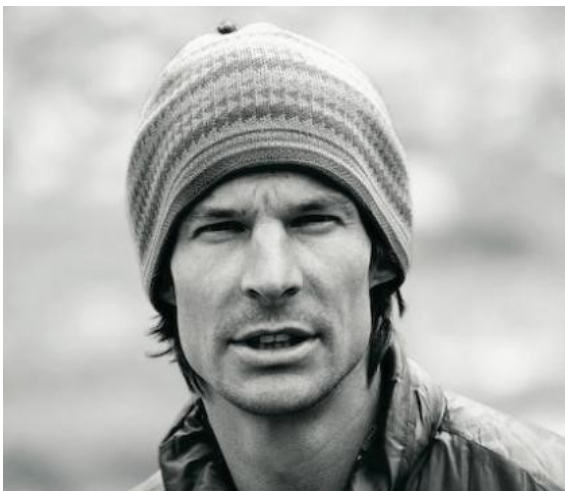
### UIAA Achievement Award

American climber and mountaineer Steve House who was awarded the UIAA Achievement Award at the 2014 General Assembly in Flagstaff, Arizona has climbed tough and punishing big walls on some very big mountains in far flung corners of the world.

They include what he considers his toughest climb yet, Nanga Parbat (8,125m) where he made the difficult first ascent up the Central Pillar of the Rupal Face of Nanga Parbat in 2005 with friend and fellow climber Vince Anderson. The Anderson / House line is graded M5 X, 5.9, W14 and the face is 4,100 m tall.

Ask House what he likes about such big technical alpine-style challenges, and he replies: "I just love the complexity and the problem solving. I love the environment it takes place in, the partnerships and the relationships that come out of it. I even like the early morning, I like all of it."

Nothing is for certain on a big wall or mountain and especially if it in a remote location, said House.



Steve House

So many factors contribute towards the final outcome including the weather, food, access, your climbing partner, the altitude, the list goes on.

His climbing adventures across the globe, however, almost ended on Mount Temple near Lake Louise, Alberta in 2010 when, while climbing yet another new route with Bruce Miller, House lost a foothold and suddenly found himself airborne. After a 25 meter fall, he slammed against a wall which resulted in a pelvis broken in 20 places and



numerous other internal injuries including a punctured lung.

It was a moment he was lucky enough to come out of alive, and as is the case at such times, resulted in a period of deep introspection.

That's when House said he decided to found *Alpine Mentors* which helps aspiring alpinists prepare for tough and demanding big wall climbing over a two-year-programme.

UIAA president Frits Vrijlandt said Steve House is an inspiration to climbers around the world and an example of the best climbing and mountaineering offers.

"Not only is a renowned climber internationally, but House has gone one step further and climbed an even higher mountain with his dedication to teaching what he has learned to young aspiring alpinists."

House describes himself today as an alpinist, speaker, mountain guide, author and coach. He tries to integrate all these different aspects together based on a philosophy of awareness and experience.

He's written a well-received book called "Training for the New Alpinism: A Manual for the Climber as Athlete" which he believes has started an important new conversation about the need for a balanced life which takes stock of both the personal, spiritual and the physical quest.

House said climbing and mountaineering can at a steep price and at the expense of other things that matter including relationships, family and friendship.

"What is considered good climbing sometimes comes out of an unhealthy place," said House.

The idea behind *Alpine Mentors*, a two-year-climbing resource, is about learning skills, but also about realizing that it's not just strength but confidence, borne out from experience and wisdom, that is crucial to succeeding on difficult climbs.

"After my accident in Canada, I realized, it wasn't more climbing I had done in my life but that I hadn't done more for my climbing community, a community that has given me so much," said House. "I created *Alpine Mentors* for that."

House said *Alpine Mentors* is his main avenue for giving back, the ability to teach young alpinists that you can have a healthy relationship and enjoy climbing.

Mountains will always be dangerous, said House, but what's important is to "know when to be afraid and of what, when to be confident and why.

"Mentorship is so important in big alpinism because it's such a complex environment, it's rock, ice, snow, glaciers, weather, altitude, even eating and drinking," stressed House. "It's not just hard skills we are trying to pass on, it's a way of believing in your abilities.

This kind of approach to teaching young alpinists a positive way to climb, House explains is already prevalent in Europe through programs administered by federations such as the French Alpine Club (FFCAM) and the Slovenian Alpine Club (PZS) – but not widely taught in North America.

House is now working on a regional mentorship programme in Washington State with the backing of the American Alpine Club.

## Forthcoming Events

### The Himalayan Club Annual Seminar 2015

#### Everest? Perspectives and Philosophies in Mountaineering

*You could die in each climb and that meant you were responsible for yourself. We were real mountaineers: careful, aware and even afraid. By climbing mountains we were not learning how big we were. We were finding out how breakable, how weak and how full of fear we are. You can only get this if you expose yourself to high danger. I have always said that a mountain without danger is not a mountain. ... High-altitude alpinism has become tourism and show. These commercial trips to Everest, they are still dangerous. But the guides and organisers tell clients, "Don't worry, it's all organised." The route is prepared by hundreds of Sherpas. Extra oxygen is available in all camps, right up to the summit. People will cook for you and lay out your beds. Clients feel safe and don't care about the risks.*

*Reinhold Messner (2004)*

Everest in the Western world, Sagarmatha in Nepal, Chomolungma in Tibet...This mountain over the last century or so has evoked different passions, actions and reactions from mountaineers the world over. It attracts trained mountaineers willing to go for it by themselves as well as capable climbers who hire professional guides. Several routes have been tried and several approaches too, from different sides of the mountain and from different philosophies on how to climb it. Since 1953 when it was first climbed, many records have been established, some truly outrageous. In fact the other 8000 mt peaks have also fascinated mountaineers drawing them to Nepal in droves, thus contributing to the Nepalese economy and keeping the fire burning in many a Sherpa home.

But this magnet also repels an equal number of mountaineers, who truly believe that small is beautiful; that discovering a new valley is more exciting than standing in a queue to get to the 'top of the world'...

We at the Himalayan Club have wanted to address certain burning issues on this forum, rather than presenting exciting trekking and expedition accounts alone. You will get your fill of that as well – all we have done is put these in a context.

The Himalayan Club will hold the Annual Seminar on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2015. It is open to all members and their guests. Leading mountaineers,

explorers and writers will be presenting audio-visuals and illustrated talks on various topics.

**Venue: The Mysore Association, Bombay, 393, Bhau Daji Road, near Madras Cafe, Matunga (East), Mumbai - 400019**

**Registration:** A Registration fee for two days is Rs. 200 (for Club members) and Rs. 300 (for Guests) per person. It will include tea and snacks.

Kindly register with the Club office or on our website [www.himalayanclub.org](http://www.himalayanclub.org) or by email to: [events@himalayanclub.org](mailto:events@himalayanclub.org)

Saturday, 14 <sup>th</sup> February 2015	
3.30 pm onwards	Registration
4.00 pm	INAUGURATION
4.15 pm	<p>KAIVAN MISTRY MEMORIAL LECTURE - LINDSAY GRIFFIN ‘Escape from Mongolia’</p> <p>Lindsay Griffin has had many adventures in the mountains but perhaps one of the most extraordinary took place in the early 1990s, and is a story about human spirit, teamwork, and a considerable dose of luck.</p>
5.15 pm	<p>JAGDISH NANAVATI AWARD CEREMONY</p> <p>The ‘<u>Jagdish Nanavati Award for Excellence in Mountaineering</u>’ and the ‘<u>Garud Medal</u>’ for the year 2014 instituted by the Club and the Nanavati family in the memory of Late Jagdish Nanavati will be presented to the awardees.</p>
5.40 pm	Tea Break
6.20 pm	<p>KEKOO NAOROJI BOOK AWARD</p> <p><u>The 8<sup>th</sup> Kekoo Naoroji Book Award</u> for Himalayan Literature will be presented to Tony Smythe (UK) for his book ‘My Father Frank’.</p>
6.30 pm	<p>Tony Smythe ‘My Father Frank’</p> <p>Tony will talk about his award winning book including the conceptualisation, research and the process of understanding the unique position of Frank Smythe in history of exploration and mountaineering. Tony will also screen a 20 minute film on Kamet by Frank Smythe.</p>
<p><b>Annual Dinner:</b> The contributory annual dinner will be at 8.00 pm for all members and guests. Please register at the Club office before 14<sup>th</sup> February by paying Rs. 1500/- per person.</p>	

<b>SUNDAY, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2015</b>	
3.00 pm	Introduction to the theme
3.05 pm	<p><b>DIVYESH MUNI</b></p> <p>Divyesh will talk about the challenges of self-organised expeditions to smaller but unexplored as well as technically difficult mountains - illustrated by his recent expedition to Rassa Glacier.</p>
4.00 pm	<p><b>STEVEN DAWA SHERPA</b></p> <p>Steven Dawa will explain perspectives of the Sherpas, commercial organisers and the environmental impact of climbing on Everest and other high mountains.</p>
4.45 pm	Tea Break
5.15 pm	<p><b>HARISH KAPADIA</b></p> <p>An intrepid explorer, Harish will share the joys of trekking, discovering new valleys and climbing areas rather than climbing high mountains.</p>
5.35 pm	<p><b>UMESH ZIRPE</b></p> <p>An organiser and leader of three successful expeditions to 8000 m peaks, Umesh will talk on his experience of climbs on Everest and other peaks.</p>
5.55 pm	<p><b>MURAD LALA</b></p> <p>Dr. Murad is a self-proclaimed 'tourist trekker' who climbed Everest with a commercial expedition. He will give his perspective as a client of a guided climb to the top of the world.</p>
6.20 pm	<p>Panel and interactive discussion with audience</p> <p>Panellists – Lindsay Griffin, Harish Kapadia, Divyesh Muni, Steven Dawa Sherpa, Victor Saunders (on line), Umesh Zirpe and Murad Lala</p>

10 January 2015  
 Nandini Purandare  
 Hon. Secretary - The Himalayan Club

## Indian Mountaineering Foundation Events

### **Climbathon 2015.**

Climbathon 2015 is designed as an Alpine Leadership Mountaineering Programme. The course provides a comprehensive introduction to all the skills of alpine mountaineering, general team leadership, and leading roped teams on glaciers, snow, rock and ice leading to participation in an expedition in which all of the skills developed are employed in a mountain setting. The program will run from August 4 to 27, 2015. For more information visit

<http://www.indmount.org/newsdetail.aspx?Aid=90>

### **Indian Everest Expedition 1965, Golden Jubilee Celebration**

Indian Mountaineering Foundation plans to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of this momentous event in

Indian climbing history with functions and receptions throughout the year. About 10 members of

The 1965 team are expected to personally participate in the celebrations. The IMF and various other organisations have planned several felicitation receptions at various venues within India and Nepal.

## **Obituaries**

### **Dr. J. de Villiers Graaff**

Dr. Graaff was a neoclassical South African welfare economist] and former chairman of Nedbank. Graaff is noted for his work on optimal savings rates contributions to the creation of the social welfare function and for his 1957 magnum opus Theoretical Welfare Economics.

He was a leading mountaineer from South Africa and is credited with the first ascent of Manirang in 1952. He died in Cape Town on January 6, 2015

## Office bearers of the Himalayan Club for the year 2014

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Spaniards depart from a bivy high above the Kyasar valley.

**Edited by  
Ravi Mariwala**

**Published for the Himalayan Club**

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