HARISH KAPADIA

India 2004

While the world is opening its doors to mountaineers and mountain lovers, there is distressing news from the new Uttaranchal state in India. The state contains some of the most beautiful areas in the Indian Himalaya with peaks like Nanda Devi, Kamet, Shivling and several others. Unfortunately, it has imposed severe restrictions on climbing and special royalty charges for mountaineers (minimum US$ 1400). This is *in addition* to charges payable to the Indian Mountaineering Foundation. Moreover, separate permissions must be obtained from officials in the state, forest departments and local authorities. At least half the number of porters must be employed from local villages and each village is to be paid a fee as you trek through. The forest department is to be paid a special fee to camp on its land. Indian mountaineers and trekkers are not spared and for the first time they will have to pay peak fees to climb peaks in their own country. After many discussions, negotiations and protests, all of which were brushed aside, the state government has decided to impose these rules from the beginning of the 2005 season. Please check full details, rates and addresses on the website www.indmount.org.

An Indian army team climbed Kangchenjunga from Nepal to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the first ascent of the peak.

Another major event was the exploration of the Tsangpo-Siang Bend from the south. A team of three Indians pioneered a route through the thick forest of Arunachal Pradesh to reach the Line of Control, between India and China, where the Tsangpo enters India and is called the Siang. The same river is called the Brahmaputra as it flows into the plains of Assam. The full exploration of the Tsangpo gorge was thus completed.

SIKKIM

Tingchenkang (6010m)

An expedition organised by the Himalayan Club, Kolkatta Section, led by Air Vice Marshal A K Bhattacharyya (retd), made the second ascent of this mountain on 6 November. The summit was reached via the north face (a new route) in extremely cold conditions. Subrata Chakraborty and Pasang Phuter Sherpa reached the summit. The first recorded ascent was made in 1998 by the Indo-British Territorial Army's team by the west ridge.

GARHWAL

Adi Kailash (5925m)
An international team of climbers led by Andy Perkins and Martin Welch made the first ascent of Adi (also known as Chota or Little) Kailash in the Kumaun Himalaya. The mountain is revered due to its similarity to the holy mountain of Kailash in nearby Tibet. Andy Perkins, Tim Woodward, Jason Hubert, Martin Welch, Diarmid Hearns, Jack Pearse, Amanda George (all UK) and Paul Zuchowski (US) made the first ascent of Adi Kailash by the SW ridge on 8 October in perfect weather. Out of respect to local sensitivities, the team stopped a few metres short of the summit.

Nikarchu Qilla (5750m)
From the same expedition, Welch, Woodward, Hearns, Pearse, George and Gustavo Fierro-Carrion (Ecuador) made the first ascent of this peak which is located 3km NE of the unclimbed Nikurch Rama (5995m). This team also stopped a few metres below the summit..

Arwa Spire (6193m)
A four-member German team, led by Thomas Hüber, attempted the popular peaks of Arwa Spire in Central Garhwal. They followed the west ridge and despite some poor weather, Thomas Hüber with Alexander Hüber and Peter Auzenferger reached the summit on 28 September.

Bhagirathi III (6454m)
A German/French team led by Walter Hoelzler climbed two routes on Bhagirathi III, first by the W pillar on 19 May and then by the N ridge on 20 May. Summiters on the W pillar route were Walter Hoelzler and Joerg Pflugmacher. Jerome Blanc-Gras, Christopher Blanc-Gras, Lionel Deborde and Philippe Albouy reached the summit by the north ridge.

Chaturangi I (6407m)
A four-member German team led by Joachim Gnoyke had excellent weather in September and the summit was reached on the 13th by Joachim Gnoyke, Nadine Bagnoud, Mathieu Aste and two high-altitude porters.

Chaturangi IV (6304m)
All the peaks of this group are very inviting to climb and are situated on the Gangotri glacier. Five members of an Indian expedition from Bengal, led by Ms Jayanti Chaudhuri, reached the summit on 21 September.

Chaukhamba III (6974m) and IV (6853m)
An expedition from the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering, led by Col Ashok Abbey, made the first attempt on these unclimbed peaks. A high point of 6300m on the western flank was reached on 8 July in poor weather.

Chiring We (6599m)
The first ascent of this peak was made in 1979 by a team from Mumbai under the leadership of Harish Kapadia. The 12-member team led by Martin Moran completed the second ascent on 26 September. They followed the west ridge (route of first ascent) after establishing four camps above base camp and the summit was reached by Martin Moran, Alex Moran, Jonathan Preston, Liam Warren, Paul Watson, Stuart Reid, Christopher Wheatley, Geoffrey Dawson and Christopher Harle.

Januhut (6805m)
A British/New Zealand team led by Malcom Bass attempted this unclimbed peak near Chaukhamba I in the post-monsoon season. Following the SW ridge they reached a height of 6400m on 10 November. However, heavy snowfall caught them unawares and they were forced to retreat.

Kalanka (6931m)
An expedition led by American Carlos Buhler attempted this peak in the pre-monsoon season by the north face. Unfortunately they encountered serious bad weather and snowfall which could have avalanched. All three team members – Buhler, John M Lyall and Sandy Allan – reached a high point at 6075m on 30 May.

Kamet (7756m) and Abi Gamin (7355m)
This large team from Bengal, led by Samir Sengupta, comprised 15 members, five Sherpas and four high-altitude porters. They climbed both peaks on 29 May. The route followed on Kamet was from the NE face and on Abi Gamin via the W ridge. Both mountains were climbed an hour apart on the same day from a common last camp. The Kamet summiters were Samrat Basu, Dawa Sherpa, Thukpa Sherpa and Na Dorjee Sherpa. The Abi Gamin summiters were Prodyut Bhattacharjee, Sandip Roy, Nima Sherpa, Debender Singh Rana and Shohan S Martholiya.

Kedarnath (6968m)
A Japanese five-member team, led by Yosuke Narisue, attempted the normal route on Kedarnath. Not using any high-altitude support, members ferried their own luggage and reached 4400m by the normal route, but they were too tired to continue further.

Mana Northwest (7092m)
A team of eight members from Bengal, led by Arupam Das, attempted this subsidiary peak of Mana in Central Garhwal. The peak is situated near Kamet. The team reached 6900m on 21 June via the Purvi Kamet glacier.

Meru (6660m) and Shivling (6543m)
A five-member Japanese team, led by Hiroyoshi Manome, attempted both these peaks in the post monsoon season in different pairs. In the early stages of the expedition one member had a serious fall and was hurt in the leg. All the members helped in the rescue but some equipment was lost. Later they attempted Meru, reaching 5850m on 3 September by the NE face. Another team reached 5900m on Shivling on 4 September while attempting the W face. They had to give up the further climb.

Parvati Parvat (6257m)
A 10-member team from the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, led by Lovraj Singh Dharamshaktu, approached the peak from the south via the Panpatia Bamak. On 17 September Nadre and Balwant with three high-altitude porters reached the col between Nilkanth and Parvati Parbat. From the col, in whiteout conditions, they climbed the east ridge to a high point. They placed a snow stick there and returned. On 21 September, the leader with Ashish, Deepesh, Surender and Umesh and two high-altitude porters reached the same high point in clearer weather and could see two more tops (estimated 100m higher). They were unable to reach either of them.

Saf Minal (6911m)
A two-man team of John Varco (USA) and Ian Parnell (UK) made one of the best ascents in the Indian Himalaya this season. They climbed the N ridge and NW face of this high peak situated on the northern rim of the Nanda Devi Sanctuary. The summit was reached on 6 October. Except for four days, they had excellent weather throughout. (*See Parnell's account 'Saf Minal North-west Face' on page 83.*)

Sudarshan Parvat (6507m)
This peak, rising above the Gangotri glacier, was climbed on 19 June by the popular east ridge. The summiters from this 10-member team from Bengal, led by Biswadeb Ghosh, were Dalip Sahoo, Dev Jyoti Datta and four high-altitude porters.

Thalay Sagar (6904m)
A strong Swiss-American-German climbing team of six members, led by Stephan Siegrist, climbed the NW buttress route to reach the summit on 27 September. Summiters were Thomas Senf, Dennis Burdet, Ralf Weber and the leader. They encountered excellent weather throughout the ascent.

Yogeshwar (6617m)
A six-member Indian team from Maharashtra, led by Chandrashekar Shirsat, attempted this peak from the Shyamvarna valley in May and June. Gautam Raut, Datta Chalke and Rajendra Shinde reached a high point of 6250m on June 1.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

First Ascent of Khhang Shiling (6360m)

A three-member team, Divyesh Muni, Vineeta Muni and Shripad Sapkal, sponsored by the Himalayan Club, made the first ascent of Khhang Shiling (6360m) on 19 September, assisted by Sherpa Lakhpa Bhote. They explored the Khamengar valley in Spiti, a rarely visited area in Himachal Pradesh. Khhang Shiling is a prominent mountain at the head of the Khamengar valley. Camp I at 5880m was established in a basin formed between a large rock feature and the Shigri Parvat massif. After climbing along the glacier to a bergschrund below the col between Shigri Parvat and Khhang Shiling they dumped equipment there. Next day they reached the top at 1.30pm. The party returned to Kullu via the Pin Parvati pass.

Dharamsura (6445m)

A 10-member, all-women team, sponsored by the IMF and led by Ms Deepu Sharma, climbed Dharamsura (also known as 'White Sail') on 14 August via the E ridge. The summiters were Nari Dhami, Asmita, Chandra Bisht, Bhuvneshwari Thakur and Krishna Thakur.

Indrasan (6221m)

On 30 August Basanta Singha Roy, the leader, with three high-altitude porters, reached the summit of Indrasan. This was the first ascent by an all-Indian team of this formidable peak. The E ridge was followed to the summit.

Unnamed Peaks (6240m, 6100m)

A 12-member team from Bengal led by Ujjal Ray climbed both these peaks situated in the Pakshi Lamur river basin of the Spiti valley. They approached the peaks after crossing Parang La and established their base camp near the confluence of Pare Chu and Pakshi Lamur Nala. Peak 6240m was climbed on 28 August and Peak 6100m on 29 August via the SW face.

Lahaul

CB - 9 (6108m)

A nine-member IMF sponsored expedition led by I D Sharma approached this peak on the Milang glacier after establishing three camps above base camp, but on 25 August bad weather and technical difficulties stopped the attempt at 5600m.

CB-13 (6264m)

A twelve-member team from Bengal led by Pijush Kanti Das climbed this popular peak in summer. The peak was climbed by the traditional route on 27 July by Samar Prasad, Mithun Talukdar, Biplab Mondal with Sonam Rana (high-altitude porter).

CB-14 (6078m)
A large 14-member Indian team from Bengal, led by Anal Das, climbed CB-14 (6078m) on 19 August. The summiters were Swaraj Ghosh, Ajoy Mondal, Subrata Banerjee, Sanjay Ghosh, Moloy Mukherjee and Arindam Mukherjee, with three high-altitude porters. They followed the west ridge to the summit. On their approach to the mountain the team located the wreckage of a plane which had crashed here in 1968. They reported the matter to the nearest authorities and in a large recovery effort many parts of the plane were brought back and a major mystery solved.

KR-7 (6096m)
An eight-member Polish team led by Adam Sredniawa climbed the E ridge in three different ascents. The summit was reached on the 6th, 17th and 22nd August respectively. All climbers reached the top.

Menthosa (6443m)
This high peak in Lahaul's Pangi valley was climbed by Japanese and Indian teams in the past following a route from the Urgus pass and then going up an ice wall to the summit. This large 12-member team from Bengal, led by Bikash Roy and accompanied by two Sherpas and two high-altitude porters, reached above camp II on 1st September through Urgus pass but could not establish camp III, which was to be their summit camp. They reached 5850m on the mountain.

Kinnaur

Phawararang (6349m)
This peak is situated in a little known valley of Kinnaur. The circular route round Mt Kailash passes at its foot. A nine-member team followed the north ridge and the leader Dhananjay Bhagat, with guide Manoj, reached the summit on 31 August.

Zonikanda (4250m)
This 11-member Indian team, led by Chanchal Bhaduri, had some strange experiences with bureaucracy. In spite of having permission from the IMF they were not allowed to go beyond base camp at Zonikanda (4250m). The local army and the Indo-Tibet Border Authorities refused permission to proceed on 20 September.

LADAKH – ZANSKAR

Harong (6210m)
A seven-member Japanese team, led by Masato Oki, attempted the E face of this peak near the Pangong lake, Ladakh. On 18 August Hideho Masudu, Sherpa Pem Tsering and Sherpa Sangay Pun reached the top.

Exploring the Tsangpo Gorge from the south

The romance of exploration of the Tsangpo gorge has puzzled geographers for centuries. The Tsangpo (as it is called in Tibet) originates near Lake Manasarovar at the foot of Mt Kailash. Flowing east across the Tibetan plateau, its progress is blocked by Namcha Barwa and the Gyala Peri massif and between these peaks the river takes a huge turn called the 'Great Tsangpo Bend'. From here onwards the Tsangpo descends steeply towards the south from the Tibetan plateau to the Himalayan divide leading to the McMahon Line and India.

As the river enters Indian territory at 580m, it takes an 'S' loop, the 'Tsangpo/Siang Bend'. In Arunachal Pradesh it is called by different names, like the Siang and Dihang, and is joined by various tributaries. On reaching the Assam plains it is joined by the Dibang and Lohit rivers and from that point onwards the river is called the Brahmaputra.

The exploration of this mighty river started in 1715. Although the 'Great Tsangpo Bend' in the north (the Pemako area in Tibet) had been explored, the 'S' bend at the border of India-China had never been reached owing to the inhospitable nature of the terrain. After the 1962 war with China the whole area became 'out of bounds'.

In 2004, a three-member team, Harish Kapadia, Motup Chewang and Wing Cdr V K Sashindran, travelled from the Brahmaputra river in the Assam valley along the Siang river to the Tsangpo gorge where it enters Indian territory, thus completing the exploration of the Tsangpo.

Books

Capt M S Kohli published his autobiography entitled *One More Step* covering his illustrious career in the Himalaya and in the Navy. *J B Auden A Centenary Tribute* was published by the Geological Survey of India, paying tributes to this foremost geologist in the early part of the last century. Towards the end of the year came *Adventure Travels in the Himalaya* by John Jackson, covering his lifetime of travels and climbs in the range.

Save Siachen

The war-torn Siachen glacier remains peaceful due to a lasting ceasefire. But soldiers continue to die there, as they stay for too long at altitude. Pollution is prevalent and the shrinking glacier is a warning against future disaster.

A conference, chaired by Dr Saleem Ali, a young professor from the United States, was held in Mumbai. It considered various proposals and possible methods of protecting the glacier. Political talks between India and Pakistan are moving, albeit slowly, towards a peaceful solution.