

sive SW pillar of **K7 West**, climbing at up to 7b A2, but descending from 5700m, fully 1000m below the summit. There are now three partial routes on this pillar but none has reached the 6200m sub-peak of K7 West, let alone the main summit.

2010

Relatively few parties managed to climb in Pakistan in 2010, due to the security situation and also to the catastrophic floods, which affected not only the lowlands of the country, but also the Indus valley as far up as Ladakh.

On **K2** there were no successful ascents this year. The Swedish climber and extreme skier Fredrik Ericsson was climbing with Austrian mountaineer Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner on the Abruzzi Spur when he slipped somewhere above the Bottleneck and fell over 3000 feet to his death. His plan, believe it or not, was to ski down from the summit. Kaltenbrunner, who is trying to become the first woman to climb the fourteen 8000m peaks without oxygen, turned around and safely climbed down to camp four on the shoulder and then continued down to base camp.

The Austrian climber Christian Stangrl claimed the only ascent of K2, in what appeared to be a remarkable solo push, but was doubted by several people and eventually admitted that he had not been very near the summit at all. He seems to have turned back below the Abruzzi Shoulder. His account included a sighting of a snow leopard somewhere well above the base camp, which in itself is highly improbable. The Austrian media have nominated him for the 'climbing lie of the decade' – though this decade has a way to go.

In August two Russian climbers, Vjacheslav Ivanov and Oleg Koltunov, finally succeeded on the steep granite west face of **K7 West**, though it is not clear at the time of writing whether they continued up the difficult mixed ridge to the summit 600m higher. An Italian pair attempted the same face but retreated after 10 days when their portaledge was destroyed in a rock-fall. They then climbed a steep 900m new line on the W face of **Farol West** (6370m).

The Pakistan authorities are putting up their peak fees for 2011, though not by very much. The 50% discount that has been applied to most of the high Karakoram peaks since 2002 has been cut to 40%, which means, for instance, that a K2 permit for up to seven climbers will now cost \$7200 instead of \$6000. Peaks in Gilgit, Ghizar and Chitral (except Spantik) are offered at 90% off for anyone brave enough to go there. Peaks below 6500m still require only a \$50 per person trekking permit, which is very liberal compared to China, India or Nepal.

For those interested in the **Hindu Kush** a new and detailed sketch map of the Tirich Mir massif at a scale of 1:70,000 is now available from a Spanish source, including a panoramic sketch of the mountains based on a photograph taken by Kurt Diemberger.

For more information, visit www.sгим.drac.com

HARISH KAPADIA

India 2009



174. Zaskar peaks, L to R: Pk 5780, Rungofarka (6495m) (on Rungofarka glacier) and Lingsarmo (6955m) (on Lingsarmo glacier). Taken from a chorten near Gelmothungos. (Harish Kapadia)

The best news of 2009 was that the Indian government opened 100 new peaks for climbing. Though the notification came in early 2010, the process was undertaken throughout 2009. It is almost 17 years since a number of new peaks have been opened to climbers. All the peaks are in the Zaskar and Ladakh area. Many of them are along the road which runs from Kargil-Sankoo to Padam. This passes Panikhar, Parkachik, Ringdom, and the Pensi la to reach Padam. South of this road lie several smaller valleys which are on the watershed between Zaskar and Kishtwar. The peaks that lie in these valleys like **Gelmothungos**, **Chilung**, **Durung Drung**, **Hagshu** and **Nun and Kun** (both above 7000m) were open but now many other approaches to these peaks are possible. **Lingsarmo (6955m)**, a high peak in the Nun-Kun massif is now open. In the Shafat glacier, peaks opened include **Rungofarka I (6495m)**, **II (6395m)**; **Chilung nala**, **Chiling Pk I (6253m)** and **II (6349m)**; **Hagshu valley Peak 6515m**; and in the Durung Drung valley **Peak 6485m**. Moreover, due to the road passing by the mouths of these valleys one only has to step down from one's trans-



175. Zaskar peaks in the Lalung valley (third valley from Ringdom to Pensi la): Pk 6152m (left) and Pk 5844m. (Harish Kapadia)

port and cross the Suru river or Doda river to set up a base camp. Peaks are not more than two days away, thus allowing climbing in very light style, economically and with the ability almost to change base camps by road. Some photographs were published in the *Himalayan Journal*, Vol 65, and a complete list of 104 newly opened peaks with co-ordinates and map references is available.

In 2009 there were 64 Indian and 37 foreign expeditions to the Indian Himalaya, a total of 101, one of the largest numbers in recent years. However, many Indian expeditions were to peaks that have been climbed often (Satopanth, Chhamser Kangri) and many foreign groups were commercially organised trip to well-known peaks, including Nun and Kun. Stok Kangri retained its record as the most climbed 6000m peak in the world with the added tag of one of the dirtiest base camp seen (or smelt) anywhere.

In Garhwal, one of the best climbs was that of **Mukut Parvat (7242m)**, by a French team. It is significant that a team of foreigners was allowed to climb a peak that stands on the border with Tibet. Martin Moran solved the challenge of **Changuch (6322m)** rising above the Pindari glacier. Many teams in the past, and even in 2009 failed, sometimes with fatalities. An Indian team climbed **Deoban (6852m)** and the leading Slovenian alpinist Marko Prezelj, with two young climbers, climbed **Bhagirathi II (6512m)** and **III (6454m)** above the Gangotri glacier. They climbed the south and

south-west faces respectively in alpine style.

Sikkim was also opened to allow a British team to attempt **Kellas Peak (6680m)**. Though they did not ascend the main peak, the party reached Kellas Col (6380m), a snow saddle on the border ridge south of Kellas Peak, and climbed an unnamed peak of 6252m. On nearby **Tingchen Khang (6010m)** tragedy struck a Mumbai team soon after the ascent of the peak. A freak fall killed two young climbers, while two badly injured Sherpas with them were rescued.

In the eastern Karakoram, two high virgin peaks were attempted in adjoining valleys. An American-British-Indian team attempted **Saser Kangri II (7518m) Eastern Peak**, while an American-Indian team attempted **Plateau Peak (7287m)**. Both attempts reached half way up their respective mountains.

Both leading mountaineering organisations in India had new Presidents. Ramkrishna Rao, former Director General of ITBP, was elected President of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, while leading Indian mountaineer Col Ashok Abbey took over the reins of the Himalayan Club. The Himalayan artist Serbjeet Singh passed away during the year, leaving a legacy of many fine paintings. He was painting at the Zozila pass in Kashmir as a war artist when Indian guns were firing on Pakistani troops. He produced several sketches of the Himalaya, based on maps, which were remarkably true to reality.

And finally, the Indian Himalaya was severely affected by changes in the weather, such that one can use the cliché that the only certainty about the weather was its uncertainty. The dry spells had effects on villagers' psyche too. The villagers of Langja in Spiti have always been suspicious about the weather being affected by the mountain above their village and have given it the romantic name Chau Chau Kang Nilda – 'Blue Moon in the Sky'. This year the villagers stopped some expeditions from proceeding to the mountain as they believed the presence of climbers was affecting the crops. A curious effect of global warming!

SIKKIM

Kellas Peak (6680m)

Team: British; leader, Jeremy Windsor. For the first time in more than 75 years, a party of climbers obtained permission to retrace the footsteps of historic British explorers such as Douglas Freshfield, Alexander Kellas and Frank Smythe, visiting the mountains of north-west Sikkim. Graham Hoyland, Mark Lambert, Anindya Mukherjee, George Rodway, Dukpa Tsering Sherpa, Phurba Sherpa, Thendup Sherpa and Jeremy Windsor headed north from Gangtok by 4WD to the district capital of Lachen, then on to the roadhead just beyond Thangu. With the help of the Indo-Tibet Border Police and a number of bemused yak herders, the party moved west across the Lugnak la to the Lhonak valley, then made a series of camps up-valley in an attempt to make the first ascent of Kellas Peak (6680m) on the Tibetan Border north of Jongsang (7462m).



176. Kellas Peak (6680m, left) and Lhonak Peak (6710m, right) from the Lhonak valley. Kellas col (6380m) is the snowy col on the far left. (*Jeremy Windsor*)

During the 1930 Kangchenjunga expedition, Günther Dyhrenfurth, Frank Smythe and other members named this shapely mountain after the prolific Scottish explorer Dr Alexander Kellas, who visited the mountains of Sikkim from 1907 to 1921. Kellas made a prodigious number of climbs in the region and in 1910 completed no less than 10 first ascents over 6000m, including Pauhunri (7125m), at that time the highest summit reached by man. Through his professional interest in chemistry, Kellas became an authority on the effects of high altitude on the human system, and questioned whether Everest could be climbed without the use of supplementary oxygen. In 1921 he explored approaches to Kabru (7338m) to the south of Kangchenjunga and returned to Darjeeling just a few days before joining the first British Everest expedition. Sadly, during the approach through Tibet, he suffered a heart attack and died. One of the great British mountain explorers of the time, Kellas was a retiring character who most often climbed with local Sherpas and, unfortunately, wrote almost nothing about his mountaineering experiences.

The 2009 party reached Kellas Col (6380m), a snow saddle on the border ridge south of Kellas Peak first gained by Kellas during one of his unsuccessful attempts to climb Jongsang. Members of the party also made the first ascent of Pt 6252m, but frequent avalanches and difficult hidden crevasses put them off making a serious attempt on Kellas Peak. The expedition was able to identify a large number of attractive unclimbed peaks in the Lugnak, Muguthang and Lhonak valleys, which should attract mountaineers for many years to come providing access to this area remains possible. (*report by Lindsay Griffin*)

Tingchen Khang (6010m)

Team: Indian; organisers, Chakram Hikers, Mumbai; leader, Mangesh Deshpande. A team of five mountaineers attempted this peak in the Sikkim Himalaya. At 1.30pm on 19 October, Mangesh and Sekar along with two Sherpas reached the summit. After descending around 100m on the slopes they slipped and fell about 50m. Both the members were fatally injured and died. Sherpa Mingma and Sherpa Ang Dorjee were also severely injured. Rescue operations were launched with the help of local government and military authorities and high-altitude Sherpas. The remoteness of the area and weather conditions made rescue operations difficult. Both Sherpas were evacuated to hospital by Indian Air Force helicopter and survived.

UTTARAKHAND – KUMAUN HIMALAYA

Nanda Devi East (7434m)

Team: Polish; leader, Jan Lenczowski. Since the first ascent of this peak in 1939 by a Polish team the climbers from Poland have had a special affinity with this high peak. The 10-member team established base camp at 4300m in the Lawan valley. They followed the south ridge and put up Camp 2 at 6400m on 22 May. They reached 6900m, however constant bad weather, insufficient time and the sickness of one member forced them to call off the attempt.

Changuch (6322m)

Team: British; leader, Martin Moran. Many attempts have been made on this unclimbed peak and some have ended in disaster. Finally the mountain selected its climbers and the six-member British team was successful in reaching the coveted summit in the pre-monsoon season. After establishing base camp at 4275m in the Lawan Gad, ABC at 5150m and the summit camp at 5800m, they followed the NW ridge of the mountain. On 9 June, Martin Moran with Rob Jarvis, Paul Guest, Leon Winchester with LO Ludar Singh reached the summit. They estimated the climb to be Alpine D-. They also attempted Nanda Devi East but too much snow, lack of campsites and illness of two members halted them at 6050m.

Team: Indian; organisers, Mountaineers' Association of Krishnanagar; leader, Basanta Singha Roy. Unlike the British, the seven-member team from West Bengal was not successful in climbing the peak. They crossed Trail's pass en route and entered Lawan Gad from the Pindar valley. High camp was established at 5640m on 29 August on the north-west ridge connecting Changuch with Nandakhat. Technical difficulties stopped the attempt at that point.

Team: Indian; organisers, Altitude High Adventure; leader, Anit Sah. This 14-member Indian team also failed in the post-monsoon season due to bad weather and snowfall. They reached 300m above their Camp 2 established at 5180m.

Kalanka (6931m)

Team: Netherlands; leader, Michael Robert van Berkel. From Jumma, the three-man Dutch team established base camp at Bagini Kharak (4400m) on

19 August. They reached ABC at 5000m but could not proceed due to lots of snow. As a consolation, they climbed an unnamed peak (6505m) near their base camp on 21 September.

GARHWAL HIMALAYA – GANGOTRI AREA

Bhagirathi II (6512m) and III (6454m)

Team: Slovenian; leader, Marko Prezelj. The renowned Slovenian alpinist visited the Garhwal with two young climbers, Rok Blagus and Luka Lindic, in the post monsoon season and climbed both the peaks in alpine style. Bhagirathi III was climbed by its south-west face, all three reaching the summit on 22 September. Bhagirathi II was tackled from its south face followed by south ridge and all three climbers stood on top on 1 October.

Kedarnath (6968m)

Team: Italian; leader, Giordani Maurizio. On 12 August, all 11 members of this Italian expedition reached the summit of this peak above the Gangotri glacier. They followed the traditional route from their base camp at Tapovan.

Meru Shark's Fin (6450m)

Team: Slovenian; leader, Silvo Karo. Another well-known name from Slovenia, Karo attempted the Shark's Fin of Meru with two friends, Andrej Grmovsek and Marko Lukic in August–September 2009. They established ABC at 5160m but reached only 5800m on the east face before heavy snow-fall forced their retreat.

Unnamed (6172m) and Swachand (6721m)

Team: Italian; leader, Giambattista Villa. This unnamed peak is located on the left bank of Swachand glacier. In August 2009, this Italian team followed the traditional path from Gangotri – Bhojbasa – Tapovan to Sunderban following the Gangotri glacier and established base camp at 4600m. Bad weather stopped any further progress.

CENTRAL GARHWAL

Chaukhamba I (7138m)

Team: Indian; organisers, Summiters, Kolkata; leader, Satyajit Kar. This large team from Kolkata approached this high mountain from Mana. After reaching the Bhagirath Kharak glacier, they established base camp at Ghoracha (4200m). Three further camps were established with Camp 3 at 6100m above the icefall. They attempted north face and reached just 40m below the summit on 25 June. Bad weather stopped them reaching the top.

Deoban (6852m)

Team: Indian; organisers, Ordinance Factories Mountaineers & Trekkers; leader, Samrat Basu. The nine-member team approached Deoban, in the Amrit Ganga valley, in the post monsoon season. They established base camp at Eri Udiyar on the right bank of Amrit Ganga. Camp 3 was established on Upper Bidhan glacier and summit camp at 6320m. Ascending via the north-west ridge and finally via the west ridge, the leader along with Ashim Ghosh, Tapas Dey, Prosenjit Bagchi and four high-altitude

supporters reached the summit on 28 August.

Mukut Parvat (7242m)

Team: French; leader, Lionel Albrieux. The eight-member team approached this high mountain from Ghastoli. After entering Khati nala they reached the Pachhimi (West) Kamet glacier, established base camp at 4800m, ABC at 5300m and the summit camp at 6500m on the south ridge. Climbing alpine style, Albrieux with Damien Cabane, Sebastien Giacobbi, Didier Jourdain, Emmanuel Pellissier, Marion Poitevin and Sebastien Bohin reached the summit on 2 October at 11am. Mukut Parvat was first climbed by a New Zealand expedition in 1951, but from the Dakhhini Chamrao glacier and NW ridge. They had tried the west Kamet glacier approach but found it too challenging. Edmund Hillary was a member of the team and the climb was one of the reasons he was selected for the 1953 Everest expedition.

Ronti (6063m) Team: Indian; organisers, The Natures' Foundation; leader: Debabrata Dutta. This seven-member team approached from Wan following the route through Ranak Dhar – Gairuli Patal – Ali Bugial – Baidani Bugial – Pathar Nachuni – Kailubinayak – Baguabasa – Huniathar – Rupkund – Giunargali col to base camp at Silasamudra. They established Camp 1 at Dodang and then crossed Bara Homkund. On 29 August they reached the Ronti Saddle and finally the summit at 1.30pm.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Fluted Peak (6159m), Losar valley, Spiti

Team: Indian; organisers, Jadavpur University Mountaineering and Hiking Club; leader, Atanu Krishna Pathak. The team of eight members approached from the Losar nala and established two high camps. On 27 June they reached to beneath a cornice at 5800m and could not proceed.

Indrasan (6221m)

Team: Indian; organisers, Tarit Memorial Mountaineering & Trekking Association; leader, Partha Majumder. A seven-member team attempted this attractive mountain near Manali in June. After establishing Camp 1 atop Duhangan col (5100m) the team had to return as bad weather and excessive snowfall stopped the attempt at 5300m on 12 June.

Menthosa (6443m)

Team: Indian; organisers, BEAS Sodepur; leader, Amiya Sarkar. The seven-member team followed the Urgus nala and established two high camps. From their top camp (5850m), on 30 July they attempted on the summit but a big crevasse at around 6005m could not be crossed and they retreated.

Papsura (6451m)

Team: Indian; organisers, Bhadrakali Padatik; leader, Prosenjit Mukherjee. This eight-member team from West Bengal established base camp at 4500m on the Tos glacier. They put in four high camps with a summit camp at 5850m. From here they reached 6100m on the NW face. Bad weather and lots of snow prevented them from continuing. An attempt on nearby

Devachen also failed for the same reason. On 8 June, Arun Sen, Dipankar Ghosh, Rajib Bhattacharya, Soma Paul, Jyotilal Soren, Santosh Singh and Subrata Das reached the top of an unnamed peak (approx. 6000m) via the north ridge. This peak was located west of their Papsura summit camp.

Rubal Kang (6187m)

Team: Indian; organisers, Kolkata Trekkers Youth; leader, Ashim Kumar Ghosh Chowdhury.

This peak is located in the West Dibibokri glacier, and was attempted by an eight-member team from West Bengal. They established two high camps on the mountain. From the top camp at 5836m, Kakali Majumdar and Mohar Singh Thakur reached the summit on 27 August.

Shiva (6142m)

Team: Indian; organisers, Climbers' Circle; leader, Tapan Kumar Mukhopadhyay. Shiva is located in the Pangi valley of Chamba district. From Cherry village the team of nine members followed the right bank of the Garotu nala and reached base camp on 27 July. They established Camp 1 (4800m) on the SW ridge on an icy patch, Camp 2 (5400m) on the broken west ridge and summit camp (5800m) again on the NW ridge. On 7 August, after crossing an icy hump, the leader with Sushanta Mandal, Laxman Singh Rana and Kendru Singh Rana reached the true summit.

Unnamed Peak (6184m) near Gangstang

Team: British; leader, Jonathan Preston. The 11-member British team began walking from Darcha and after passing through Palamo and Doll established base camp at 4284m. ABC was at 5008m and Camp 1 at 5606m. Two members suffered AMS and were brought down by the liaison officer and high-altitude supporters. Other members continued the attempt. From summit camp, they climbed the S face and on 5 October the leader with Robin Thomas, David Bingham and Benjamin Fry reached the summit. This was the first ascent of this peak located at 32° 49' 25" N, 76° 58' 91" E. They have proposed to name the peak 'Sarasvati'. Their GPS showed the summit to be at 6165m.

Unnamed Peak (6060m) near Karcha Parvat

Team: Japanese; organisers, Tokai Section of Japanese Alpine Club; leader, Tsuneo Suzuki. This three-member Japanese team followed the Karcha nala and set up base camp at 4420m. Camp 1 (4700m) and Camp 2 (5200m) were established and on 18 July at 2.50pm, Ritsuyu Matsubara with three high-altitude supporters reached the summit via the NW face. They proposed the peak name 'Lower Karcha Parvat'.

EASTERN KARAKORAM AND LADAKH

Saser Kangri II (7518m)

Team: Indian American; leaders, Motup Goba and Mark Richey. This joint Indo-American-British expedition included Indians Chewang Motup (co-leader), Ang Tashi, Konchok Tinles, Dahn Singh and Tsering Sherpa; Americans Mark Richey (co-leader), Steve Swenson, and Mark Wilford; and British climber Jim Lowther. The goal was to climb the east summit of

177. South face of the unclimbed Saser Kangri II Main (7518m) showing the 2009 route from its base at 6000m to the high point at 6800m, with the three bivvi sites marked. The intended continuation, which the team consider safe and feasible, follows the upward rightward sloping break in the face to linked icefields at the top. The Main summit is the left hand of the two prominent points on the summit ridge. (Jim Lowther)



Saser Kangri II. The west summit was climbed by an Indo Japanese expedition in 1984. According to the team's maps and information, the east summit is higher and therefore should be referred to as Saser Kangri Main, which would make it the second highest unclimbed peak in the world. Mark Richey reports:

'The expedition left the Nubra valley (3050m) near the village of Tigur on 7 August. Two days were spent hiking up the Chameshan Lungpa valley to the snout of the Sakang Lungpa glacier. Base camp was established in a side valley on 11 August above and SE of the Sakang Lungpa glacier at 5180m. To reach our intended objective of the East (Main) Summit of Saser Kangri II, we needed to cross over onto the South Shukpa Kungchang glacier which was the next valley east of our base camp. We made acclimatisation and reconnaissance trips up the unnamed glacier behind base camp on 12-13 August and established a camp on an unnamed pass above the South Shukpa Kungchang glacier at approximately 6000m. We dropped onto the South Shukpa Kungchang glacier on 14 August to explore the route to the base of the south face of Saser Kangri II. We returned to base camp on 16 August in deteriorating weather and waited

there until 24 August when the weather improved enough to go back onto the South Shukpa Kunchang glacier. We spent two nights camped high on the glacier at 6500m to acclimatise and then returned to base camp.

After a period of rest in bad weather, on 6 September we climbed back to the pass in cold and windy conditions. We decided to use the short weather window to go up on the route for a day and reconnoitre the route and assess snow conditions. On 7 September we made an advanced base camp below the face and on 8 September we climbed up the south face to approximately 6700m before rappelling back down. The bottom of the south face is at about 6000m and the map shows the east summit at 7513m. The face is all hard water ice and no snow so the lower slopes were all technical ice climbing. The rock on SKII is high quality orange granite. It is a safe route with nothing above you to fall on you, provided you stay along the far right side of the couloir as we did.

Bad weather kept us from attempting the peak again until 19 September when we started up the face with the intent of going for the summit. We reached a good bivouac site early in the day at 6700m and spent the night there since there did not appear to be any good bivouac sites until a ledge system at 7000m. On 20 September we climbed up steep ice slopes in the main gully system to where we veered to the right into some mixed climbing that would take us onto the major ledge system halfway up the face. We had a poor bivouac that night on small ledges chopped out of the ice and we were not able to erect the tents. On 21 September we made progress onto the large ledge system and established a better bivouac by spending nearly 4 hours chopping a ledge out of the ice. That night it snowed and due to the poor, cold and windy weather we decided to descend on 22 September. Climbing this high in late September was very cold. We had nighttime temperatures of -13 to -17 C and highs during the day if we had sun of -5 to -9 C. We left base camp on 25 September and arrived at the road in the Nubra valley that same day.'

Plateau Peak (7287m)

Team: Indian – American – British; organisers, The Himalayan Club; leaders, Divyesh Muni and Marlin Geist. This five member Indian-American team approached this unclimbed mountain from the Sakang valley. No expedition was reported to have entered this valley since a 1985 Indian-Japanese team to Saser Kangri II. The team faced many difficulties in route finding and ferrying loads to base camp near the snout of Sakang glacier at 4800m. ABC was at 5400m on the moraines of the glacier and Camp 1 at 5760m at the base of the wall leading to the col between Plateau Peak and Saser Kangri III. The team started fixing ropes on the wall in turns and reached around 6600m on 15 August. On the same day both leaders with Rajesh Gadgil and Sudeep Barve reached the Sakang col (6100m) overlooking North Shukpa Kungchang glacier. The weather turned bad, with heavy snow and the team decided to retreat due to threat of avalanches.

On 26 August, Divyesh Muni with Rajesh Gadgil, Samgyal Sherpa and Mingma Sherpa completed a first ascent of **Tsumzong Kangri (6010m)** in



178. The first (and only) decent bivvi site at around 6700m on the 2009 attempt on the south face of Saser Kangri II Main (7518m). (Mark Richey)

alpine style. The peak is located near the junction of the Sakang glacier with its subsidiary glacier near its snout. One high camp was established and from there the climbers followed first the north ridge and then the west ridge to the summit.