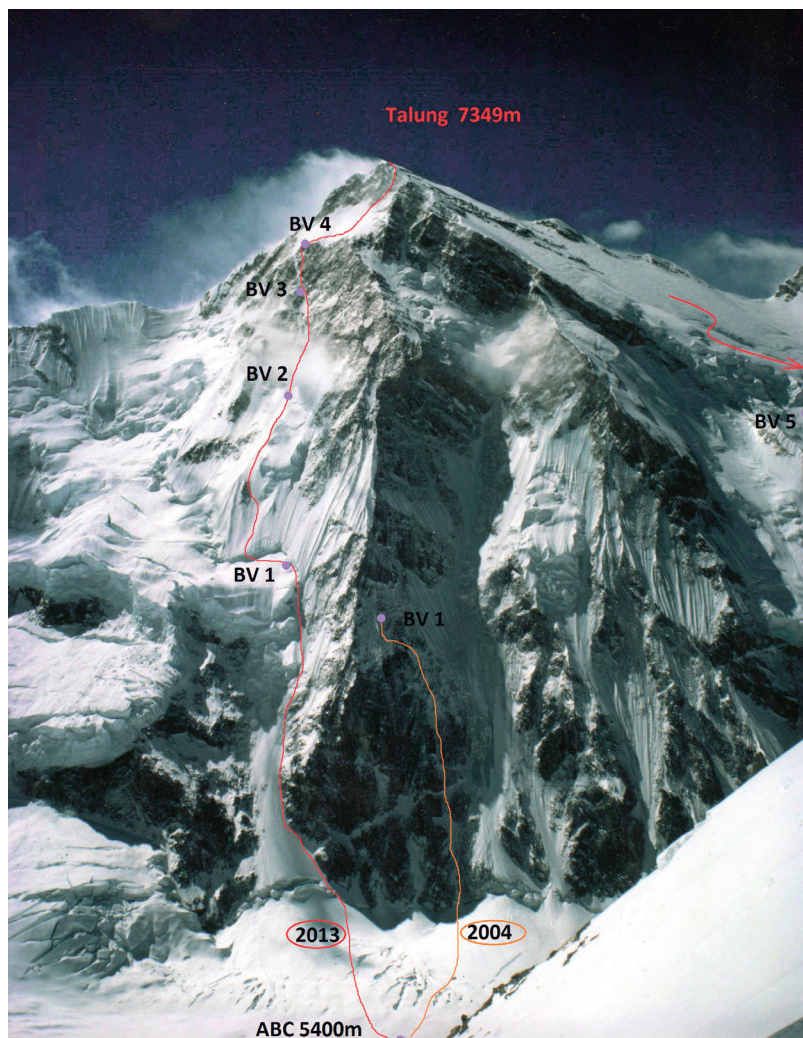


IAN WALL
Nepal 2015-16



The new Ukrainian route *Daddy Magnum Force* (2350m, ED2, M6, AI6, A3) on the north-west pillar of Talung (7348m). (Nikita Balabanov)

The earthquakes that struck Nepal in the spring of 2015 continue to have a devastating impact on ordinary people and the region's infrastructure. Because of extensive damage to the border crossing areas, China closed the Tibet Himalaya and expeditions scheduled for Shishapangma, and the north sides of Cho Oyu and Everest had to relocate; many went to Mansalu. Then in September 2015, India closed its joint border with Nepal, allegedly due to hostilities in the Terai region of Nepal over the nation's new constitution. Many people publically expressed the view that India was annoyed about Nepal's apparent turn from a Hindu state to a secular one. The border closures further slowed Nepal's recovery from the earthquakes.

Autumn 2015

Foreign visitors likely noticed little difference to life in Kathmandu other than fewer vehicles being on the road. India's blockade manifested itself in particular in Kathmandu: there was no fuel, no medicines or raw materials and no cooking gas since Nepal gets 95% of these requirements from India. As might be expected, a thriving black market developed driving prices up. Domestic flight costs increased as there was limited aviation fuel and many non-tourist flights were cancelled, although that happens during more normal periods too.

Some expeditions did succeed during the autumn 2015 season. The first ascent of **Gave Ding** (6571m), by Mick Fowler and Paul Ramsden, in far north-western Nepal via its difficult north face was covered in *AJ* 2016. This difficult ED+ route took five days up and another two days for the descent. Hansjörg Auer, Alexander Blümel and Gerhard Fiegl climbed **Nilgiri South** (6839m) via the south face between 22 and 26 October. The route (1500m, M5, 90°) follows the previously unclimbed Nilgiri Spire to the right side of the south face, then the ridge to the summit. This was only the second ascent of the mountain since the Japanese made the first ascent in 1978. The technically difficult and unclimbed south-west ridge was followed in descent, but tragically Gerry Fiegl fell and died. The climb required three bivouacs for the ascent and one in descent.

Thulagi Chuli (7059m), Mansari Himal, west Nepal received a first ascent via the west face by the Russian team of Aleksander Gukov, Ivan Djedev, Valeriy Shamalo and Ruslan Kirichenko. They set out from ABC at 5,759m on 24 September and reached the summit on 25 September, returning to base camp on 27 September. A snow cave bivy was used in ascent and descent. The team called the route *Happy Birthday* (1850m, TD+, VI (5c), AI4+, M4).

Justin Griffin and Skiy DeTray (USA) climbed **Tawoche** (6541m) in the Khumbu via the north buttress in November 2015 over five days. The climbers compared the route to the north face of Mt Hunter in Alaska with the added difficulties of altitude. Tawoche, also spelled Taboche, offers extreme alpine climbing on steep ice and steep granite; the west face is 1,524m high and the American route had consistent pitches of M5 and one very exposed pitch of AI5, M5R at 6,100m. The top of the buttress was reached on 14



What's in a name? Nepal Peak (7177m) in the Kangchenjunga region, first climbed by Erwin Schneider in 1930. (Ian Wall)

November but the true summit lay several hours off. The descent route was via the east face gully. Sadly, virtually at the foot of difficulties, Justin Griffin lost his footing on steep but technically easy ice and was killed.

The south face of **Ama Dablam** (6812m) received its first alpine-style ascent via the *Lagunak Ridge* (1200m, TD+, F5, AI5, M4, 90°) from French guides and aspirant guides Fleur Fouque, Sébastien Rougegré, Fanny Schmutz, Damien Tomasi. Between 22 and 25 October the climbers succeeded on the mixed route with pitches of F5 on good quality rock. At the steep barrier the climbers reported pitches of M4, the ice was grade V with a long 50° slope to the summit. Overall, Ama Dablam was attempted by seven expeditions; all other teams climbed via the south-west ridge and of these five succeeded.

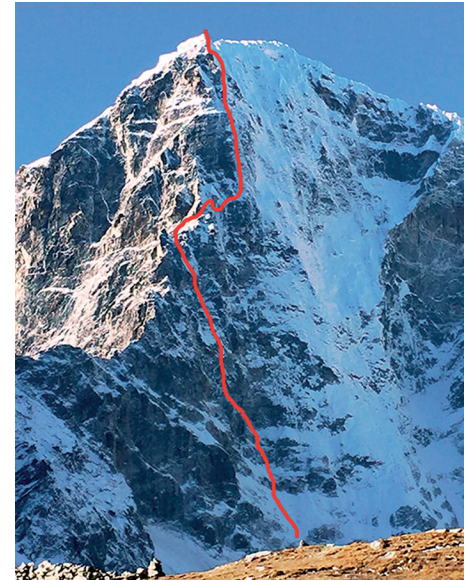
In the Kangchenjunga region, the Ukrainian climbers Nikita Balabanov and Mikhail Formin climbed the much-eyed north-north-west pillar of **Talung** (7348m) between 18 and 25 October 2015, calling their route *Daddy Magnum Force* (2350m, ED2, M6, AI6, A3). It is reported as being long and very steep and similar to winter routes in Chamonix, but with the additional problems incurred with heavy sacks and altitude. The route mainly consisted of hard mixed climbing on thin ice, and the descent route was via the west side of the mountain. The technical difficulties began at 5,600m at the bergschrund followed by pitches of M6 and A3; the summit was reached on 23 October after five bivys with another on the descent at 6,700m. Balabanov and Formin had previously made the first ascent of Langshisa Ri's north-west spur in 2014.

On 17 October, Julien Dusserre and Mathieu Détrie (France) made the first ascent of the north-east face (700m, TD+, WI5-) of **Dzasamptse** (6293m). On 18 October Pierre Labbre and Mathieu Maynadier (France) summited via the same route. This was not the initial objective for the expedition, however. Several days of bad weather and the condition of their original objective forced the team to look at other possible lines in the Nangpai Gosum massif. The climbers likened their route to that of the north face of Les Droites.

Matej Mučič and Luka Stražar (Slovenia) climbed **Chugimago** (6258m) in Rolwaling. Starting on 15 October from ABC they climbed a direct line in the centre of the west face of, arriving on the summit at 8am the following morning. They took a line to the right of the *Hennessey-Kastelic*, reaching the summit ridge a very short distance north of the highest point. The pair then climbed down the south-west ridge a short distance before descending the west face. Their route (800m, WI4, M5) was thought to be about the same overall difficulty. **Chhopa Bamare** (6109m) was attempted by a French team via the south-east ridge but bad conditions caused the party to retreat before the summit.

Also in Rolwaling, Mingma Gyalje climbed the west face of **Chobutse** (6686m) in October 2015. The 1,200m route starts in the valley under Chobutse before ascending the west ridge. Before the ridge steepens Mingma descended 60m to the foot of the snow face and from here the route was on steep snow. Mingma climbed solo and after being stranded for two days and nights on the summit without food or shelter he was evacuated by helicopter. As part of the same expedition Tashi Sherpa, Dawa Gyalie and Nima Tenji Sherpa climbed three new routes up previously unclimbed mountains in the same area: **Thakar-Go East** (6152m); **Langdak** (6220m); and **Raungsiyar** (6224m). All of the ascents mentioned were undertaken as private expeditions and are breakthrough ascents for the Sherpa of Nepal. Mingma Gyalje, Tashi Sherpa, Dawa Gyalie and Nima Tenji Sherpa were all on a Nepal Mountain Guide training course.

A French team attempted the east ridge of **Annapurna** (8091m) but experienced bad snow and avalanche conditions. A Japanese expedition climbed the north-west ridge of **Annapurna IV** (7525m) while another French team attempted the east ridge of **Annapurna South** (7219m) but again experi-



The line of the American route on the north buttress of Taboche (6541m), which ended in tragedy. (Skiy DeTray)

enced bad snow and avalanche conditions. **Baruntse** (7152m) received attention from three expeditions all attempting the south-east ridge; it is believed that only one team achieved success on the main peak whilst the others struggled with storms and high winds.

Among the more regularly visited peaks, **Everest** (8848m) was attempted by a Japanese team via the South Col but was beaten by high winds and storms. **Himlung Himal** (7126m) was climbed via the west ridge by a combined Swiss, Austrian, German and Italian team, and then by a second expedition made up of French, Italian, Belgian and Swiss members. An Anglo-American expedition attempted **Makalu** (8468m) but was defeated by bad weather and snow conditions. **Manaslu** (8163m) was successfully climbed by 19 expeditions, all via the north-east face route. **Chamlang** (7319m) was climbed via the south-west ridge by a Spanish team. **Nuptse** (7855m) was attempted by two expeditions, one of Swiss and USA members while the other was an all-French expedition. Both teams were attempting the 1961 route on the south face but both experienced less than favourable conditions.

Among the lesser known peaks that received attention in the autumn season of 2015 were **Aichyn Peak** (6055m) in west Nepal. Yuki Senda, Shintaro Saito, Kaya Ko, Yuto Tamaki and Yuma Uno, members of the Doshisha University Alpine Club in Japan, made the first ascent via the south-west ridge on 3 September. A Spanish expedition reached **Ombigaichen** (6340m) planning to climb the south-west face but conditions were so bad they did not attempt to climb. **Jabou Ri** (6666m) received its first ascent from the American pair Eric Larsen and Ryan Waters, via the north-east face and north ridge, which they described as being 'not technical and we simply kicked our way up step after step.' The west ridge of **Kangchung Shar** (6103m) west ridge by a UK expedition but poor conditions prevented any major progress.

The high-profile duo of Conrad Anker and the Austrian David Lama, accompanied to base camp by two photographers Martin Hanslmayr and Menk Rufibach, attempted the west ridge of **Lunag Ri** (6895m), currently the highest unclimbed peak in Nepal. After climbing a steep rock wall to gain the north-west ridge, they started their summit attempt before dawn on 13 November. After spending 12 hours climbing a very exposed ridge the pair realised that the 300m headwall that stood between them and the summit would prove too risky in -25°C and strong winds, especially with no bivy equipment or sleeping bags. The expedition was abandoned but the pair was determined to return, which they did in the autumn of 2016. Anker suffered a heart attack and was evacuated home to Montana. A Romanian expedition attempted **Tsartse Peak** (6343m), north of Dhaulagiri, via the south-east ridge but bad weather and a high risk of avalanche made progress too dangerous.

Spring 2016

Over the last three years there have been various well-publicised events on **Everest** that shocked not only the mountaineering world but also Nepal and the rest of the world: the fight in 2013 between Sherpas and climbers, the avalanche in 2014 that killed 16 high-altitude workers and then the earthquake in 2015. Initially the number of expeditions requesting permits for Everest in 2016 was low. At the last minute, the Department of Tourism honoured their pledge to accept those expeditions who had permits for the 2015 season but had been cancelled due to the earthquake, announcing these would be accepted for both 2016 and 2017 seasons. At the same time it was announced that permits issued in 2014 that were not used due to the avalanche would be honoured through to 2019.

Various public sector organisations offer incentives for their members who summit Everest; the Indian armed services acknowledge an Everest summit with instant promotion, which includes a wage and pension increase. The stakes are high and at the end of the Everest 2016 season a story emerged that two police officers from the Pune police force used allegedly doctored photographs to prove to Nepal's Department of Tourism as proof of their success. The fraud was recognised by other expedition members who verified that the husband and wife team had been wearing red and black down suits throughout the expedition. In the summit photos they appear to be wearing yellow and black suits and their boots had also changed. A complaint was filed at Maharashtra police commissioner's office. Ultimately the Nepali authorities recommended a 10-year ban on Dinesh Chandrakant Rathod and his wife Tarkeshwari Chandrakant Bhelerao from climbing in Nepal and the cancellation of their summit certificates.

This scandal prompted an investigation into the role of liaison officers (LOs) in the expedition industry. LOs are allocated to all expeditions attempting mountains over 6,500m, with a remit to assist the expedition and resolve local issues, and provide evidence of summit bids and successes. Further, according to tourism regulations, they must stay at base camp for the duration of the expedition. On Everest they get nearly \$3,000 for this task. During the spring 2016 Everest season nearly 50% of liaison officers, representing 33 teams, never reached Everest Base Camp (EBC) to carry out their duties. The majority of LOs who trekked to EBC vanished within minutes after taking a few 'selfies'.

Weather conditions also had an impact on some expeditions in the spring 2016 season. Two German nationals along with their 18 Nepali staff were stranded in the Saribung Himal following a snowstorm on 13 May, and had to be rescued using helicopters and long-line techniques. Everest witnessed the death of five climbers including three from India and one from Australia, all above higher camps. Over the last few days of May, areas of the Himalaya experienced very unsettled weather with strong winds and rapidly dropping temperatures.

The Peak League Table: Spring 2016			
Region	Mountain	Expeditions	Foreign members
Khumbu	Everest (8848m)	34	289
	Lhotse (8516m)	11	78
	Nuptse (7855m)	8	45
	Ama Dablam (6814)	3	36
Western	Saribung (6346m)	6	38
	Annapurna I (8091m)	5	26
	Annapurna III (7555m)	1	3
	Annapurna IV (7525m)	1	4
	Dhaulagiri I (8167m)	4	40
	Manaslu (8163m)	3	29
	Makalu (8463m)	5	51
	Tukuche Peak (6920m)	4	39
	Thapa Peak (6012m)	4	36
	Chamlang (7319m)	2	4
	Tilicho Peak (7134m)	1	2
	Thorong Peak (6144m)	1	1
	Himlung Himal (7126m)	1	8
	Khan Tari (6100m)	1	2

On Everest, 289 climbers from 29 foreign countries in 34 expeditions attempted to summit. By the end of the season a total of 456 mountaineers of whom 199 were foreign had succeeded. On 19 May alone 209 expedition members reached the summit. Just across the valley **Lhotse** (8516m) hosted 11 expeditions with a total of 78 members; **Nuptse** (7855m) had eight expeditions with a total of 45 members and one death. The Italian team of Hervé Barmasse and Daniele Bernasconi planned to attempt the south face in true alpine style but did not get to base of the route due to poor conditions. **Ama Dablam** (6812m) received the attention of three expeditions with a total of 36 members.

In the western district, the 'new' peak of **Saribung** (6346m) is proving a draw for commercial expeditions. The fabled south-east ridge of **Annapurna III** (7555m) was attempted again, this time by David Lama, Hansjörg Auer and Alexander Blümel from Austria. They reached a similar altitude to the British team from 1981. Of the four expeditions on **Dhaulagiri I** (8167m), the 2016 Medical Research Expedition from the UK led by AC member Adrian Mellor climbed **Tukuche West** before continuing to summit Dhaulagiri I in alpine style via the north-east ridge on 20 April 2016. The expedition carried out several ground-breaking medical experiments. On **Chamlang** (7319m), the two expeditions trying the mountain via the north ridge included Andy Houseman and Jon Griffith and the Italians Marco Farina and François Cazzanelli. Both teams were beaten by the weather. **Khan Tari** (6100m) was summited by Spaniards Ángel Salamanca and Javi San Miguel, with technical sections of M6.

Danfe Sail (6103m) is situated in Dolpo on the northernmost point of the border with Tibet providing a strenuous 16-day walk to base camp. An expedition from UK, Australia and Nepal comprising Ian Wall, Alasdair Lawrence, Bill Crozier, Alex Cramb, Michael Salmon, Chirring Bhotia and Wongchhu Sherpa were beaten by a combination of strong winds, poor conditions and ultimately a lack of time. Attempts were made on **Chumbu** (6859m) and **Om Tso Go** (6332m). Brian Jackson was prevented from reaching the summit by a combination of weather and a dangerous and complicated glacier. Attempts were also made on **Dhechyan Khang** (6019m) and **Gorakh Khang** (6254m).

Despite the fact the mountains were fairly busy it seems that in the 2016 spring season trekkers stayed away, with a reported decrease of 40% from the previous year, hurting hotels, restaurants and taxis in Kathmandu, as well as the teahouses, guides and porters throughout the trekking areas of Nepal. Trekking brings more money to Nepal than climbing, so the backlash from the bad publicity centred on the earthquake and Indian embargo did have a major impact.

Expeditions had problems of a different kind. During the first week of July local people stopped two foreign mountaineers from entering Upper Mustang. The expedition to **Arniko Chuli** (6039m) was told they could not progress through Upper Mustang during the 'growing season' because this might precipitate bad omens, from hailstorms to storms. Despite paying all the taxes and obtaining the required permissions for mountaineering, local people elected to impose the ban on foreigners entering the area from the Tiji festival in April until September. Upper Mustang residents can fine foreigners who breach this law. After receiving a complaint from the climbers, the Department of Tourism's director Laxman Sharma told expedition members that the department would look into the case.

After years of denying requests from international guides and local mountain workers, in 2016 Nepal's Department of Tourism finally granted permission for a helicopter to transport rope-fixing gear from Everest Base Camp to camp one on Everest's South Col route, bypassing the treacherous Khumbu Icefall and thereby sparing mountain workers some of the exposure. On 23 April, a helicopter made six trips to camp one (6035m) in the Western Cwm to deliver ropes, anchors, and oxygen for Nepali workers: a total of roughly 2,870lb of equipment: roughly 84 loads out of a thousand or more. It is estimated loads could be further cut by 50% or more via a mix of helicopters, storing gear at camp two and restricting all the luxuries and other clutter from camp two like carpeting, chairs, tables, huge kitchens and kitchen staff, and solar panels.

On 19 July 2016 it was reported that the Department of Tourism was to propose a set of new rules for climbing in Nepal. These will include a ban on solo ascents of 'climbing' peaks, a restriction on people who are completely blind, double amputees, and climbers over 75 years of age; the younger age limit is already set at 16 years. It is also proposed that people attempting to scale Everest should be assigned at least one mountain guide,

while a guide should accompany two climbers on other peaks. The criteria for being issued with an Everest permit is that a climber should have previously climbed a 7,000m peak.

Autumn 2016

Much has been written over the last decade or so about the hundreds of people attempting Everest on commercial expeditions each season. However, the low number of expeditions to other Nepali 8,000m peaks is causing Nepali officials to ask why there isn't so much interest in the other big mountains. The answer must rest in a combination of time commitments and the high cost of permits, as well as the draw of the world's highest mountain.

With the internet and access to other information sources, more mountaineers are focusing on lower-altitude mountains with greater technical difficulty that are less expensive and often with fairly straightforward access. The internet also provides those with the desire for self-promotion the opportunity to stand out from the rest by proclaiming a first ascent on a technically hard route.

The Nepali authorities, mainly with the aim of keeping the coffers full, opened 104 'new' peaks for mountaineering in 2014. However, there were several major problems with this. Although Nepal has been open for climbing since the 1950s the peak permit system only really came into existence in the mid 1970s. When that happened there was no vigorous monitoring of what had been attempted or what had been climbed: record keeping was virtually non-existent. Without a transparent and robust monitoring system it was difficult to keep track, not only of financial transactions but also of which mountains had been climbed and which had not.

In more recent times mountains have been re-named from local or traditional names to something, in the eyes of the authorities, to reflect modern times or honour personalities: Baden-Powell Peak, Nepal Peak, Pasang Lhamu Chuli, Tenzing Peak, Hillary Peak, Peak Hawley – and so on. With the lack of robust systems it is likely that in 2014 officials did not have either the ability or inclination to research all 'newly' opened peaks to find out what these peaks are actually called and whether they had been climbed. Ascents were not always recorded by the first waves of mountaineers in pre-permit times. Other peaks have been climbed 'illegally', either because of lack of information or on 'the spur of the moment'. In some cases people were not prepared to abide by Nepali law to pay the fees, either as a matter of principle or because of their own economic situation.

The resulting confusion of newly opened peaks created a media frenzy in the autumn season of 2016 compounded by Nepal's push to open up remote areas with the inducement of waiving peak fees: climbers were still required to get permission however. During the autumn of 2016 Sean Burch (USA) fell foul of this situation when he claimed to have climbed 31 closed peaks in 21 days in the Humla region as part of his traverse of the Nepal Himalaya. His claims not only raised eyebrows within the mountaineering community but also within the Department of Tourism, which was stated that Burch



The Spanish climber Oriol Baro high on Numbur (6958m). The expedition was unapologetic in not paying for permits.

did not have the appropriate permission to attempt any of these mountains which were not deemed by the Nepali authorities open for climbing. Burch stated that as the peaks were all below 6,500m he did not need permission from a higher authority but had obtained what he considered the relevant permission from local authorities. According to the Nepal Tourism Act permits should still have been obtained to climb mountains that were normally closed to mountaineering activities (regardless of height) even if fees were not due.

Similarly three Spanish climbers made successful (but illegal) ascents of **Karyolung** (6530m) and **Numbur** (6958m) in the Rolwaling without obtaining permission from the Department of Tourism. Santi Padros, Oriol Baro and Roger Cararach claimed the new routes in the media admitting that they did not get official permission and that they climbed independently and without Nepali support. Again the Department of Tourism issued a statement: 'It is illegal to climb mountains in Nepal without obtaining Government permission ... according to Nepal's mountaineering regulations a three member expedition to any mountain below 7,000m must obtain a permit from the Department by paying the Government's royalty of \$700 per mountain along with a garbage deposit, the expeditions must have the service of a liaison officer and employ high-altitude workers to support climb-

ing activities.' On **Karyolung** the Spainards named the new route *Pilar Dudh Khunda* (1400m, 6a, AI4, M4) and on **Numbur**, *The Nepal Sun* (1000m, V, M4). The Department of Tourism has threatened legal action against the above-mentioned climbers.

So as a potential mountaineer in Nepal, how do you cover the bases? The Himalayan Database would be the best place to start, and most of the Himalayan and Alpine clubs have good records of Himalayan ascents. It doesn't help that many mountain names also have different spellings. First ascent or not, to save stress in the future always offer information to the Himalayan Database via their website so an accurate record can be kept. Also check thoroughly with the Department of Tourism in Nepal; failure to do so could not only be very expensive but could result in being banned from climbing in Nepal for the foreseeable future, or worse.

'Fake news' seems to be a buzz phrase at the moment and why should Nepal miss out? During autumn 2016 **Manaslu** received a reported 150 ascents but initially only three climbers were given 'summit certificates' (another thorny issue previously mentioned in this year's *Journal*) stating that there was insufficient evidence from the liaison officers of climbers actually reaching the true summit at 8,163m, and consequently the Department of Tourism would withhold the certificates. Clear summit images should be submitted as supporting evidence; it is the responsibility of the liaison officer to verify these facts. Interestingly 90% of the Manaslu liaison officers failed to accompany their expeditions to base camp despite being paid (out of expedition funds) \$2,000 per expedition. Four did arrive at base camp, but according to base camp officials they only stayed a day or two. This is a recurring issue but 2016 was the first time that the Department had responded in such a stringent way, and to the detriment of the climbers. The true Manaslu summit is a fine snow cone and, according to Mingma Sherpa of Seven Summit Treks, one of the largest Nepali operators, the normal window is too short to allow all climbers to stand on the actual summit. In the past it had been agreed that there should be an alternative summit option some five to 10 metres below the actual summit. It was reported in December that certificates would be issued to all getting 'near' to Manaslu's summit! As an aside, Mingma David Sherpa, Tashi Sherpa and Krishna Thapa Magar became the first to complete a ski descent on Manaslu, from 7,500m.

The two Indian police officials, Dinesh Chandrakant Rathod and his wife Tarkeshwari Chandrakant Bhelerao of Maharashtra who falsified their Everest summit claims were investigated by the Punjabi police and having been proven guilty, were dismissed from the force and any enhancements provided by the police at that time had to be returned. The Nepali Government also enforced a ten-year ban on the climbers and imposed a \$4,000 fine on Makalu Travel for aiding and abetting the couple. However, no action was taken against the liaison officer.

In December 2016, Reinhold Messner, interviewed by the *Himalayan Times*, stressed that 'the traditional art of mountaineering should be preserved and promoted as it was a direct exposure to nature'. He went on



When is a summit not a summit? Climbers gathering on a fore-summit of Manaslu to avoid congestion on the real thing.



Masha Gordon on the first ascent of Khangchung Shar (6063m).



The line of the new Austrian route on Gimmigela East (7005m) near Kangchenjunga.



Maya Sherpa, left, who climbed K2 in 2015 along with two other Nepali female climbers, was the only Nepali woman to climb Everest in 2016; she then went on to climb Himlung Himal (7126m) in the Manaslu Himal, the first Nepali woman to do so. Maya is also the first Nepali woman to have climbed Ama Dablam, Baruntse, Pumori and Cho Oyu and the first Nepali climber to summit Khan Tengri in Kyrgyzstan. Maya, along with Dawa Yangzum Sherpa, centre, and Pasang Akita Sherpa, right, are planning an expedition to Kangchenjunga in the autumn of 2017. (Ian Wall)



Left: In October 2016 the French ambassador to Nepal, Yves Carmona, presented the *Légion d'Honneur* to Ang Norbu Sherpa in recognition of his contribution in saving the lives of French tourists during the earthquakes of 2015.

to add that traditional alpinism and tourism were two factors that created a huge division in the Alpine community. He likened the present trend of commercial expeditions to 'climbing indoors' while traditional alpinism is all about 'climbing on the rocks'. Referring to the Everest fraud incident during spring 2016 and the Manaslu autumn 2016 incident, Messner said it was a result of prioritising tourism over alpinism; he went on to reinforce the fact that Nepal needs tourists now more than ever. With regard to recent comments made by the Nepali government on amputees and people with hearing or visual impediments attempting to climb Everest, he stressed that those people had paid thousands of dollars into the Nepali economy to make that happen, and that was tourism not alpinism. His views on the

way 'expeditions' are run in today's world: 'this is tourism and Nepal needs that, the Nepali agents are perfectly capable of running those themselves, now there is no need for the American or British companies to operate such ventures in Nepal.'

A 5.6 tremor on 28 November, rated as an aftershock of the 2015 earthquake, triggered an avalanche on **Ama Dablam**, which killed Lakpa Thundu Sherpa and injured British climber Ciaran Hill.

In October 2016, **Cho Oyu** was climbed twice over two consecutive days but within 24 hours by Australian guide and expedition agency owner Rolfe Oostra, together with his clients. In Rolwaling, **Khang Karpo** (6704m), situated near the source of the Ripimo glacier on the border with Tibet, was climbed by eight mountaineers including three women: Squash Falconer (UK), Alison Levine (US), Kath Staniland (UK) along with Gopla Strestha, Phurba Tenjing Sherpa, Tsering Pemba and Lakpa Nurbu Sherpa, all Nepali guides. In the same valley Mark James Pugliese and Nikolas Ryan Mirhashemi (USA) climbed new technical lines on **Chukyima** (6289m).

In November **Khangchung Shar** (6063m) in the Mahalangur Himal received a first ascent from Ben O'Connor-Croft (UK), Joshua Jarrin (Ecuador), Masha Gordon (UK), Ang Phurba and Pasang (Nepal) via the Khangchung La, situated between Khanchung and Cholo Peak. Although not technically difficult, the rock required careful handling while there were stretches of exposed steep snow slopes.

Austrians Alex Blümel and Hansjörg Auer made the first ascent of the north face of **Gimmigela East** (7005m) a subsidiary summit of **Gimmigela Chuli** (7350m) approximately four kilometres east of Kangchenjunga in November 2016. The team set up base camp just above Pangpemba and acclimatised on Dhromo's south ridge. The route, climbed in alpine style, required two bivys but the 1,200m face of approximately 85° ice was in perfect condition and, according to Auer, presented no serious difficulties although the bivys were exposed.