
HARISH KAPADIA

India 2008

New ascents, high peaks, exploration of new areas and most importantly, challenging climbs by Indian mountaineers – all were part of the 2008 season in the Indian Himalaya. This year will be remembered for some energetic climbs and rather settled weather. In total 65 foreign expeditions climbed in India. Since the Indian Mountaineering Federation opened a liaison office at Leh to collect fees locally, **Stok Kangri** has become their most profitable peak, with 21 official ascents. Counting this with Indian teams and unofficial climbing, this peak will be in the record books for the most climbed peak above 6000m.

Kishtwar area, once a paradise for challenging mountains, was closed due to terrorism in Kashmir. The routes from the valley were too dangerous to approach. A British-Canadian-American team tried to approach Kishtwar-Shivling from the north, crossing Umasi la. But a small incident en route scared porters and they refused to descend into the valley. According to their observation, terrorists were watching them and they do not like any nationalities – the three above or Indians. So Kishtwar will have to wait till things improve. Another show of energy was on **Chong Kumdan II**. This virgin 7000m peak had beaten two expeditions previously, both from the east. The Indian-French team approached from the south over a high pass and finally reached the long summit ridge. After a camp on the high ridge, they traversed to the summit and back in a long day. This was perhaps both the longest approach and longest climb in recent years. There were worthy climbs in **Garhwal** too. Conrad Anker and friends climbed Meru Shark's Fin despite bad weather, Mick Fowler challenged **Vasuki Parbat** by a daring route (see page 3) and the Japanese climbed **Kalanka** by the north face (p64). But the iconic climb was on **Kamet** by a two-member Japanese team (p62). They acclimatized on the 'normal' route and established supplies for their return. Then in one push they climbed the steep south-east face to the summit and returned by the normal route. With most of the climbing above 7000m, this expedition too can enter the fitness race with those above.

With 57 expeditions during the year, Indian teams were not too far behind in terms of excellence in climbs. **Thalay Sagar**, up to now the pre-



195. South-east face of Nya Kangri, an unclimbed peak in Arganglas valley, East Karakoram. (*Divyesh Muni*)

serve of strong foreign teams, received Indian climbers for the first time. A small team from Bengal reached the summit. Similarly, **Tirsuli West** was climbed for the second time by an Indian expedition. This high peak in earlier years had defeated several strong teams. Maiktoli south face, Sri-kanta and Manirang were other high peaks climbed by the Indian teams. This is a very welcome sign and it is hoped that a new breed of young mountaineers in future will explore climbing without fixed ropes and support by Sherpas, as was done this year.

Others either climbed in new areas or opened new valleys for the future. Irish teams explored Gramang Bar in Kinnaur and climbed in the Debsa valley of Spiti. Two Indian teams took on challenges of Nya Kangri and Plateau Peak. Both are challenging peaks in the Eastern Karakoram that will take strong teams to tackle them in future. On the historic trail was a British team exploring to reach the Zemu Gap and planning for its first crossing. Their route from high Guicha la to the Talung valley was not without difficulties. Ahead lay the icefall, and approaching bad weather stopped their movements. Hopefully some team will return here to reach the Zemu Gap, a first after H W Tilman.

This list below covers important expeditions to the Indian Himalaya in 2008.

UTTARAKHAND: KUMAUN HIMALAYA

Changabang (6866m)

Team: Czech Republic. Leader: Michal Bernard

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

Kalanka (6931m)

Team: Japanese. Leader: Fumitaka Ichimura

Ichimura with Yusuke Sato and Kazuki Amano completed a new route on Kalanka's N face. After enduring a short spell of bad weather, they started from base camp on 14 September. They had to stay three nights at 6600m on the face due to more bad weather and finally reached the summit on 22 September, returning to base camp on the 24th. They had permission to climb Changabang (6866m) also, but abandoned it, as Kalanka had left them exhausted. (Account page 64)

Tirsuli West (7035m)

Team: Indian Mountaineering Foundation. Leader: Gautam Dutta

The team of 12 climbers with some high altitude supporters followed the route of the first ascent (by a team from Nehru Institute of Mountaineering in 2001). They fixed the entire route from base camp till near the summit, establishing four camps, the highest (Camp 4) at 6630m. On 12 June, Amresh Kumar Jha, Debraj Dutta, Goutam Saha, K Wallambok

Lyngdoh, Mohan Lal, Subrata Chakraborty and three high altitude supporters Phurba, Tashi and Dorjee Sherpa reached the summit. It was the second ascent of the mountain, which had been attempted several times earlier.

Maiktoli (6803m)

Organisers: Indian Mountaineering Foundation. Leader: Col Vijay Singh, VSM

As Maiktoli lies on the southern rim of the Nanda Devi sanctuary, it can be attempted only from outside the sanctuary walls, i.e. the S face. A Japanese team first climbed this route in 1977. On the same route in 1992 four climbers from an Indian expedition from Almora, Uttarakhand, died in a fall from the ridge. The Almora team again attempted the route in 1995 without success. The IMF team of nine climbers followed the same route finding it very steep and fixing 880m of rope. In bad weather, they reached 6200m on 10 September. Knowing the history of the deaths on the S face, the leader wisely called off the expedition.

GARHWAL HIMALAYA: GANGOTRI AREA

Thalay Sagar (6904m)

Team: Indian. Leader: Basanta Singha Roy.

Comprising nine members with four Sherpas from Darjeeling, this team proceeded from Gangotri, and established base camp at Kedar tal. From here, they followed the W ridge and established Camp 3 (summit camp) at 6400m, fixing ropes en route. The summit camp was the junction of the snowy W ridge, which connects the Jogin group of peaks and the vertical rock wall of Thalay Sagar. On 29 August they fixed ropes for 550m to almost within 100m of the summit. After sitting out snowfall on the 31st they set out at 4am on 1 September, finishing up 100m of steep snow to reach the summit at about 8am. This was the first ascent of Thalay Sagar by an Indian team. Summiteers were Basanta Singha Roy and Sherpas Pasang, Pemba and Phurba Gyalgen.

Meru (6660m)

Team: Korean. Leader: Se Joon Kim

The Korean team of three climbers climbed a new direct route on the N face of Meru. The leader with Wang Jun Ho and Kim Tae Mam reached the summit late on 13 July.

Meru Central (6550m)

Team: American. Leader: Conrad Anker.

Attempting the peak in September 2008 via the 400m prow of the Shark's Fin, Anker, Jimmy Chin and Renan Ozturk reached the summit ridge after 19 days only to be thwarted 100m from the summit by an overhanging gendarme and exhaustion.

Shivling (6184m)

(1) Team: Swiss. Leader: Nellen Michael

All three climbers of this Swiss team successfully reached the summit by the traditional W ridge. On 28 May the leader with Simon Schydrig and Wellig Diego climbed to the top at 5pm.

(2) Team: Korean. Leader: Boun Hyun Park

The five-strong team climbed the W ridge. The leader with Young Jik Yoo and Seon Tae Jang reached the summit on 31 May, three days after the Swiss expedition. The Koreans also attempted Meru but could not climb beyond 5900m due to heavy snow.

(3) Team: Iceland. Leader: Arnar Emilsson

The team of five climbers attempted the W ridge but was unlucky with the weather. They reached Camp 3 (6000m) after fixing ropes all the way from Camp 2. There was heavy snowfall and they could not climb the overhanging route ahead. There were avalanches on both sides of the route so they backed out. Despite returning in bad weather, they cleared all their fixed ropes.

Sudarshan Parbat (6507m)

Team: Japanese. Leader: Toshio Yamagiwa

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

Vasuki Parbat (6792m)

Team: British. Leader: Mick Fowler

Mick Fowler and Paul Ramsden attempted the W face of the 'King of Serpents' (Vasuki). It would have been a new route but they could reach only 6400m. Mick describes his experience as follows: 'We tried the buttress line catching the sun and reached a point about two-thirds of the way up. I think we might have completed the technically hardest climbing but an earlier spell of bad weather meant that we did not acclimatise as well as I would have liked and we just ground to a knackered halt going slower and slower (and feeling we were getting more and more wobbly). It was also surprisingly cold to the extent that we could not use bare hands on rock.' (Account page 3)

Srikanta (6133m)

Team: Indian. Leader: Anand Mali

The expedition approached the mountain from Jangla village near Uttarkashi on the Gangotri road and established two camps at 5200m and 5600m. On 12 September, five climbers reached the summit of this rarely visited mountain. The last successful attempt was in 1997. Anand Mali with Tekraj Adhikari and Krishna Dhokle and two high altitude supporters Gyalbu and Pasang reached the top after 16 days of efforts. Kalyan

Kadam, the fourth member, reached the summit camp. They fixed about 1100m of rope between their top camp and the summit.

CENTRAL GARHWAL

Kamet (7756m)

(1) Team: Japanese. **Leader:** Hazuya Hiraide

The two-member team of Hazuya Hiraide and Kei Taniguchi climbed the formidable SE face of Kamet. They set up base camp on 1 September and acclimatised by climbing to Mead's Col on the normal route. There was heavy snowfall from 18-24 September. Starting on 29 September, they climbed a direct line up the face and reached the summit at 10am on 5 October. This was the first ascent of the SE face (commonly called east face) and the pair are the first Japanese summiteers of Kamet. Just before this expedition, Hiraide had summited Gasherbrum II and Broad Peak. (Account page 62)

(2) Team: Japanese. **Leader:** Isao Hidehiko

Before the above-mentioned spectacular ascent, another Japanese team of seven climbers attempted Kamet in the pre-monsoon season. Taking the normal route, on 12 June they reached Camp 4 at 6050m which proved their high point. They had a curious situation when the soles of seven new boots they were using came off. They were trying the new model for a possible attempt on Everest. We do not know the brand of the manufacturer.

Nilkanth (6596m) - Correction regarding 2007 'ascent' (AJ 113, p304)

The Himalayan Club had sponsored an expedition to Nilkanth in Garhwal in 2007, organised by its Kolkata Section. The expedition leader AVM (Retd) A K Bhattacharyya reported that the team had reached the summit of Nilkanth after a difficult climb. As doubts were expressed regarding the authentication of this climb the Himalayan Club appointed Jagdish Nanavati, (President Emeritus) as Ombudsman. On examination of details and photographs the Himalayan Club Managing Committee accepted the report of the Ombudsman and concluded that the summit of Nilkanth was not climbed by this expedition. Hence, the record of ascent of this peak should be corrected. The Ombudsman's Report is available on the website of the Himalayan Club at www.himalayanclub.org

HIMACHAL PRADESH: KINNAUR

Rangrik Rang (6553m)

Team: French. **Leader:** Ferron Odilon

Three young mountain guides (all 22 years) completed the second ascent of this beautiful mountain in Kinnaur. The original route, followed by the 1994 Indian British expedition led by Chris Bonington and Harish Kapadia, climbed directly from the glacier to the col. This was the intended route of the French alpinists, but because of heavy snowfall, they found

this route dangerous and hence followed an alternative longer route to the summit. They traversed over Mangla peak to the col with the main peaks and followed it to the summit. The leader with Rumebe Jeremy and Audibert Slvoin reached the summit. The climb was completed in only two days reaching the top on 1 October at 7.30pm. They bivouacked on the summit for 10 hours and returned to their top camp on 2 October late in the evening.

Gramang Bar (6248m)

Team: Irish. Leader: Seamus O'Hanlon

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

Manirang (6593m)

Team: Indian. Leader: Dr. Anjan Choudhury

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

SPITI

Kanamo (5975m)

Team: British Royal Navy. Leader: Andrew Wagstaff

The name of this small but attractive peak implies 'White Hostess' and this easy peak welcomed a 12-strong RN team. Situated near Shilla and Chau Chau Kang Nilda peaks, Kanamo is now easily approached by road from Kaja. On 6 September, all members except one reached the summit. They climbed the SW ridge and had warm, sunny weather except on summit day.

Lhakhang (6250m)

Team: British. Leader: Michael Borroff

Six senior citizens (60+) from the Yorkshire Ramblers Club accompanied the leader to attempt this mountain in Spiti during the post-monsoon season. They established their advanced base camp on the lateral moraines

on the west of the Dhhun glacier, which allowed detailed reconnaissance of the NW face. Unseasonal and widespread snowfall on peaks in the northern Spiti caused them to abandon the climb. They reached 5660m while exploring the glacier.

Khhang Shiling (6360m)

Team: Indian. leader: Anath Bandhu Ghosh

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

P. 6135m (Debsa nala)

Team: Irish. Leader: Gerard Galligan

This three-member team entered the Debsa nala in western Spiti and established base camp at Thwak Debsa. After exploring the surroundings, they climbed an unnamed and previously unclimbed peak of 6135m, on Upper East Debsa glacier. They suggested the name Ramabang (peak of Rama). On 22 June the leader with Darach O'Murchu and Paul Mitchell climbed the SW ridge to reach the summit. Later, the expedition crossed a high pass at the head of Bauli Khad (Debsa valley) to the Parvati valley.

KULLU – LAHAUL-ZANSKAR

Menthosa (6443m)

Team: Italian. Leader: Bruno Moretti

This team of 10 was not successful on Menthosa, but climbed four other peaks in the area, p.6046m, p.5770m, p.5760m and p.5577m, all in September.

Dharamsura (White Sail) (6446m)

Team: Indian. Leader: Barun Mazumdar

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

Papsura (6451m)

Team: Indian. Leader: Prosenjit Mukherjee

This expedition of seven members reached 200m short of the summit on Papsura (peak of evil), a higher neighbour of Dharamsura. On 11 June, they stopped their climb due to verglas on rock and a shortage of rock anchors and fixed ropes.

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

Team: Indian. Leader: Dr. Ujjal Ray

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

Shinkun East (6081m)

Team: Himalayan Club. Leader: Subrata Chakraborty

A team of seven members climbed in the Zaskar area, near the popular trekking route across Shinkun la (formerly Shingo la). Base camp was at Chuminakpo at 4650m and a second camp was set up at 5190m. They reached the top of an unnamed point 5912m on 9 September and established their summit camp here. On 10 September, starting from the summit camp, they negotiated a cornice and two rock bands of about 70m each, traversed another rock band and reached an ice slope leading to easier ground to the summit. The summiteers were the leader with Debraj Dutta, Jayanta Chattopadhyay, Goutam Saha, Rudra Prasad Halder and HAP Harsh Thakur.

P. 6184m (Jankar nala)

Team: British. Leader: Stuart MacDonald

The peak is located north of Gangtang. The nine-member team approached the mountain from Jankar nala turning SW from Kuddu for the base camp. Massive snowfall on 19-20 September made progress difficult. One of the members, Jamie Emberson, suffered multiple fractures in the upper arm and shoulders and was evacuated by helicopter on 26 September. The team reached a high point at 5900m on 29 September before calling off the attempt.

CB – 13A (6240m)

Team: Polish. Leader: Pawel Krawczyk

The peak is situated in the Chandra Bhaga range of Lahaul and is often visited by climbers. The Polish team consisting of three members attempted the NE ridge. On 13 August, one climber, Mariusz Baskurzynski reached the junction of the N and E ridges at 6000m, which was the high point of the expedition. The continuation ridge was complicated due to loose rocks and they decided to turn back.

Shib Shankar (6011m)

Team: Japanese. Leader: Shoji Sakamoto

A team of five members successfully climbed this mountain in the Pangri valley. The peak is located at the head of the Dharwas in the Lujai nala, near the Sersank pass on the Pangri-Zaskar divide. Attempted by a British

expedition in 2006, Shib Shankar is surrounded by many hidden crevasses. On 19 July, Kazuo Kozu, Hidetaka Lizuka and Miss Reiko Maruyama with three high altitude supporters reached the summit.

LADAKH AND EASTERN KARAKORAM

Rimo I (7385m) Correction regarding 2007 ascent (*AI* 113, p309)

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

Kishtwar Shivling (6000m)

Team: American-British-Canadian. Leader: Kevin Thaw

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

Pologongka (6632m)

Team: Indian. Leader: Karuna Prasad Mitra

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

Chalung (6546m)

Team: Indian. Leader: J S Gulia

The team approached via the Rupshu valley from Sumdo Ribil. After establishing base camp at 5200m and a high camp at 5900m, they decided to tackle the W ridge. On 29 June, the leader with Gaurav and Amardeep along with two high altitude supporters Fateh Chand and Pyare Lal reached the summit at 1pm. This was the second ascent of the peak and first by the W ridge. A Japanese team made the first ascent in 1997.

Nya Kangri (6480m)

Team: The Himalayan Club. Leader: Divyesh Muni

Nya Kangri is a beautiful pyramid-shaped peak of the Arganglas valley in the Eastern Karakoram. It dominates the entrance to the valley. A four-member team attempted the peak in June–July, establishing base camp at Phonglas on the right of the Argan nala at 4600m. The attempt was made from the SW side. A higher camp was established on the south slope at 5400m. The south ridge was approached from a 700m gully flanked by a

rocky ridge on one side and a huge hanging glacier on the other. On 26 June, the team opened a route through the gully and fixed four ropes to 5800m. It snowed heavily over the next two days and with a series of slab avalanches the attempt was called off.

Saser Kangri IV (7410m)

Team: Indian. Leader: Samir Sengupta

Starting from Panamik, the 26-member team approached via the Phukpoche glacier to their base camp, then placed two camps on the W ridge of the peak. They reached c7000m on Saser IV on 5 August, however terrain difficulties defeated further progress. A large amount of equipment was left at Camp 2.

Chong Kumdan II (7004m)

Team: Indian-French. Leader: Chewang Motup Goba and Paul Grobel

This team accomplished the first ascent of one of the last unclimbed 7000m peaks in the Eastern Karakoram. The 12 members approached via the Mamostong valley and crossed the NW ridge of the Mamostong Kangri by a high col to reach the South Terong glacier. From the glacier, they climbed to the Nup Col overlooking the Chong Kumdan glacier, then gained the S ridge of Chong Kumdan II. On 20 August, the main peak was climbed by Konchok Thinless, Samgyal Sherpa, Maurine Bernard, Raiot Dominique, Paul Grobel and Sebastiano Audisio.

Plateau Peak (7287m)

Team: Indian Mountaineering Foundation. Leader: Wing Commander N. K. Dahiya

The IMF organised an expedition of 11 members to this virgin seven thousander in the Eastern Karakoram. The team approached from Panamik in the Nubra valley in northern Ladakh. Base camp was set up on the Phukpoche glacier at 3950m, reached on 26 July. The members had to ferry loads between the road-head and advanced base camp (4875m), as very few porters were available. From ABC they climbed the SW slopes to reach the west ridge and established Camp 1 at 5650m. They continued on the west ridge, fixing ropes. Camp 2 was to be established at 6400m from where they had planned to attempt the summit. Their 1100m of fixed rope was not sufficient, so seven climbing ropes were also fixed. Bad weather and unconsolidated snow defeated the attempt at 6900m on 3 August.

Zemu Gap (5891m)

The expedition was organised by Colin Knowles, with Adrian O'Connor and Jerzy Wiczorek. Its objective was to link together two treks – the 'Goecha La' trek, which leaves from Yuxsom and terminates at the Goecha La, and the 'Green Lake' trek, which follows the Zemu Chu from Lachen to the eponymous lake, and back. To make the connection it would be necessary to cross the Talung glacier, gain the Tongshiong glacier and cross

the Zemu Gap (Zemu La) – a *brèche* on the SE ridge of Kangchenjunga, before descending to the Zemu glacier and thus to the Green Lake. The Zemu Gap (5891m) has a remarkable place in mountaineering history. The northern approach, via the Zemu glacier, is relatively straightforward, and documented visits include Alexander Kellas (12 May 1910), John Hunt (18 November 1937) and H W Tilman (9 July 1938). Tilman then crossed the gap, experiencing some interesting adventures on his descent from the Talung glacier.

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

The Burma Hump

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