

Kokthang. A 12-member team from Calcutta climbed Kokthang (6147 meters, 20,167 feet) via the northeast face from Camp II at 5425 meters. On May 12, Dipak Kumar Bose, Parijat Chowdhury and Sherpas Kami, Lhakpa Tsering and Tharchen Tsering reached the summit. The leader was Amulya Sen.

KAMAL K. GUHA, *Editor, Himavanta, India*

Nepal

Nepalese Peak Fees. Climbers are concerned with a sizeable increase in the fees that the Nepalese government charges for permission to climb its peaks. On September 20, the Ministry of Tourism announced that fees were being raised for the start of the spring 1992 season "in consideration of environmental conservation." A ministry official said that this means the government wants fewer climbers and their rubbish on Everest and the other popular 8000-meter peaks. He cited the view of Sir Edmund Hillary that Everest should be closed to all mountaineers for several years to give the mountain time to cleanse itself. The Nepalese authorities said they did not want to take such drastic action, but they would like to encourage climbers to go to peaks below 8000 meters, for which the fee increase is less extreme. He also pointed out that Nepal had devalued its currency by about 20% in July and the new rates were partly designed to make up for this. (The old rates had been fixed in Nepalese rupees.) A member of a Spanish team returning from Pumori and Lhotse observed that the new fee of \$8000 for Lhotse alone is equal to half of their total budget for this autumn's climb. The leader of the Russian Cho Oyu east-ridge team said that he had previously applied for a permit for Dhaulagiri in the spring of 1993. This permit would now cost \$8000 for a team up to nine members with an added charge of \$800 per additional member and "I am afraid this is too much money. I will not be able to come." (The old fee was less than \$2000 with no fixed limit on a team's size.) When Sergio Martini came back from his attempt on Kangchenjunga, he went to the Tourism Ministry to ask permission to return for a try next year. When he learned that he would have to pay four times as much as he had this autumn, he did not put in the application. Whether the drastic increase in fees for 8000ers will actually decrease the number of climbers is open to question. The obvious way to achieve this goal is to stop giving so many permits. Obviously, it is likely that there will be a drop in the number of self-financed teams, but there could be an increase in the commercial expeditions, which are organized for profit by adventure-travel agencies, mountaineering clubs and climbing schools. The commercial expeditions are joined by people who are strangers and so have never climbed together before and sometimes do not even speak the same language. They are led by professional guides who are hired to take them climbing by standard routes. By contrast, the self-financed teams tend to be small groups of friends—or a single individual like Svetičič—who try difficult and unclimbed routes, often on little-known peaks that do not attract commercial organizers. A third source of financing is

finding sponsors. Potential sponsors are often not interested in unknown peaks, especially small ones. There can be a drawback to sponsorships. A French team received help from a television organization which reasonably required photographic coverage. Two members on a summit try did not arrive on top, having spent so much time photographing that when the wind rose, they had to turn back to be in camp before nightfall. None of the other members ever got so high again. The results of the higher fees could be 1) The Ministry's desired result, namely climbers turning to Nepal's lower, less costly peaks and to more difficult routes on them. Instead of having to find \$8000 or \$10,000, they would need only \$1,000 to \$3,000 depending on the mountain's altitude. (The old rate for "lesser" peaks ranged from \$500 to \$1400.); 2) Mountaineers say they will go where the cost is lower. An American who was on Lhotse this autumn with just one teammate said, "For a small two-man climb, I'll look instead at Pakistan." Of course Pakistan may follow Nepal's example and raise its fees; 3) There could be a rise in the number of people who climb in Nepal without getting permission. When discovered, they are subject to fines and banishment from entering and/or climbing in Nepal for some years, as happened to Martínez this autumn, but often the Nepalese authorities do not know of such cases. Only time will tell what the effects of the increase in fees will be.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY

Kangchenjunga. The Slovene expedition, which made a remarkable new route on the southwest ridge of Kangchenjunga South, ascended others of Kangchenjunga's summits, made a new route on Talung and attempted the difficult east face of Kumbhakarna East, is described in a complete article earlier in this *Journal*.

Kangchenjunga Attempt. A Spanish expedition led by Mari Abrego attempted to climb the north face of Kangchenjunga. They reached a highpoint of 8400 meters on September 23.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY

Kangchenjunga Attempt. The highly experienced Italian climber, Sergio Martini, managed to reach 8200 meters on the southwest face of Kangchenjunga on October 11. He and two Nepalese helpers became too exhausted to continue after a month's effort.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY

Yalung Kang, Southwest Face Attempt. Our international expedition was composed of Czechoslovaks Leopold Sulovský, Miss Zdeňka Pleskotová and me as leader and Italians Marco Berti, Gianluigi Visentin and Miss Dr. Monica Zambon. We had no high-altitude porters and used no supplementary oxygen.