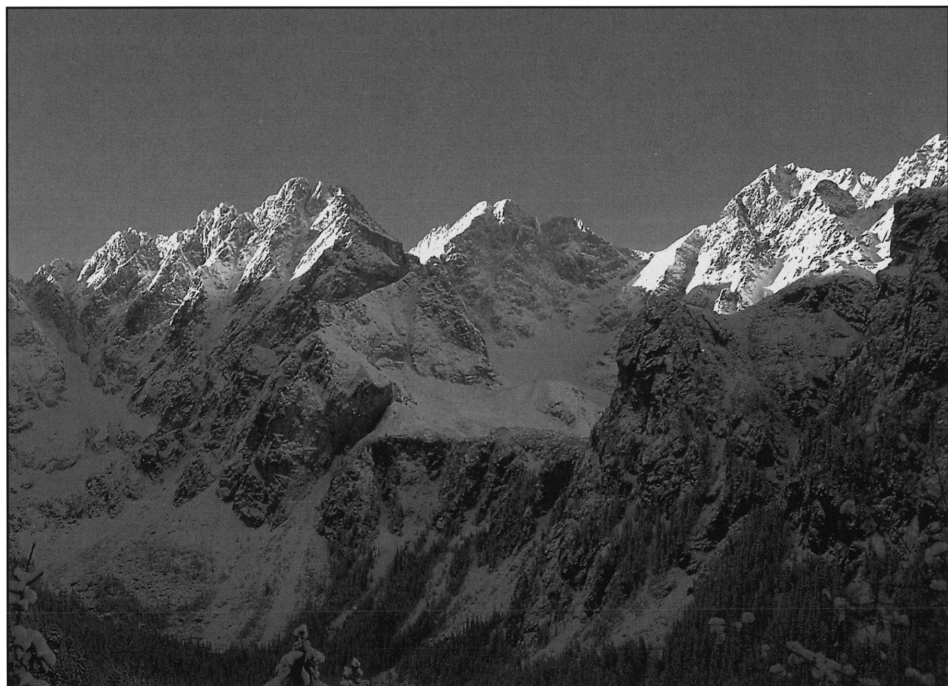


rock. Maybe this will be the case someday—though at current levels of equipment and sanity, it will be some time in the future.

CHRIS McNAMARA, *unaffiliated*

SLOVAKIA

High Tatras, Ridge Traverse. In January, Vlado Plulik made a solo traverse of the main ridge of the High Tatras in Slovakia. He had tried to climb the ridge in winter for the first time in 1992. His idea was to climb this problem non-stop very quickly with minimal gear. Many attempts with partners left him more and more experienced. The final problem was weather. Finally, in January, a stable weather system arrived in the High Tatras. Plulik started the climb on Thursday, January 16 at 2:30 p.m., alone, without support, from the Kopske Col (the starting point for the main ridge for an east-to-west traverse). He reached the first crux of the main ridge Ostry Peak at 1 a.m., climbing it in climbing shoes. By dusk, he had climbed the very dangerous ridge of Batizovsky Peak and reached Popradsky Ladovy Peak in the middle of the main ridge. The batteries to his headlamp were dead and he had to climb the next crux, Zlobiv and Rumanov peaks, by the slight light of the moon. By midnight, he was tired and waited for dawn in the Rumanove Col. The next morning, he decided to omit the difficult Ganek. His progress was very good and he quickly climbed through Vysok and Rysy to the next rock crux, Zabi kon (Frogg's Horse), climbing it in light shoes. By dusk, he had overcome the final problem, the Mengusovsky Peaks, and reached Cubrina. He was unfamiliar with the last part of the main ridge from Cubrina to Laliove Col and thought it would be easy. But after many hours of hard climbing, his hands were bloody. By midnight, at the very end of the main ridge, close to Svinica, he had to wait until dawn because of exhaustion and dis-



orientation. Finally, on Sunday, he reached Lalioue Col in one hour's time.

The main ridge of the High Tatras is 26 kilometers long with much hard climbing, an altitude difference of about 7000 meters and comprising 90 main peaks. Plulik's solo achievement was accomplished in only 50 hours of actual climbing. It is without a doubt one of the best achievements in the history of High Tatras mountaineering.

VLADO LINEK, *Jamesak*

ASIA

BURMA

Hkakbo Razi, First Ascent. It was reported that Nyama Gyaltsen from Burma and Takashai Ozaki from Japan made the successful first ascent of Hkakbo Razi (5881m), the previously unclimbed highest summit of Burma and the mountain marking the easternmost point of the Himalayan chain, in 1996. The ascent was the culmination of four years of work by Ozaki, who had begun negotiations for permission to climb the mountain in 1993, then spent 30 days walking in to the north side of the mountain in the winter of 1994-'95 with his ten-year-old son and a major from the Myanmar (Burma) Hiking and Mountaineering Federation. That attempt ended a day from base camp when bad weather and avalanche danger prevented them from even seeing the mountain.

In the summer of 1995, Ozaki returned with his French wife, his son and daughter, six Burmese team members and a Japanese film crew. They followed their approach of the year before, using machetes to reach the north side of the peak in early August. An Advanced Base Camp was established on the moraine at 3900 meters. Rope was fixed to Camp I (4300m) and then to Camp II (5100m). The climbing featured poor granite, avalanche danger and difficult route-finding; Ozaki and Gyaltsen made it 100 meters above CII before abandoning their attempt.

In July, 1996, they returned, using the same 30-day approach to arrive at BC on August 20. The two re-achieved their high point, then were forced to climb a dangerous hanging glacier to reach the summit ridge, which had many rock sections with climbing up to V+/VI. Camp III was established at 5400 meters and, on September 4, the pair reached a snow dome on the ridge. It had been snowing every day and continued to do so. A faulty stove forced them to return to base camp, and a porter was sent the 60 kilometers to the last village to retrieve their spare high-altitude stove. Gyaltsen and Ozaki returned to CII on September 12, were confined to CIII by heavy weather on the 13th and 14th, and set out for the summit on the 15th. The final 250 meters of climbing presented them with eight pitches of up to V+/VI. A final 50-55° snow slope brought them to the highest point. They made it back to base in time to pack up and leave on September 17. (*High Mountain Sports* 178)

INDIA

Environmental Security Deposit and Environmental Fees for Expeditions. Col. J. P. Bhagatjee, Director of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, states that the IMF does not take require environmental security deposits from visiting expeditions. However, non-refund-