

Pakistan

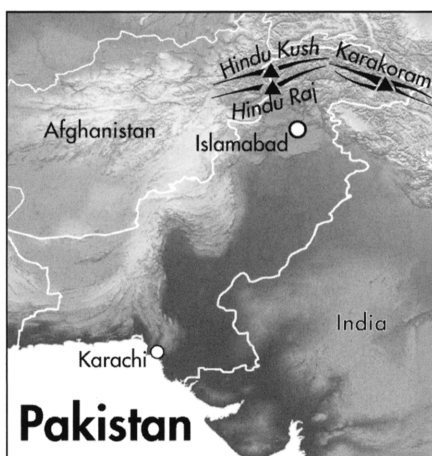
Change in peak and trekking fees. It is with great relief and pleasure that I announce the formal acceptance by the government of our longstanding demand to waive mountain royalties on all peaks up to 6,500m. Thus anything below 6,500m will be considered a trekking peak. This was decided at a high level meeting at the Ministry of Tourism. The decision comes into effect immediately and will apply for several years. It will be a great boon for individuals and smaller teams as now they will be able to climb many of world's most exciting peaks without a fee. Only in restricted areas they will bear a trekking fee of \$50 per person per month, which is the old practice.

This gesture has been made to attract climbers who are not hunting for 8,000m peaks but instead want to climb in unexplored areas. We also hope this will send a positive message to the mountaineering community at large about the normalization of security in Pakistan after the peaceful elections and rehabilitation of democracy. Tourism in Pakistan including climbing has been seriously hurt since September 11, 2001, but this is undeserved because the climbing regions are relatively safe. Another motive is to offer incentives when we celebrate the Golden Jubilees of the first ascents of Nanga Parbat and K2, in 2003 and 2004 respectively. It is hoped that the mountaineering community will draw the utmost benefit from this unique opportunity and join us in 2003 and 2004 in celebrating the two greatest mountains on Earth. Other incentives like simplifying trekking and climbing procedures and easy availability of visas are also being worked out by a special committee.

NAZIR SABIR, *Pakistan*

Expeditions to Pakistan in 2002. In 2001 around 70 expeditions came to the Karakoram. However, with the change in political climate following the events of September 11 and reprisals in neighboring Afghanistan, plus the subsequent threat of an Indo-Pakistan nuclear war, a little less than 40 were due to turn up at the start of the 2002 season. Then, a dozen or so cancelled at short notice, leaving no more than 28 permits being taken up by visiting expeditions. As several expeditions operating on the high Baltoro mountains had more than one peak booked, the actually number of climbing teams on the ground was somewhat less than 28.

Many of the last minute cancellations came from commercially organised enterprises, which because of the prevailing political situation either did not get enough clients or felt it unwise to visit Pakistan at the time. However, as many suspected, those who did decide to continue with their plans generally experienced no real problem traveling through the country and found almost everyone they met extremely pleasant. From the point of view of the local economy a far greater effect was felt by the drop in number of trekking parties, which was, proportionally, considerably greater than the drop in mountaineering expeditions



LINDSAY GRIFFIN, *High Mountain INFO*