

India

Overview. First ascents, high peaks, exploration, and challenging climbs by Indian mountaineers: all were part of 2008 in the Indian Himalaya, a year that will be remembered for energetic climbs and generally settled weather.

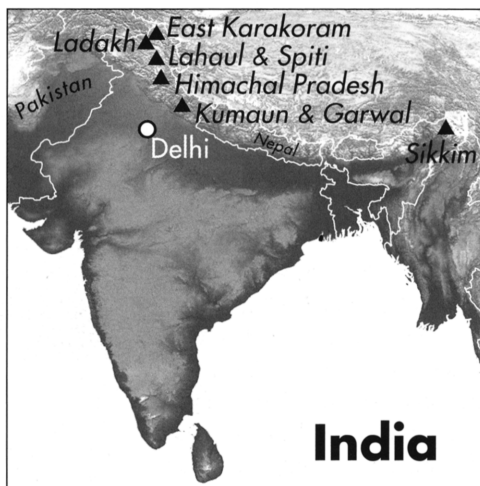
Sixty-five foreign expeditions visited the mountains. Since the IMF opened a liaison office at Leh to collect fees, Stok Kangri has become its most profitable peak, with 21 official foreign ascents. Add to this ascents by Indian teams and unauthorized climbers, and this peak will go into the books as the most climbed mountain above 6,000m. The

area of Kishtwar, once a paradise of challenging mountains, has been closed for many years due to terrorism in Kashmir. A British-Canadian-American team tried to approach Kishtwar Shiveringling from the north, crossing the Umasi La, but a small incident en route scared their porters, who then refused to carry loads over the pass. According to the porters, terrorists were watching. Kishtwar will have to wait till things improve.

There were 57 Indian expeditions during the year, and some completed excellent climbs. A small team from Bengal reaching the summit of Thalay Sagar, till now the preserve of strong foreign teams. Tirsuli West was climbed for the second time by an Indian expedition. This high peak had defeated several strong teams. Maiktoli via the south face, Srikanta, and Manirang were other high peaks climbed by Indians. This is a welcome sign, and we hope that a new breed of young Indian mountaineer will continue to climb without fixed ropes and Sherpa support.

There were also expeditions climbing in new areas and opening new valleys. Irish teams explored Gramang Bar in Kinnaur and climbed in the Debsa valley of Spiti. Two Indian teams took on the unclimbed Nya Kangri and Plateau Peak. Both are challenging summits in the East Karakoram and will need strong teams to achieve success. A British team took a historic trail, exploring an approach to the Zemu Gap (Sikkim) from the south, intending to traverse the pass. Their route over the high Guicha La to the Talung Valley was not without difficulties. But the icefall beyond and approaching bad weather stopped further movement. This is a worthy project, and hopefully a team will return to reach the Zemu Gap for the first time since H. W. Tilman.

HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*



Fast track permits. 113 Himalayan peaks were pre-cleared for 2009, meaning that obtaining permits should only take two–three weeks. You still need to fill out an application and other formalities, but now you can arrive on a tourist visa, so the hassle is quite reduced. These 113 peaks include some of the plums like Shiveringling, Meru, Bhagirathi, Satopanth, Thaley Sagar, Nanda Devi East, Trisul 1, Nanda Kot, Nilkantha, and Chaukhambha in Uttarakhand; Nun, Kun, Pinnacle, White Needle, Z1, Z3, and Z8 in Zaskar. In Himachal Pradesh most of the peaks from CB 9 to 35, White Sail, Papsura, Deo Tibba, Menthosa, and Phabrang are included, among many