

# **RIMO 2000 KARAKORAM EXPEDITION**

## **R – 2 – K EXPEDITION**

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### **Summary**

An Indo-French Expedition was organised to the East Karakoram in July-August 2000. The expedition climbed two peaks, Rimo IV (7169 m) and Migpa (5935 m). They reached two historic passes, Karakoram Pass and Col Italia. Two new cols were explored, Lharimo and Dzomsa Col. Three Rimo glaciers were explored after several decades. And other points in the area were observed and reached.

However the expedition suffered a tragedy. While returning after the successful trip member KAIVAN MISTRY was swept away in the Shyok river. While three other members who fell in the river with him managed to survive, Kaivan Mistry hit a rock and died instantly. His body was recovered lower down and sent to Mumbai.

### **Brief Report**

The expedition was organised from 25 July 2000 when five Indians and four French members finally gathered in Leh. After proper acclimatisation the team moved to the Nubra valley to start the trek to the mountains.

Starting on 31 July the team with seven Sherpas, 38 horses and other helpers followed the historic Central Asia Trade Route. After initial bad weather and crossing flooded nalas the team went from Changlung – Jhingmoche – Tutiyaalak – Skyangpoche to cross Saser La. The Shyok was crossed on 6 August and the trail continued via Chhongtash – Murgo – Kalon Chumik – Burtsa – Qazi Langar to reach Depsang La. From Track Junction on the Depsang plains, the Indian members visited the historic Karakoram pass.

The trade route to Karakoram Pass is used for centuries. Nothing is known of the early pioneers who discovered this pass. But later several Central Asian travellers and traders passed from here in search for trade. Many used the trail for pilgrimage to Mecca (via Leh, Srinagar, Amritsar and Mumbai !). Bones of animal littered the route which are still seen. The difficulties of river crossings and difficulties of passes en route are legendary and several books and stories are written about it.

On this historic Central Asia Trade Route caravans passed till 1959. The India-China war of 1962 put the area under restriction. In the past 40 years we were perhaps the only third civilian party to visit the Karakoram Pass. Standing on the pass gave a great feel of history of the by-gone trade caravans.

On 12 August the team reached Gapshan. From here two separate base camps were established – on the South Rimo glacier (on its right bank) and on the Central Rimo glacier (foot of the central moraine).

### **SOUTH RIMO GLACIER**

Starting from the 15 August, the team ferried loads to the Advance Base Camp. While the camp was being stocked, Camp 1 was established by the 17<sup>th</sup>. On the 20<sup>th</sup> Camp 2 was occupied. After a day of bad weather, Rimo IV (7169 m) was climbed (third ascent) on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August by Dr Jeff and Sherpa Pema Tsering. Lt Cdr S Dam reached an altitude of c. 6800 m before descending to help the ailing liaison officer down to ABC. The route to the summit followed the west face, approached from the cwm between peaks Rimo III and IV.

Two cols, Lharimo Col, on the southern rim of the glacier, and Dzomsa Col, on the northern rim of the south Rimo glacier, were reached on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> August respectively, by three French members each.

The South Rimo glacier had been visited by two previous expeditions from these eastern approaches. An Indian Army team, led by Capt. K. S. Sooch visited the area in 1984. After establishing a base camp in centre of the South Rimo glacier, they followed the Central moraine of the glacier and finally made the first ascent of Rimo IV (7169 m). Four climbers reached the summit on two days.

In 1989 four members of the Indo-British team made the second ascent of the peak by the west face. They crossed the high col between Rimo II and III and descended to the Cwm between these peaks and Rimo IV. Summit was reached from a high camp before they retreated back to the North Terong valley by the same high col. Our route of ascent almost followed the route of 1989 expedition.

In 1986 an Indo-New Zealand expedition attempted Rimo I from the eastern approach. Mired in controversies they failed to achieve their goal.

## **CENTRAL RIMO GLACIER**

The area of the Central Rimo glacier had been visited only twice before. In 1913 an expedition of Filippi de Filippi spent some weeks on the both the South, as well as the Central Rimo glaciers, mapping the area, though their party did not reach Col Italia. Their photographs and panoramas are a complete record of these glaciers. In 1930 a party of Italians, led by Prof. G. Dainelli were climbing on the Siachen glacier. The Nubra river, which drains the Siachen glacier, was flooded and blocked their exit beyond Warshi. As an alternative escape route they climbed on the Teram Shehr glacier and crossed a high col at its head and descended the Central Rimo glacier. They named this col as 'Col Italia'. Their party then returned to civilisation by the caravan route from the Depsang la. No other party had visited this glacier in last 70 years.

Three Indian members and four Sherpas proceeded on the Central Rimo glacier. After initial difficulties they opened the route which led to 'Lake Filippi' which was at the centre of bifurcation of the Central and South Rimo glaciers. The party followed the right bank of the Central Rimo glacier to set up four camps in all till the foot of 'Col Italia'. En route 'Lake Dainelli' and the snout of the North Rimo glacier (International boundary) were observed. After a day of bad weather, 'Col Italia' was reached on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August by three Indian members and two Sherpas. It is a 7 X 7 kms plateau and they could overlook the legendary 'Raider's Cols 1 and 2' towards the Shaksgam pass.

They returned to Camp 1 on the 25<sup>th</sup> August. On the 26<sup>th</sup> Huzefa, Nima and Karma Sherpas climbed Migpa, (5935 m) (first ascent) and obtained a view of both the glaciers.

## TRAGEDY

As the teams were returning on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August, as planned, a tragedy struck the team. The Central Rimo team was crossing a branch of the Shyok river. Suddenly, Dan Sinh fell and three other members tumbled with him. All four were swept by the Shyok river, even though water was only knee-deep. The cold was intense and huge chunks of ice were floating rapidly in the river. Three members, Huzefa, Harish and Kumaoni Dan Singh managed to reach different banks. Dan Sinh was reached first and was rescued by the Sherpas who had managed to locate him. Injured, wet and shivering in the cold breeze, Harish and Huzefa spent almost three hours sheltering under a small rock before the rescue arrived. KAIVAN MISTRY, who was unable to throw off his heavy rucksack, possibly hit his head against a rock as he fell. He was carried 2 – 3 kms down stream where he was found dead by the South Rimo team who were crossing the Shyok at the same time.

Kaivan's body was carried to Gapshan and after two days it was flown to Leh, on the 29<sup>th</sup> August, by an Indian Air Force helicopter and send to Mumbai on the 30<sup>th</sup> after conducting the post-mortem at Leh.

Kaivan Mistry (32 years) was an experienced mountaineer on his 9<sup>th</sup> trip to the Himalaya and the Karakorams. He was a Lighting-engineer-designer for the theatre and movie world in Mumbai. He was well-known in the mountaineering and the art circles. Very enthusiastic outdoor lover he loved the trans-himalayan barrenness. His typical Parsi humour regaled friends on many Himalayan nights. He was unmarried and leaves behind old parents. Kaivan will be sorely missed. May his soul Rest in Peace.

The expedition returned by the same route to Sasoma on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September and to Leh on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 2000.

## MEMBERS

Indian:

1. Harish Kapadia (overall Leader) ('Col Italia' team)
2. Huzefa Electricwala ('Col Italia' team)
3. Kaivan Mistry ('Col Italia' team)
4. Lt Commander Satyabrata Dam (Indian Navy) (South Rimo team)
5. Raj Joshi (South Rimo team)

French: (all in South Rimo team)

1. Jean F. Tripard (Deputy Leader)
2. Dr J.F. Manificat
3. Olivier Follmi
4. Bernard Odier

Liaison Officer: Capt Rahul Jain (519 ASC Battalion) (South Rimo team)

Period: 22 July to 9 September 2000

(Harish Kapadia)  
Leader

**R-2-K Expedition**

Mumbai, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2000

## SUMMARY OF THE EXPEDITION

### Peaks Climbed

<i>No.</i>	<i>Name and height</i>	<i>Date climbed</i>	<i>Summiteers</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1.	Rimo IV (7169 m – 23,520 ft)	23 August 2000	Dr J.F. Manificat and Pema Tsering Sherpa	Third Ascent (via west face)
2.	Migpa (5935 m – 19,472 ft ) 'horseshoe'	26 August 2000	Huzefa Electricwala, Sherpas Karma and Nima Dorje	First Ascent (via southeast ridge)

### Passes and Cols Reached

<i>No.</i>	<i>Name and height</i>	<i>Date reached</i>	<i>Persons</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1.	Karakoram Pass (5569 m – 18,270 ft)	11 August 2000	Harish Kapadia, Kaivan Mistry, Huzefa Electricwala, Lt. Cdr. S. Dam, Raj Joshi and Capt. R. Jain (LO)	As per available records, perhaps ours was only the third civilian party to reach the pass in recent years.
2.	Col Italia (5920 m – 19,422 ft )	23 August 2000	Harish Kapadia, Kaivan Mistry, Huzefa Electricwala, Sherpas Pemba Tsering and Karma.	The pass was last crossed in 1930. We were the second party to reach this.
3.	Dzomsa Col (6050 m – 19,850 ft) 'meeting (of glaciers) col'	25 August 2000	Jeff Tripard, Bernard Odier and Dr J.F. Manificat.	Col on the northern rim of the South Rimo glacier, overlooking the Central Rimo glacier.
4.	Lharimo Col (6200 m – 20,340 ft) 'holy col'	24 August 2000	Jeff Tripard, Bernard Odier and Dr J.F. Manificat.	Col on the southern rim of the South Rimo glacier, near Lharimo peak.

### Other Points Reached/ Observed/Studied

<i>No.</i>	<i>Name height</i>	<i>and Date</i>	<i>Persons</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1.	Point Goba (5450 m – 17,880 ft) 'village headman'	26 August 2000	Harish Kapadia and Kaivan Mistry.	A high vantage point above 'Lake Filippi' which offers a complete coverage of both the Rimo glaciers. Possibly from the same point Filippi had taken a panorama in 1913. It is one of the important and prominent point between two glaciers. A small cairn (and an old bucket) was found here.
2.	Gyani Ridge (5200 m – 17,060 ft) 'Knowledge Ridge'	14 August 2000	Harish Kapadia and Huzefa Electricwala	A prominent ridge situated to the east of the Central Rimo Base Camp. It offered a vast panorama of both the Rimo glaciers and surrounding peaks. This point was reached by Filippi in 1913 and a similar panorama was taken by him. Because of the knowledge of the area it offered it has been named as such.
3.	Raiders' Cols 1 and 2 (6000 m – 19,690 ft) (Situated on the northern rim of the Central Rimo glacier)	23 August 2000	By Central Rimo Team from 'Col Italia'.	As per legend Central Asian Raiders looted Balti villages on the Siachen glacier and below towards the Gyari nala. Possibly they came across these cols which connect with the North Rimo glacier and the Shaksgam Pass.
4.	'Lake Filippi' (5045 m – 16,550 ft)	18 August 2000	By Central Rimo Team, en route to 'Col Italia'	Situated at the upper junction where the South and Central Rimo glaciers moraine meet.
5.	'Lake Dainelli' (5100 m – 16,730 ft)	21 August 2000	By Central Rimo Team, en route to 'Col Italia'	A long lake stretching from the eastern rim of the Central Rimo glacier towards the international border.
6.	North Rimo glacier	21 August 2000	By Central Rimo Team, en route to 'Col Italia'	The glacier descends from the Shaksgam Pass to join the Central Rimo glacier. The snout is the international boundary and an alternate trade route passed from here to the Shaksgam valley.