

Outdoor activities: Italian climbers to train local mountain guides

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Published: September 8, 2011

GILGIT: Sixteen mountain guides from Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) will be given climbing, rescue and first aid training at Rakaposhi Base Camp.

The 10-day course is being conducted by Alpine Club of Pakistan (ACP) in collaboration with EV-K2-CNR, a non-profit association, and is funded by Italy.

Maurizio Gallo and Michele Gucchi, experts on climbing, will teach the course.

Gallo hoped that upon completion, the participants will impart their acquired skills to other mountain guides and help improve the quality and safety of mountaineering services in G-B. "This will have a positive impact on the tourism industry," he said.

Gallo, who introduced the term "high altitude crew" for mountain porters, said their job is extremely important and needs more recognition.

Additionally, Gallo said, various aspects of environmental care, including solid waste disposal and conservation will be taught during the training course.

"Almost 30 tons of solid waste was collected from various glaciers and disposed off properly. For this purpose, we hired hundreds of porters," he explained. Gucchi said that the people of G-B were physically strong enough to excel in the field of mountaineering. However, he maintained that they need essential training for their safety.

He said that the experts will help the participants develop climbing skills including ascent, descent, traverse and caves crossing, and all safety procedures will be followed during the course. "Rescue, evaluation and emergency communication are all essential part of this training programme," he explained.

When inquired about the sustainability of the training, he said it was not possible for the donors to fund the project for an indefinite period, adding that the local organisations should come forward and devise a strategy for the sustainability of these courses.

Arif Hussain, the technical representative of the association, said that the course was organised in the framework of Social Economic and Environmental Development (SEED), a project funded by the government of Italy and Pakistan. It was implemented through a partnership between the EV-K2-CNR committee and Karakoram International University (KIU).

Shehzada Magpoon, also managing the project, said that the Baltoro Glacier, which is spread over 64 kilometres from Askoli to K2, was recently cleaned from all solid waste.

"We have dumped 2,500 kilograms of human waste and installed 17 modern toilets in Askoli," said Magpoon. He requested the government to play its role in maintaining the beauty of G-B.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 8th, 2011.

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