

ALPINE CLUB OF PAKISTAN



MAURIZIO Gallo from Ev-K2-CNR talks to the media in Islamabad on Sunday. Alpine Club of Pakistan President Nazir Sabir and Italian Ambassador Vincenzo Prati are also present.—Dawn

Undoing the damage done to mountains

By Jamal Shahid

ISLAMABAD, July 26: One of the most passionate mountain climbers, Agostino Da Polenza, is back in town but this time on a different mission — to clean up the mountains.

"The mountains are calling, but this time to clean up the garbage left behind by expeditions," said Polenza, who scaled K2 back in 1983 and had led several missions since then.

Agostino Da Polenza is also president of the Ev-K2-CNR Italy, a non-profit committee striving to protect mountain environments since past decade in collaboration with the Alpine Club of Pakistan.

Polenza was speaking at a press meeting to bring into spotlight environmental challenges of Karakoram, especially in the Baltoro region of Baltistan.

Speakers including the chief guest, Italian Ambassador Vincenzo Prati, gave details of the remedial measures jointly undertaken by both organisations to address the serious environmental threats to the areas.

"Mountaineers leave behind

rubbish — tins, tissues and cardboard etc., that is destroying natural environments of the highest mountains in the world," said Alpine Club of Pakistan President Nazir Sabir. "The Ministry of Environment and especially the tourism ministry that has been collecting \$200 per expedition since past 15 years or more for environment clean up have done nothing to protect the mountains. Tourism ministry also collects refundable \$1,000 that it fines incase expeditions pollute the environment."

Human waste was one of the biggest challenges for Ev-K2-CNR and Alpine Club, he said. "Human waste is a major concern because it pollutes the glaciers." One of the greatest environmental challenges was to clean up Siachen glacier that was being massively polluted by militaries on both sides, said Mr Sabir.

"It will take more than 50 years to clean Siachen glacier alone. People don't know that sometimes air drops from aircrafts land in crevasses that are further carried through

streams and small rivers. Armies on both sides need to quit Siachen and let world community have access to it," he said.

With the help of audio-visual aid, Maurizio Gallo from Ev-K2-CNR said this year they had collected 8,000kgs (8 tons) of waste left behind by expeditions.

"We have incinerated more than 2,000kgs (2 tons) of waste in a specially designed unit without creating environmental degradation."

All the base camps of the highest mountains are polluted. More than 10,000 porters and hundreds of foreigners leave rubbish that sits and rots along major routes. "We clean up as much as we can but find tons more every year we go back."

Mr Gallo said that his team was working on a project to design sanitary system as well as train staff for mountain clean up expeditions.

Speakers also called to include Karakoram in the world heritage list to protect it from degradation.

Ringleader of criminal gang arrested

By Our Correspondent

ATTOCK, July 26: Police on Sunday claimed to have arrested ringleader of a four-member gang allegedly involved in attacking a police patrolling team, snatching arms from them and various crimes of murder and robbery.

The police arrested gang leader, Riaz Mohammad, alias Bacha, during a raid near Formuli village located in Banga police station area. They seized kalashnikov, pistol, rifle, three magazines and 54 bullets from them.

District Police Headquarters, in a statement, said the gang had intercepted police patrolling team near railway crossing on Attock-Basal Road on June 25.

The outlaws snatched an official motorcycle, pistol, rifle, mobile phones and cash from the policemen before escaping.

Soon after the incident, a po-