

Mountaineers to clean K2 high camps of solid waste



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Internews Report

ISLAMABAD: For the first time in Pakistan's history, a dedicated expedition will scale high to clean the high camps of K2, the world's second highest peak, of solid waste, beyond cleaning up the Baltoro Glacier and the base camps of the surrounding mountains at an average altitude of 5,000 metres.

Many top climbers and experts gathered here at a ceremony to describe and discuss modalities of two cleaning expeditions to be carried out: the first on the Baltoro Glacier, the second on K2, near the end of the mountaineering season.

Both 2010 Cleaning Expeditions have been organised in the framework of Socio Economic and Environmental Department (SEED) and Integrated Management of Natural Resources and Culture of the Central Karakoram National Parks in collaboration with Alpine Club of Pakistan.

SEED involves important Italian and Pakistani partners, all joining the objective of protecting the environmental heritage of the Karakoram region and improving the quality of life of population of the area. Engineer Maurizio Gallo will lead both the expeditions while guides of Alpine Club and technical director of the Karakoram Trust would also extend their help for the project.

Some key initiatives would also be part of these expeditions including creation of a school of ecology, development of an ecological platform for waste collection, training of trekking guides and high altitude porters and installation of an ecological island near the village of Askole.

Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan Vincenzo Prati has said the fragile ecosystem is threatened by the waste pollution so they are interested in providing help to start a department for monitoring of environmental changes in the region at Karakoram University.

He said that two cleaning expeditions would hopefully remove solid waste that is causing adverse effects on the environmental conditions of the mountainous range.

In 2009, an Italian organisation and its partners brought down to plains more than 8 tons of waste: paper, tins, glass and toxic material. Most of the waste have already been burnt and disposed through Earth, the waste disposal system installed in village of Askole, which is able to work four hours a day at full capacity.

Nazir Sabir, the president Alpine Club of Pakistan, who is the only Pakistani to have scaled both Mount Everest and K2, said the wonderful Baltoro region is always a paradise for climbers and trekkers from all over the world, with four peaks higher than 8,000 metres including K2, Broad Peak, Gasherbrum I and Gasherbrum II.