



Corean Alpine Club expedition leader Cho Sung-Dae (second right standing) with Yoo Hak-Jae (summitter and movie recorder), Bang Jung-Ho (summit third left standing) and Kim Tong-Kwan (sitting middle front).— Photo by the writer

Gasherbrum-IV bows down to Koreans after 11 years

By Asem Mustafa Awan

ISLAMABAD—Cho Sung-Dae kept his words by scaling the awesome Gasherbrum-IV (7,925 metres) which let only five climbers to its top till July 18 this year claimed seven who perished on its steep slopes while attempting to tame it.

Mr Cho, Leader of the Corean Alpine Club team which was celebrating its Golden Jubilee in 1995, had left for home unsuccessful, with members reaching 7,800 metres on the treacherous West Face.

Starting July 10, 1997, four climbers Yoo Hak-Jae, Bang Jung-Ho, Kim Tong-Kwan and Hwang Ki-Yong set their ambitions to go for the G-IV summit. Three went on to reach the top while the fourth, Hwang Ki-Yong, returned to the base camp because of an injury.

The team made history by making the first ascent on the Central Pillar which offers a vertical climb of roughly 3,500 metres and named the route "Corean Direct".

The team also used 7,000 metres of fixed ropes and used two bolts in the climb, one at the lower portion offering a very technical climb in the 6,000 metre area, and second at Haken Piton in the last portion between 6,800 metres to 7,200 metres.

The three summiters took eight days from Camp 2 at 6,200 metres to summit on July 18 and back.

The three who reached the summit are Yoo Hak-Jae (36), Bang Jung-Ho (28) and Kim Tong-Kwan (28). Yoo Hak-Jae also made a movie of this historic ascent achieved after 11 years. He also recorded the 1995 ascent and reached 7,800 metres.

The last ascent dates back in 1986 when three climbers Greg Child, Thomas Hargis and Timothy McCartney-Shape reached the summit from the North West Ridge. The first ascent on the peak dates back to 1958. Walter Bonatti and Carlo Mauri made the first ascent on the North East Ridge.

Cho Sung-Dae (34) leader and the Secretary General of the Corean Al-

pine Club in his exclusive talks to *The Nation* expressed his jubilation saying, 'I am very happy to have the climbers reaching the summit and coming back alive. The expedition planned its move very accordingly.'

"The climb was very difficult and it was Grade VI plus all the way," said Cho adding, "We lost our equipment on July 15 when a big serac broke burying our equipment at Camp 2 and Camp 1 and during the summit bid the members experienced an air like a jet stream coming from China which made them sit in their tracks for six hours, clinging with their ropes at 7,200 metres."

"I am very happy on the success and above all the expedition ended without any accident."

The team made Base Camp at 4,700 metres, Advance Base Camp at 4,800 metres, Camp 1 at 5,500 metres, Camp 2 at 6,200 metres, Camp 3 at 6,800 metres Camp 4 two bivouacs at 7,400 metres and 7,500 metres. Route Central Pillar (First Ascent) Corean Direct. Grade VI plus.