

# Nepal Tourism Board

## *E-Newsletter*

January 28, 2005

### Nepal Day Observed in Frankfurt

Nepal Day programme was organised at Frankfurt, Germany on January 24, 2005 by German-Asian Business Circle. Hon'ble Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Deep Kumar Upadhyaya was the Chief Guest of the programme. Welcoming the Minister Upadhyaya, President of the Circle and Honorary Royal Nepalese Consul to Frankfurt Mr. Bodo Krueger pleaded the German business community, journalists and tour operators to foster co-operation between Nepal and Germany and promote Nepal as a major destination for German tourists.

Addressing the function, the Hon'ble Minister highlighted tourism scenario of Nepal and emphasized that despite the problem of insurgency, Nepal has remained a safe and friendly destination for foreign tourists. Stating that Nepal attached due importance to the German market which currently contributed nearly ten percent of foreign tourist arrivals by air, the Minister said there is a huge potential in developing bilateral co-operation in promoting tourism in Nepal. He also called on potential German investors to take advantage of liberal and market- friendly economic policies pursued by His Majesty's Government and make joint investments in different tourism projects like regional airports which have been earmarked under the BOOT (build, operate own and transfer) scheme. Observing the fact that 10.4% of Nepal's foreign exchange reserves come from tourism, he stressed the need for resumption of direct air linkages between the two sides for further promoting tourism in Nepal which also has a major impact in alleviating poverty.

Speaking on the occasion, Royal Nepalese Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany, Madan Kumar Bhattarai lauded German co-operation in various fields particularly in the arena of cultural and heritage conservation that have emerged as major tourist spots in Nepal. He also emphasized that despite insurgency no foreigner, whether a tourist or development official, has been targeted and Nepal has remained a safe place for foreign tourists. The Hon'ble Minister later participated in a panel discussion about tourism in Nepal and answered various questions raised by the audience.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Executive Officer of the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) Tek Bahadur Dangi apprised the audience that despite adverse political climate Nepal's tourism growth in 2003 was phenomenal recording a 23% growth in comparison to the status of the previous year. He also said that the growth figure for 2004 was also not that bad taking into account negative media publicity and unfortunate riots on September 1 as the year witnessed around 13% rise in tourist traffic. He also assured German travel operators that NTB would make a special focus on German market to restore the earlier status of being the second most important tourist generating country after India during 1994-96.

President of the Nepal-German Chambers of Commerce and Industry Rohini Thapaliya presented a paper on Nepal's economy and chances for German small and medium enterprises to invest in Nepal. Dr. Roger Tynior presented a situation report on environmental protection in Nepal.

Important German tour operators, journalists, diplomatic representatives and Nepalese staying in Frankfurt attended the function. Kishore Raj Pandey, Vice-President of the Nepal-German Chambers of Commerce and Industry, moderated the panel discussion. Video presentations on diverse aspects Nepal's tourism were also made on the occasion.

The programme was followed by an evening reception, which was attended by a large numbers of tour operators, journalists, and diplomats, members of Nepalese community friends and well-wishers of Nepal.

Meanwhile, Hon'ble Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Deep Kumar Upadhyaya had a meeting with Vice-President of the Lufthansa Thomas Kropp and other senior officials of the German carrier in Frankfurt on Monday, January 24, 2005.

The two sides had a friendly and cordial discussion on promoting technical co-operation between Lufthansa and Royal Nepal Airlines, possibility of resuming flights between Kathmandu and Frankfurt and Lufthansa's possible role as a strategic partner in promoting RNAC's management efficiency. During the meeting, the German side

assured the Hon'ble Minister that Lufthansa would positively consider Nepal's request and promised to look into the entire gamut of cooperation from a fresh perspective in the near future.

Royal Nepalese Ambassador Madan Kumar Bhattarai, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Shankar Prasad Koirala, Managing Director of the RNAC Mohan Prasad Khanal and Chief Executive Officer of the NTB Tek Bahadur Dangi were also present on the occasion.

## Increase in tourist arrivals in Annapurna Conservation Area

Annapurna Conservation Area received a total of 42347 tourists in the year 2004, which is the increase in previous year arrival data by 1812. Other countries' (except SAARC nationals) tourists dominated the arrivals, which was 40709 while SAARC tourist arrival was 1638. In the statement issued on January 26, 2005 by King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC), the information regarding tourist arrival is disseminated. The maximum number of arrival last year was in month of October when 9314 tourist reached the area. The Annapurna Conservation (ACA) is spread over 7,629 sq. km. of Kaski, Myagdi, Parbat and Manang districts in northwest Nepal. Established in 1986, the conservation area is surrounded by high mountains and deep valleys. A mosaic of ethnic groups has carved lifestyle out of its steep terraces and barren plateaus. The conservation area is also home to 1,226 species of plants, 38 species of orchids, 9 species of Rhododendrons, 101 species of mammals, 478 species of birds, 39 species reptiles and 22 species of amphibians.

Annapurna Conservation Area is a major trekking destination in Nepal. More than 40,000 tourists annually visit the conservation area. Ghandruk and Lwang are typical Gurung villages with scenic splendor.

## Management of Tourist Information Centre programme held

A discussion programme on Management of Tourist Information Centre was organised today to discuss the possibilities of strengthening the tourist information centres in Nepal. A presentation was made by Mr. Alfred Vorstenbosch, PUM, Expert and former CEO of Bulgarian Tourism Authority suggesting raise in taxes from the tour operators and hotels rather than levying visa fee and airport tax. Attended by private sector stakeholders and the staff of Nepal Tourism Board, he also made suggestion on various issues relating to tourism industry including entry fee to different heritage sites. Mr. Subash Nirola, Acting CEO, Nepal Tourism Board, in his welcome note, said that this kind of interaction would help broaden the idea of tourism. Organised by Nepal Tourism Board, the same kind of programme was also held in Pokhara last week.

## Fifth Koshi Migratory Bird Festival from February 1, 2005

The fifth Koshi Tappu bird festival will be organized at the Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve, the largest watershed area of Nepal, from February 1-8, 2005. The festival is being organised on the occasion of the World Watershed Day on the initiation of Nepal Tourism Board, Department of National Park and Wildlife Reserve, Wildlife Preservation Office, World Wildlife Fund, World Conservation Association and the local government and non government agencies.

The Koshi Tappu area is popular for its richness in diversity of birds. There are 479 species of birds, both indigenous and migratory; some of them are rare ones. The Bird festival is being organised for the last five years. Birds migrate to Koshi Tappu from as far as Siberia, Mongolia, Tibet and India and other Asian countries in winter for breeding and other purpose. Every year about 165 species of birds migrates to the area at different times of the year-90 species of them come to Koshi Tappu during the winter. There are about 115 species aquatic birds indigenous to Nepal. The area has 19 species of birds, which are considered rare or endangered. The festival comprises of series of activities like bird watching, preparation of list of migratory birds, street play for the conservation of biodiversity of the region, cultural programs of ethnic groups, honouring people working for bird conservation. Primary objective of the festival is to promote Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve as a primary destination for the bird watchers and Eco-tourists. The festival also aims to develop a wildlife tourist link to Royal Chitwan National Park, Milke Jaljale and Kanchanjunga.

## Feature of the Week

# Tourism Infrastructure in Taplejung Increasing

Shamhu Prasain, Journalist

The magnificent 8,586-metre-tall Kanchanjanga mountain, the third highest mountain in the world, and the Phungfunge waterfall and Timbukpokhari pond are some of the special natural attractions in Taplejung district.

Apart from these, the Pathibhara Temple, the famous pilgrimage in the Eastern Development Region, the Bhootpokhari and Sodopokhari ponds and the Ilaphedi waterfall in the district are none less important from tourism point of view.

Tourists come to the district to see and study the rich natural and cultural heritage and enjoy its splendor despite various difficulties. However, the tourists themselves have to make arrangements for food and accommodation, as there is lack of well-managed hotels and lodges and transportation facilities in the district.

"There are many cases of tourists sometimes losing their way while trekking and facing a lot of hardships," says Om Prakash Rai, a tourism entrepreneur from local Suketar.

Although there is ample prospect for the development of tourism in the district, it has not developed to the desired extent due to the lack of tourism infrastructures. Among the obstacles for the development of tourism in the district, a mention may be made of the lack of good hotels and lodges and roads as well as the lack of publicity of temples and shrines and other natural heritage in the district. Similarly, lack of effort in conservation and promotion of the native culture of the district has also hindered development of tourism in Taplejung district.

Tourists in recent years have felt some relief after the implementation of the Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme (TRPAP) in the district. This programme was started three years ago by His Majesty's Government with the cooperation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The objective of this programme is alleviation of the problems faced by tourists and the rural poverty by means of sustainable tourism development.

TRPAP has been implemented in Phawakhola, Phurumbu, Lingkhim, Mamangkhe, Tellok and Khewang VDCs in the district. These Village Development Committees (VDCs) were selected for the implementation of the programme on the basis of their potentials for tourism development. Local people say that tourists have felt great relief through the development of such infrastructures as trekking routes and trails, drinking water facilities and hotel management in the VDCs where the TRPAP has been implemented.

However, this is not enough for the development of tourism in the district. Although VDCs where TRPAP has been implemented have the basic facilities for tourists, the need for the development of tourism infrastructure in Taplejung district with 50 VDCs remains ever more stark, according to the Acting Local Development Officer of the DDC Bhim Prasad Poudel.

Programme coordinator Ram Prasad Dahal, recalling the situation in the VDCs prior to the implementation of the TRPAP, says that the programme has achieved remarkable results in the development of tourism as well as in terms of alleviation of rural poverty. But, according to him, the tourism remains the same as before beyond the borders of TRPAP VDCs.

In Lelep, Yamphudin, Olangchungola and Papung VDCs development initiatives have been taken by Kanchanjanga Conservation Area Project (KCAP). According to tourism experts the VDCs are in the process of attaining the desired results in tourism, with more focus needed in developing trekking trails and basic well-managed tourist facilities.

In this line TRPAP has made a big investment in the construction of the mule track, which is also the basic need for tourism development. Stone slabs have been laid on a total of 35,942 metres of mule tracks in the six programmes VDCs.

According to statistics made available by the VDCs concerned, stone slabs have been laid on 5,900 metres of track in Mamangkhe VDC; 11,967 metres in Phawakhola VDC; 13,935 metres in Khewang VDC; 2,780 metres in Tellok VDC; and 1,560 metres in Lingkhim VDC.

Former Chairman of Phurumbu VDC, Gam Bahadur Phurumbu, however, stated that the task of paving the mule tracks with stone slabs has not been carried out sufficiently in his VDC. He said the work has been completed only

on about 150 metres of the track leading to the Pathibhara Temple.

So far, 12 drinking water projects, one suspension bridge, two concrete bridges, 19 sign boards, 27 tourist routes and one wooden bridge have been constructed in the area in connection with the development of tourism infrastructure in the area, according to Programme coordinator Dahal. Of these infrastructure projects, the suspension bridge has been constructed in collaboration with the Building Bridges at Local Level (BBLL) project.

TRPAP, implemented since 2002 has so far invested Rs. 15,594,444.63 for the construction of the different development infrastructures. Out of these projects, Rs. 1,467,400 has been invested as loan for doing different businesses for increasing the income and the earning of the poor people.

The need for implementing such programmes for the development of tourism has been felt even more in Taplejung district. Local people are of the belief that the development of tourism in the district would further gain momentum if the local Suketar airstrip, the only easy means of transportation available for tourists coming in the district, is developed in a systematic way and regular flights are operated there.

Similarly, there is a need for constructing either motorable road or mule track from the district headquarters to the different tourist destinations in the district. It is hoped that publicizing the native culture and traditions of the different ethnic communities in the district and its protection and promotion would also greatly help in developing tourism in the district. Likewise, the display of the cultural diversity available in the district would also be beneficial in the promoting tourism in the Taplejung district.

According to a report prepared by the Kanchanjanga Area Conservation Project, a total of 865 tourists visited the district in 2000. This is the largest number of tourists recorded in the district since it was opened for foreign trekkers in 1988. Similarly, 701 tourists visited Taplejung in 2001, 646 in 2002, 519 in 2003 and 417 in 2004. So far, 9,974 tourists from different countries have visited Taplejung district since 1988.

Therefore, it is necessary that His Majesty's Government bring more special programmes for the development of tourism infrastructure so as to increase tourist arrivals in the district.

## **- Rural Tourism Feature- 16/ TRPAP**

### Upcoming Events

#### **Life through the Lens**

Photograph by Kishore Kayastha

Date: Till January 31, 2005

Venue: Indigo Gallery

Tel: 4413580

E-mail: [indigo@wlink.com.np](mailto:indigo@wlink.com.np)

#### **Lha Phewa Kumbha Mela**

Date: Till January 29, 2005

Venue: Jomsom

#### **Pokhara Marathon**

Date: February 18, 2005

Venue: Pokhara

Organised by The Ex-Sportsmen Forum

Tel: 061 520 751

#### **Kickin' Up Dust**

Photographs of Australian contemporary indigenous cultural festivals

Date: Till January 31, 2005

Venue: Siddhartha Art Gallery

Tel: 4218048

**Fifth Koshi Migratory Bird Festival**

Date: February 1-8, 2005

Venue: Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve

**Media Center**

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