



Map showing the extent and the locations of the Project Highway in Nepal

project road passes through high mountains of the Greater Himalayan Range to reach Pokhara. The road passes through the Chure and Mahabharat Ranges of hilly terrains up to 4000m height. The climate of the area is tropical in Butwal but extreme in Pokhara with hot summers and cold winters.

Butwal is a rapidly growing urban agglomeration in Rupandehi district. It is an intersection of two major highways, the East-West Highway and Siddhartha Highway. Butwal is also growing fast as a sub-metropolitan city and is important for its educational institutes, health facilities, infrastructure, highway connections, communication network, trade and commerce, banking and finance, and direct connection with India by road and air. Population was about 120,000 as per 2011 census but is expected to grow to a million by 2020. There are important Buddhist pilgrimage locations in the area.

Pokhara is the second largest city in Nepal and is the HQ of Kaski district in Gandaki Zone under Central Western Development Region. Pokhara is a Trekkers' paradise due

to proximity of Annapurna and other Ranges, the home of the Gurkha people. As a result of the sharp rise in altitude, the geological and environmental condition of the city region changes rapidly. The area has one of the highest precipitation in the country, 5600 mm/year. The Seti Gandaki is the main river flowing through the city and its four tributaries have created several gorges and canyons in and around the city. Population of the city is about 350,000 (2011). The temperature varies between 25°C to 33°C in summer and around -2°C to 15°C in winter. The city does not experience snowfall but the surrounding hills do. The road was on an important trading route between China and India. After occupation of Tibet by China in 1962, the old trading route through Pokhara became defunct. It has become a tourist attraction and is the tourism capital of Nepal. Nearly one million tourists visit the place every year.

The Batwal-Tansen section of the road consists of rocky terrain affected by frequent rock falls causing road blocks and fatal accidents. Although it is a

spectacular mountain road, clinging to near vertical canyon walls, views of snow white peaks, valleys and waterfalls, the condition of the road is very poor and vulnerable to landslide risks. Landslides often block the road during monsoon. It is mainly used for transporting food grains and agricultural products. Passengers largely avoid the route due to threat of accident and delays. The project will upgrade the Highway from a narrow, single lane dilapidated road into a two-lane standard highway with all safety features to promote tourism and economic development of the area.

The objective of the consultancy service is to carry out feasibility study, detailed engineering survey and design, cost estimation, contract packaging, procurement planning and bid documentation along with pre-investment social and environmental assessment as per ADB Guidelines.

The contract for the consultancy services has been signed and the work has started. BCL, in joint venture with Hifab of Sweden, and with SILT Consultants of Nepal in association are the consultants. The author is the Transport Economist in the team. □

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CROSS-BORDER ROAD NETWORK IMPROVEMENT IN BANGLADESH

The Cross-border Road Improvement Project is being