



**Buddha Air**

**NICCI**

Nepal - India Chamber of Commerce & Industry



# VARANASI ROADSHOW

Program Report

30TH JANUARY 2026 | THE CLARKS HOTEL  
VARANASI, UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA



# FOREWORD

The Varanasi Roadshow marks a significant milestone in strengthening the enduring cultural and tourism partnership between Nepal and India. Organized by the Nepal-India Chamber of Commerce and Industry in collaboration with Nepal Tourism Board and Buddha Air, this initiative reflects our shared commitment to fostering deeper people-to-people connections through tourism.

Rooted in centuries of shared heritage, faith, and tradition, the relationship between our two nations transcends borders. The Roadshow, held in the sacred city of Varanasi, provided a meaningful platform to highlight the immense potential of bilateral tourism, particularly in the realm of religious and spiritual circuits. It also marked the launch of Religious and Spiritual Circuits Nepal and India, a publication that captures the profound interconnectedness of our sacred geographies.

This report encapsulates not only the proceedings of the Roadshow but also the spirit of collaboration that made it possible. It is a testament to the collective efforts of stakeholders, institutions, and individuals dedicated to promoting sustainable tourism and preserving our shared legacy.

As we move forward, may this initiative inspire continued cooperation, greater tourist exchanges, and a deeper appreciation of the timeless bonds that unite Nepal and India.

**MRS. SHREEJANA RANA,**  
*IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT & CONVENER, TOURISM COMMITTEE  
NEPAL-INDIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (NICCI)*



# PREFACE

The Varanasi Roadshow stands as a landmark initiative in advancing the enduring partnership between Nepal and India. As the first international event organized by the Nepal-India Chamber of Commerce and Industry, it signifies a bold step toward strengthening bilateral engagement through tourism, culture, and shared heritage.

Hosted in the timeless city of Varanasi, this Roadshow reflects the deep spiritual and cultural ties that bind our nations. In collaboration with the Nepal Tourism Board and Buddha Air, we have sought to transform centuries-old connections into a modern and seamless religious and spiritual tourism circuit.

From Kashi Vishwanath Temple to Pashupatinath Temple, and from Lumbini to Sarnath, our shared sacred geography offers immense potential for deeper engagement and increased tourist flow.

This report captures not only the proceedings of the Roadshow but also the vision of creating accessible, interconnected pilgrimage experiences.

As we build on this momentum, I am confident that the pathways between Kathmandu and Varanasi will continue to flourish, strengthening not only our tourism sectors but also the deep-rooted bonds that unite our people across generations.

**MR. KUNAL KAYAL**  
*VICE PRESIDENT*  
NEPAL-INDIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (NICCI)



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of the Nepal-India Chamber of Commerce and Industry, I extend my sincere gratitude to all those whose support, collaboration, and commitment made the Varanasi Roadshow a resounding success.

I would also like to express our appreciation to Mr. Dinesh Kumar and the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department for their invaluable cooperation and warm hospitality in Varanasi.

Our heartfelt thanks go to Mr. Binod Chaudhary for his inspiring presence and to Mr. Sunil Sharma and the Nepal Tourism Board for their steadfast partnership in promoting Nepal's tourism potential. We are equally thankful to our valued partner Buddha Air for enhancing connectivity and supporting this initiative. In this regard, we would also like to acknowledge the contributions of Mr. Uddhav Subedi, Station Manager, and Mr. Rupesh Joshi, Director of Marketing, Sales, and Ground Handling Department, for their dedicated support and coordination.

We also extend our sincere appreciation to Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), particularly the Varanasi Zone and their Chairman Mr. Umang Sah, as well as to all industry stakeholders, media representatives, and participants who contributed to the success of this event.

Most importantly, I would like to acknowledge the leadership and dedication of our Immediate Past President, Mrs. Shreejana Rana, whose vision and tireless efforts were instrumental in conceptualizing this initiative and the publication launched alongside it.

**MR. SASHI KANT AGRAWAL**  
*EXECUTIVE MEMBER*  
NEPAL-INDIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (NICCI)



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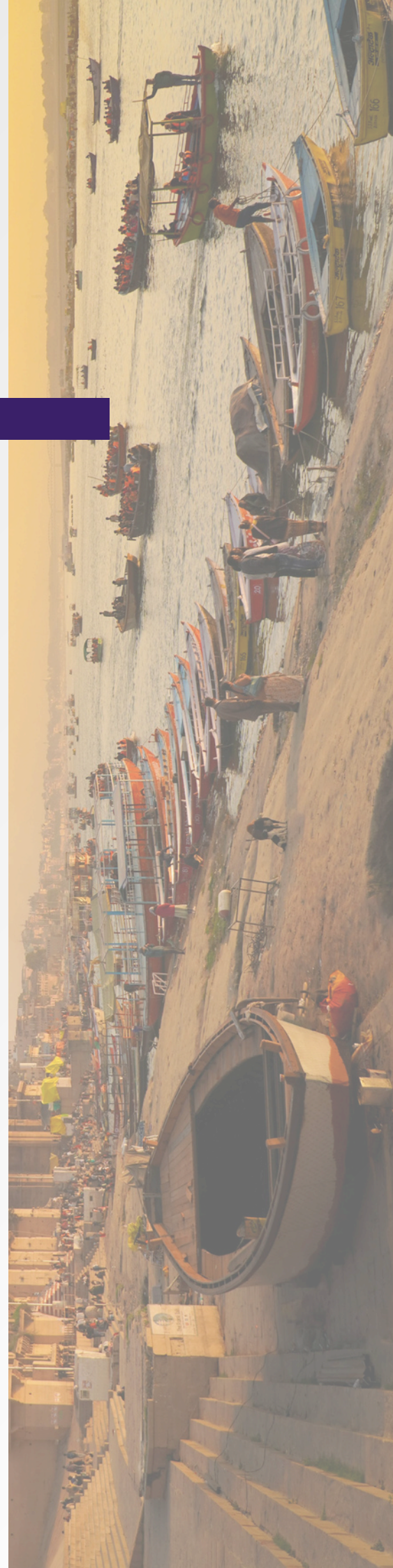
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## ORGANIZERS



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**30TH JANUARY 2026 | 4.45PM - 7PM**  
**THE CLARKS HOTEL**  
 VARANASI, UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA

The Nepal-India Chamber of Commerce & Industry (NCCI), in association with Nepal Tourism Board, Buddha Air, organized its first-ever International Roadshow, “The Varanasi Roadshow” at The Clark Varanasi Hotel, in Varanasi, India. The Roadshow aimed to promote Nepalese Tourism, inviting more tourists from India.

Various dynamics play an instrumental role in Nepal-India relations. Both countries share deep cultural, spiritual, and historical ties, particularly through religious tourism. The sacred Shiva Circuit (Pashupatinath, Muktinath, Kedarnath, Banaras connection), Buddhist Circuit (Lumbini, Bodh Gaya, Kushinagar, Sarnath), and Sikh Circuit represent a natural spiritual and tourism bridge between the two countries. There is no visa requirement for travelers; we are very well connected, and our cultures are closely knit together.

The program was split into two parts:

- Media Briefing, 2PM
- Varanasi Roadshow, 5PM

Promotional initiatives such as the Varanasi roadshow play a key role in boosting pilgrimage tourism. The roadshow encouraged pilgrims to include Nepal in the Char Dham Yatra by visiting Pashupatinath Temple. The Varanasi roadshow, therefore, was an important step toward attracting more Indian tourists to Nepal in the days ahead.



# PROGRAM SCHEDULE



## *Varanasi Roadshow*

### **Media Briefing**

30th January 2026 | 1.45PM -3PM| The Clarks Hotel, Varanasi

RSVP: Kuber Chalise, Program Consultant  
Whatsapp +977 9851076304



## PROGRAM SCHEDULE

1.45PM	Arrival Of Participants
2.00PM	Welcome Remarks by Mr. Kunal Kayal, Vice President, NICCI
2.15PM	Presentation from Nepal Tourism Board, Mr. Sunil Sharma, Officiating Director, NTB
2.45PM	Closing Remarks from Mrs. Shreejana Rana, Immediate Past President, NICCI
3.00PM	Q&A and High Tea

# PROGRAM SCHEDULE



## *Varanasi Roadshow*

30th January 2026 | 4.45PM Onwards | The Clarks Hotel, Varanasi

RSVP: Kuber Chalise, Program Consultant  
Whatsapp +977 9851076304

### PROGRAM SCHEDULE

4.45PM	Arrival Of Participants
5.00PM	Welcome Remarks by Mr, Kunal Kayal, Vice President, NICCI
5.10 PM	Remarks by Mrs. Shreejana Rana, IPP, NICCI
5.20PM	Keynote Speech by Mr. Binod Chaudhary, Chairman, Chaudhary Group
5.35PM	Spiritual and Religious Circuit Book Launch
5.45PM	Presentation by Mr. Sunil Sharma, Officiating Director, Nepal Tourism Board
6.05PM	Remarks by Mr. Umang Shah, CII Varanasi Zone Chairman & Managing Director, UP National Manufacturers Ltd
6.20PM	Address by Mr.Dinesh Kumar, Joint Director of UP Tourism
6.30PM	Vote of Thanks by Mr.Sashi Kant Agrawal, Executive Member, NICCI

# KEY THEMES

The Roadshow was anchored around the need for market recovery. It focused on tourism promotion, particularly in response to a slight decline in Indian tourist arrivals despite overall growth in Nepal's tourism sector. The event uplifted the importance of focusing on high-potential regions such as eastern Uttar Pradesh, recognizing their cultural proximity and travel potential. Using data-driven insights, the roadshow positioned itself as a strategic intervention to realign Nepal's tourism outreach with evolving market dynamics and close the gap between targets and actual arrivals.

A central theme of the roadshow was the integration of cross-border religious and spiritual circuits, highlighting the deep-rooted cultural and spiritual ties between Nepal and India. The concept of seamless pilgrimage routes—linking iconic destinations such as Pashupatinath, Varanasi, Lumbini, and Ayodhya—was presented as both a symbolic and practical pathway to strengthen tourism. This approach emphasized transforming ancient pilgrimage traditions into modern, accessible travel experiences, thereby enhancing the appeal for contemporary travelers while preserving shared heritage.

Closely tied to this was the theme of economic synergy through tourism-led collaboration. The roadshow positioned tourism not merely as a cultural exchange but as a catalyst for broader economic growth, trade, and bilateral cooperation. By promoting integrated tourism circuits and improving connectivity, the initiative aimed to boost local economies, generate employment, and create new opportunities for businesses on both sides of the border. This reinforced tourism's role as a key pillar in strengthening Nepal-India economic relations.

Another significant focus was on professional networking and B2B engagement, with the roadshow serving as a platform for meaningful interactions between Nepalese stakeholders and over 100 Indian travel trade representatives. These engagements facilitated partnerships, knowledge exchange, and potential business collaborations, ensuring that the momentum generated during the event translates into tangible outcomes. The emphasis on structured networking brought home the value of private-sector involvement in driving sustainable tourism growth.

The roadshow introduced a compelling brand narrative for Nepal centered on mystery, history, and hospitality, redefining the destination's positioning in the Indian market. Nepal presented itself as a holistic and immersive travel experience, combining spiritual depth, rich cultural heritage, natural beauty, and warm hospitality. This story made Nepal stand out in a crowded tourism market and matched what today's travelers want in terms of emotions and experiences, highlighting its charm as a place where tradition and peace come together.

## OVERVIEW

# MEDIA BRIEFING



The media briefing ahead of the Varanasi Roadshow took place at Hotel Clarks Varanasi between 2:00 PM and 3:00 PM, setting the tone for the main event that would follow. The room was filled with media representatives, industry voices, and organizers, all gathered to get a clear picture of what the roadshow aimed to present.

The session began with welcome remarks by **Mr. Kunal Kayal, Vice President of NICCI**. He introduced the organization in a straightforward way—what it does and why it exists. He spoke about NICCI’s role in connecting traders, investors, entrepreneurs, and businesses from Nepal and India. He explained that the chamber works across areas like trade, tourism, investment, and dialogue, while also advocating for policy improvements and helping resolve business-related challenges between the two countries.

He then moved into something more grounded in culture and people—how Nepal and India are linked beyond business. He pointed to religious routes like Varanasi to Kathmandu and Sarnath to Lumbini, noting that these connections have existed for generations. He made it clear that the goal of the roadshow was simple: to bring people closer.

This was followed by a presentation from **Mr. Sunil Sharma, Officiating Director of the Nepal Tourism Board**. His presentation covered almost everything—Nepal’s geography, history, tourism offerings, religious sites, wildlife, and hospitality. It was detailed but also visually engaging, with strong imagery that held attention in the room. One key point he mentioned was the direct flight connection between Kathmandu and Varanasi operated by Buddha Air, highlighting ease of travel between the two cities.

**Mrs. Shreejana Rana, Immediate Past President of NICCI**, then spoke about the purpose behind the roadshow. She explained that it was centered on promoting tourism between Nepal and India, especially through religious and spiritual connections. She referred to the “Religious and Spiritual Circuits” book, which documents these links in depth.

Her remarks brought in stories that many people in the room may not have heard in detail before—Goddess Janaki being born in Nepal and Lord Ram in Ayodhya, the Pandavas’ connection to Swargadwari, Lord Buddha’s life spanning both countries, and Guru Nanak’s visit to Nepal where he helped establish a Sikh community. She also mentioned the Shakti Peeths that exist across both countries.

She pointed out that younger generations are slowly losing touch with these shared stories and emphasized the need to document and share them. To make this easier, a QR code had been provided to attendees, giving access to the research and material behind the book. Her message was clear: these connections are real, and they need to be seen and understood.

**Mr. Uddhav Subedi, Station Manager for Buddha Air in Varanasi**, followed with brief remarks. He thanked everyone for being present and shared that Buddha Air has been operating in Varanasi for 13 years. He spoke about the airline’s ongoing efforts to improve connectivity and encouraged people in Varanasi to visit Nepal and experience it firsthand.

**Mr. Sashi Kant Agrawal, Executive Member of NICCI**, brought in a more practical perspective. He spoke about the importance of connectivity, not just in terms of flights but also in terms of currency and ease of movement. He addressed concerns around recent unrest, mentioning that Nepal had bounced back quickly after the Gen Z riots and that no tourists had been harmed during that time. He stressed that visitors are treated as a priority and referred to the idea of “Atithi Devo Bhawa” as something that is taken seriously in Nepal.

The session then opened up for questions from the media. One reporter asked about the status of hotels in Lumbini following the unrest. Mr. Agrawal responded with specific numbers—around 7 to 8 five-star hotels are currently operational, 10 to 12 three-star hotels are available, and another 5 to 6 are in development. He also mentioned that the airport in the region is expected to begin operations, which could increase movement along the Buddhist circuit. Bhairahawa, he added, also has several large casinos that are actively operating.

In a broader comment, he noted that Nepal is often seen only through the lens of the Himalayas, especially Everest, and said there is a need to highlight places like Pashupatinath as well. He suggested that visitors coming to Kashi Vishwanath should also be encouraged to visit Pashupatinath, pointing out that Nepal is not expensive and that connectivity between the two countries is already strong. He added that trekking is currently at its peak and that Nepal is steadily gaining momentum in tourism and infrastructure, in a gradual and sustainable way. He also touched briefly on Nepal’s domestic industry and how tourism fits into that larger picture.

After the formal session, the interaction continued informally. Mr. Sashi Kant Agrawal gave multiple one-on-one interviews, where he spoke further about the roadshow and Nepal’s tourism potential. Mr. Uddhav Subedi was interviewed about Buddha Air’s operations, including flight details and pricing. Mr. Sunil Sharma spoke to the media about the Nepal Tourism Board’s efforts to promote travel circuits and attract visitors. Mrs. Shreejana Rana’s interviews focused on the purpose of the roadshow and the close religious ties between Nepal and India, which she emphasized throughout.

By the end of the hour, the briefing had covered key points, addressed questions, and provided the media with clear information ahead of the roadshow.

# OVERVIEW

# ROADSHOW



The evening session of NICCI's Varanasi Roadshow began at 5 PM at the Clarks Varanasi, marking a milestone as the Chamber's first-ever international roadshow. The setting itself felt fitting—Varanasi, a city where history, faith, and daily life exist side by side, provided a natural backdrop for conversations about Nepal-India ties that go far beyond business.

The program opened with welcome remarks by **Mr. Kunal Kayal, Vice President of NICCI**. He described the roadshow as a first for NICCI—an important step outside Nepal—and pointed to Varanasi as the right place to begin. The connection, he noted, isn't just geographic. It's layered with shared belief systems, traditions, and stories that people on both sides have grown up with.

He drew attention to the spiritual links between the Kashi Vishwanath Temple and the Pashupatinath Temple, describing them as symbols of a deeper connection. He also touched on wider cultural routes—the Buddhist circuit linking Lumbini to Sarnath, and the Sikh circuit shaped by the travels of Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

A special mention was made of Mrs. Shreejana Rana for her work on a commemorative book to be unveiled later in the evening. Mr. Binod Chaudhary's presence, despite a busy schedule, was acknowledged, along with appreciation for Buddha Air for strengthening Kathmandu-Varanasi connectivity and for CII Varanasi Zone for their support. He closed by encouraging participants to see this roadshow as a starting point, using the image of the Bagmati and Ganges rivers as a reminder of how closely the two countries are tied.

**Mrs. Shreejana Rana, Immediate Past President of NICCI**, followed with remarks that focused on the cultural and spiritual familiarity between Nepal and India. She spoke about how easy it is for people to travel between the two countries—no visas, minimal language barriers, and a shared cultural rhythm that makes visitors feel at home. Her remarks centered on the newly launched book, which documents religious circuits across Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism. She highlighted the importance of storytelling in tourism—explaining not just where to go, but why it matters.

She brought in references that resonate across borders: the story of Goddess Janaki and Lord Ram connecting Nepal and India, the Pandavs and Swargadwari, the life of Gautama Buddha, and the travels of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. She also spoke about the story of Lord Shiva and Sati Devi to explain the origin of Shakti Peeths, including Guhyeshwari Temple. The book, she said, is an effort to preserve oral traditions and present them in a way that future generations can engage with. She acknowledged the contributions of scholars, partners, and the NICCI team, and invited guests to be part of what she described as a shared journey moving forward.

The keynote address by **Mr. Binod Chaudhary , Chairman of Chaudhary Group**, brought a different energy to the room—part reflection, part call to action. He spoke about the unique relationship between Nepal and Varanasi, recalling how, for generations, people in Nepal have seen Kashi as a place where life comes full circle. He described how even in earlier times, there was a desire among many to spend their final days in Kashi, underlining the emotional connection.

Referencing the transformation of Kashi Vishwanath, he pointed to what political will and vision can achieve, and linked that to destinations like Pashupatinath and Janakpur. He spoke about the natural connection between Ayodhya and Janakpur, calling these links organic rather than constructed.

His focus then shifted to tourism and connectivity. He made the case that Nepal could attract millions more visitors from India alone, calling it not just a dream but something entirely possible. The key, he said, is connectivity—better use of airports, closer coordination with Indian authorities, and building confidence through capable operators. He referenced India's UDAN scheme and how smaller cities like Darbhanga and Gorakhpur have become active travel hubs, already being used by Nepali travelers flying onward to major Indian cities. This, he said, is clear proof of demand.

He pointed out that several destinations remain underconnected and that improving these links could change the scale of Nepal's tourism sector. Demand, he noted, drives supply—if more people come, the industry will respond. He also reminded the audience that Nepal has much more to offer than the handful of destinations it was once known for, encouraging a broader view of the country's tourism potential.

The evening then moved to the launch of NICCI's first-ever book in India, *Religious and Spiritual Circuits*, marking another first for the organization during this roadshow.

This was followed by a presentation from **Mr. Sunil Sharma, Officiating Director of the Nepal Tourism Board**. His presentation covered Nepal in its entirety—from geography and history to culture, wildlife, and hospitality. The visuals used throughout captured attention, offering a vivid look at the country's diversity. He also highlighted the direct Kathmandu–Varanasi flight operated by Buddha Air, reinforcing the theme of connectivity that ran through the evening.

**Mr. Umang Sah, Chairman of CII Varanasi Zone**, highlighted the longstanding cultural and spiritual ties between India and Nepal, emphasizing how cities like Varanasi and Kathmandu share a deep-rooted religious and civilizational connection. He noted that such shared heritage creates a natural foundation for tourism collaboration, particularly in the religious and spiritual segments.

Stressing the role of the private sector, he encouraged greater business-to-business engagement to unlock opportunities in hospitality, infrastructure, and tourism services across both countries. He underlined the importance of structured partnerships between industry bodies like CII and organizations such as NICCI to drive sustainable growth in bilateral tourism. He expressed optimism that initiatives like the Varanasi Roadshow would pave the way for deeper economic cooperation and stronger people-to-people connections.

**Remarks by Mr. Dinesh Kumar, Joint Director, Uttar Pradesh Tourism,** focused on the immense potential of integrating tourism circuits between Uttar Pradesh and Nepal, particularly within the Buddhist and Hindu pilgrimage routes. He emphasized the potential for seamless connections between destinations like Varanasi, Ayodhya, and Lumbini to create enriching cross-border travel experiences. He emphasized that coordinated efforts in marketing, infrastructure development, and policy alignment would be key to enhancing the overall tourist experience.

He also spoke about the Government of Uttar Pradesh's ongoing initiatives to upgrade tourism infrastructure, improve accessibility, and promote the state as a global spiritual destination. Recognizing Nepal as a vital partner in this vision, he called for closer institutional collaboration to strengthen connectivity and jointly promote the region on international platforms.

The session concluded with closing remarks by **Mr. Sashi Kant Agrawal, Executive Member, NICCI.** He began by pointing out how Nepal is often seen only through the lens of the Himalayas—particularly Everest—and suggested that places like Pashupatinath deserve equal attention. He encouraged promoting Nepal to visitors coming to Kashi Vishwanath, highlighting how accessible and affordable Nepal is, and how well connected the two countries already are.

He also reflected on Nepal's resilience, mentioning how the country has a way of bouncing back quickly even after disruptions. He shared that during recent unrest, tourists remained safe and were treated as a priority, adding that the spirit of "Atithi Devo Bhava" is something Nepal takes seriously. He concluded with a straightforward message: he urged more people to visit Nepal and experience it firsthand.



# OUTCOMES & CONCLUSIONS

The NICCI Varanasi Roadshow marked a significant milestone as the Chamber's first international roadshow, aimed at strengthening business, cultural, and tourism ties between Nepal and India. A key highlight of the event was the launch of NICCI's Religious and Spiritual Coffee Table Book in India, which showcased Nepal's rich heritage and business opportunities, creating a lasting impression on the Indian audience. This initiative successfully positioned NICCI as a proactive promoter of Nepalese culture and commerce beyond national borders.

The roadshow garnered extensive media coverage across five leading Indian outlets, amplifying the visibility of NICCI and its initiatives. This high-profile media presence ensured that NICCI's message reached a broad audience, reinforcing its role as a credible and dynamic platform for business networking. The strategic communication efforts also highlighted Nepal's potential as a premier tourist destination, generating interest among Indian travelers and investors alike.

The roadshow helped NICCI members connect with potential Indian partners, investors, and industry peers. These interactions not only enhanced cross-border collaboration but also laid the groundwork for future partnerships, trade exchanges, and joint ventures. The event's structured networking sessions and targeted outreach contributed to a measurable increase in publicity and business inquiries, benefiting both NICCI members and the wider Nepalese business community.

In conclusion, the Varanasi Roadshow brought cultural promotion, business engagement, and media outreach together, marking a significant step for NICCI on the international stage. By promoting Nepal as a vibrant tourist and investment destination, launching its flagship book in India, and strengthening cross-border networks, NICCI has set a strong precedent for future international initiatives. The positive outcomes of this roadshow demonstrate NICCI's commitment to expanding its global footprint and encouraging meaningful collaborations to benefit Nepal's business ecosystem.

## ROADSHOW PARTICIPANTS

**102**

## MEDIA COVERAGE (INDIAN)

**6 OUTLETS**

## MEDIA COVERAGE (NEPALI)

**10 OUTLETS**

# EVENT GALLERY







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