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The Nepal Himalaya is mainly characterized by rugged topography, very high relief, variable climatic conditions, complex geological structures affected by active tectonic processes, and seismic activity. Topographic elevation changes from 60 m at the southern plains to 8848 m at the Mt Everest in the north within a horizontal distance of less than 200 km. Thus, the Nepal Himalaya has unique geological and geomorphological settings. This kind of topography is highly prone to landslide and erosion in Nepal. The mountainous and hilly regions of the country occupy nearly 83% of the total area, whereas the remaining 17% is flat land. The frequent earthquakes and seasonal monsoon rains, intense but improper land use practices make the Nepalese Himalayas the most unstable landscapes in the world. Therefore, the Nepal Himalaya has possibilities of geoparks, especially to enhance the livelihood of the local and indigenous Himali people in sustainable manner. With this objective, this paper aims to provide basic information of suitable sites of Nepal for geopark development.

As a preliminary work, eight sites were identified as suitable sites for geopark development (Figure 1). They include (1) Surkhet to Dailekh Corridor, (2) Kaligandaki Corridor - Muktinath to Beni, (3) Tinau Corridor - Butwal-Tansen, (4) Pokhara Valley and surrounding area, (5) Malekhu Khola - Thopal Khola Corridor, (6) Kathmandu valley paleolake sediment transect, (7) Salleri- Lukla-Namche Corridor, and (8) Charaali-Ilam Corridor.

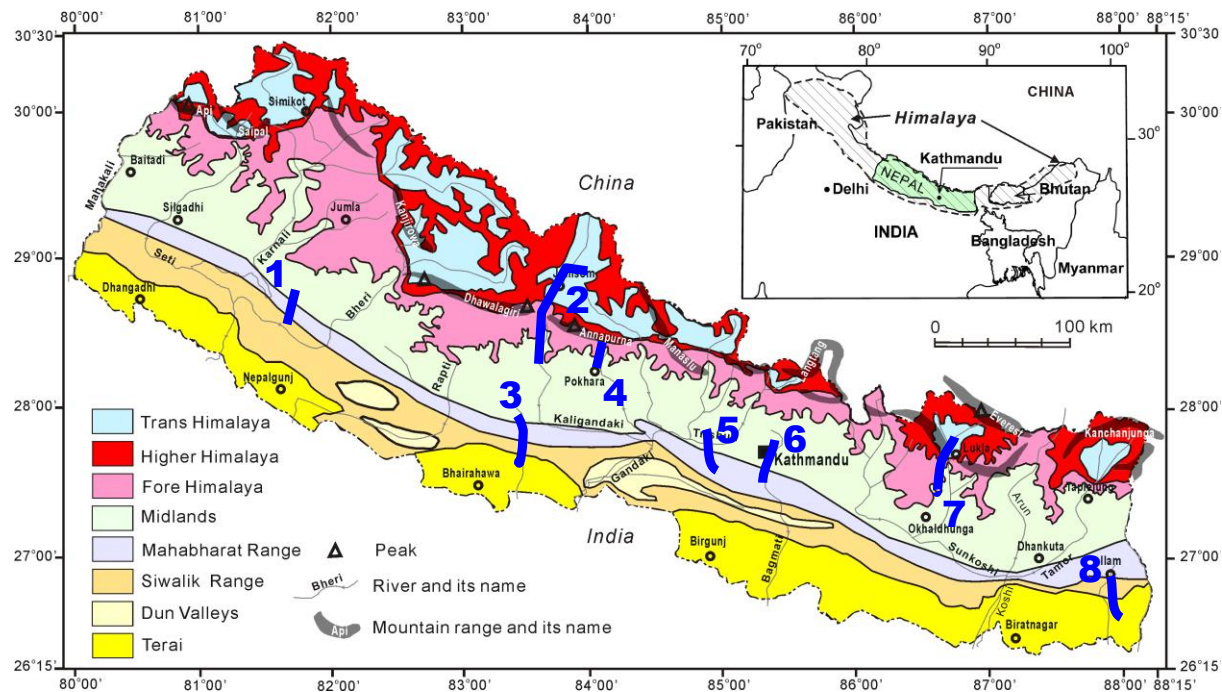


Figure 1: Regional geomorphology and location of suitable sites for geopark development. Numbers are location of proposed sites for geopark (see text).

Each proposed site/region/corridor has unique geological, socioeconomic and socio-cultural value. Further investigations for area of coverage need to be performed to begin geopark network in Nepal. For the sustainable development, this small and beautiful country needs extensive support from geopark experts around the world. The proposed geopark sites could be a preliminary network of geoparks in Nepal. After few commitments from the Government of Nepal and local people, Nepal can establish its first geopark in the Himalayan region. Constructive comments and suggestions are highly welcomed to enhance and to extend the coverage area of selected sites.

