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New budget soon: Adhikari

By A Staff Reporter

Kathmandu, June 6

Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Bharat Mohan Adhikari said on Monday that the government was working towards announcing the fiscal budget for the next year by the third week of June.

Minister Adhikari made these remarks while speaking at a meeting of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the Legislature Parliament today. He asked the political parties to forge consensus on the forthcoming budget at the earliest.

Adhikari stressed that agreements should be inked among the major parties to unveil the budget within June.

Earlier, the ministry had planned to release the budget on May 3 but it was delayed due to the opposition parties'

obstructions.

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During the meeting, the lawmakers had expressed their concern over the government's inability to expend its

development budget and asked the government to come up with ways to spend the development funds. Minister Adhikari revealed that Rs. 31 billion development budget is at risk of being 'frozen' due

effective. Stating that the NPC has not been able to come up with plans and programmes that are suitable for the country's development needs, they said it was the reason why most of NPC's plans have turned out to be a failure.

Similarly, there was also discussion on the report prepared by the PAC to investigate into the multi-million rupee Unity scam.

The government is said to be planning to file a case of tax embezzlement and fraud against the owners of Unity as well as those found guilty in the case. The PAC discussed the release of the new budget with Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Adhikari and Finance Secretary Krishna Hari Baskota in Singha Durbar today.

to the government's failure to spend it on time.

Lawmakers also urged the government to streamline the National Planning Commission (NPC) in order to make it more



NOT ONLY GOODS BUT ALSO FOOD: Slippers and other food stalls are being put at a parent in capital. (Photo: Rajendra /TRN)

PATA knots ties with STR Global

By A Staff Reporter

Kathmandu, June 6

The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) has forged a partnership with STR Global, as part of PATA's new strategic direction to "Build the Business" for members.

PATA members will benefit by receiving access to accommodation sector indicators that will enable better decision making, according to a press release issued by the association.

STR Global is the recognised leader in providing accurate, actionable information and analysis to the lodging industry. PATA members will now have access to key business indicators including room supply, the development pipeline, occupancy rates, average daily rate (ADR), and revenue per available room (RevPAR) right across Asia Pacific, it added.

PATA Interim CEO Bill

Calderwood and STR Global Managing Director Ms Elizabeth Randall signed the agreement in April at the PATA 60th Anniversary and Conference in Beijing. The partnership officially starts this month.

Calderwood said that the partnership would be extremely significant in the development of PATA's TIGA (tourism intelligence graphic architecture) platform that provides on-demand business information to PATA members.

Randall said: "With the increasing importance of Asia Pacific for the hospitality industry, we are partnering with PATA to share our expertise on hotel performance and hotel supply with PATA members. Our data puts a clear spotlight on the hotel industry and provides the basis for informed decision-making."

Nepal-France talk trade

By A Staff Reporter

Kathmandu, June 6

A delegation of private sector led by the President of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) Suraj Vaidya met with Jean Charles Demarquis, Ambassador of France to Nepal at FNCCI secretariat recently.

During the meeting, talks were held on promoting bilateral economic and business relations between the two countries.

Saying that Nepal could attract French investment in infrastructure development and energy sector, Ambassador Demarquis had asked the private sector to identify potential sectors of investment.

Nepal in South Asian Fair

By Our Special Correspondent

Kunming, Yunnan, China, June 6

The 4th South Asian Fair in Kunming has featured Nepal pavilion in which Nepal's home products are put on exhibition and sales.

About 50 stalls of different handicrafts, herbal, garment, thangka arts and others are being exhibited in the fair, which have been attracting large number of Chinese visitors, according to Nepal China Executive Council which is organising the Nepal pavilion at the fair.

Nepal's ambassador to China Tanka Prasad Karki said that Nepali entrepreneurs needed such kind of fair, especially in China, because

the northern neighbour can be a huge market for the Nepali goods.

Nepal's trade deficit with China is huge at present, such kinds of fairs can be successful in lowering the trade deficit of Nepal, Ambassador Karki said.

"However, the Nepali entrepreneurs need to be more innovative in showcasing their products to meet the demands of the Chinese people."

The demand of Nepali handicrafts is high in China and the Nepali entrepreneurs should also be aware of producing goods keeping in mind the huge number of Buddhism followers of China.

Meanwhile, Anup

Ranajan Bhattarai, President of Nepal China Executive Council, said his council's target was to increase the Nepali products reach China through such fairs.

"Last year, we had only 30 stalls but this year we have increased them to 50," he informed.

There is an attraction of Chinese people towards Nepali herbal, handicraft and garment products, he said.

Bhattarai further informed that the Nepali entrepreneurs would head to another Chinese city, Chendu, after the Kunming Fair, which winds up on June 10.

Bhaskarraj Rajkarnikar, senior vice president

Federation of Nepali Chambers of Commerce and Industries, said that China was gearing for making Kunming as a hub for trade and business of Southwest China with Southeast Asia and South Asia.

The 4th South Asian Fair is important because it could provide Nepal to exchange its trade with China and other nations. "Our products cannot compete with other nations at the huge fairs of Shanghai and Beijing, but they can lure many people of provinces like Yunnan through the Kunming fair," Rajkarnikar added.

The number of Nepali participants in the Kunming fair has increased by six folds

this year in comparison to past three years. Because of high demands of the Nepali handicrafts, the Nepali entrepreneurs, who earlier loved to visit Europe and America, are also opting to put their goods in exhibition in Chinese fairs, said Subodh Manandhar, a member of the Nepal China Executive Council.

Another member of the council, Shankar Ghimire, a pharmaceutical entrepreneur, said that the Nepali businessmen and industries were in a great need of fairs like this.

"We need a fair to promote our goods and services to the international markets," he said.

IATA halves airline profit

AFP

Singapore, June 6

IATA on Monday halved its profit forecast for the airline industry to \$4 billion in 2011 due to the March 11 tsunami in Japan, unrest in the Middle East and North Africa and high oil prices.

"That we are making any money at all in a year with this combination of unprecedented shocks is a result of a very fragile balance," International Air Transport Association (IATA) director-general Giovanni Bisignani said.

"Natural disasters in Japan, unrest in the Middle East and Africa, plus the sharp rise in oil prices have slashed industry profit expectations to \$4 billion this year," he said at IATA's annual general meeting, which is being held in Singapore this week.

The revised profit outlook is down sharply from a previous estimate of \$8.6 billion made in early March just before the tsunami-quake disasters struck northeastern Japan.

If the forecast is accurate, it would mark a 78 percent decline

from the post-recession profit of \$18 billion that the world's airlines made last year.

IATA's new profit outlook shows a meagre 0.7 percent margin on expected revenues of \$598 billion for the capital-intensive industry and leaves airlines with little capacity to absorb new external shocks.

"The efficiency gains of the last decade and the strengthening global economic environment are balancing the high price of fuel," said Bisignani, who is also IATA's chief executive officer.

NTB honoured at KOTFA 2011

By A Staff Reporter

Kathmandu, June 6

Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) participated in the 24th Korea World Travel Fair (KOTFA) 2011 held at Seoul from June 2-5, in South Korea.

NTB was honored with the best tourism promotion award at the KOTFA 2011 for its contribution to the tourism industry development with positive public relations and marketing, a press statement issued by NTB said Monday.

Participants from more than 60 countries took part in the fair that was attended

by more than 100,000 travel industry professionals, buyers and specialists and travel consumers. Korea is becoming a major player in the world tourism market.

By the end of April this year, the total number of in and outbound travelers of Korea reached 12 million, which means 100 thousand travelers per day.

The KOTFA 2011 is the market place where exhibitors shared latest travel news, information and marketing tools of each participating country. Lumbini was highlighted during the fair.

FHAN team to Germany

By A Staff Reporter

Kathmandu, June 6

A delegation of the Federation of Handicraft Association of Nepal led by its outgoing president Pushkar Man Shakya left for Frankfurt, Germany to participate in a business-to-business event.

The eight-member delegation will look for new market avenues in the European countries and help enhance trade relations with the small and medium entrepreneurs and business community, a press statement issued by the association said.

Oil prices dip before OPEC meet

AFP

London, June 6

Oil prices fell on Monday as traders took profits and geared up for this week's key OPEC meeting in Vienna.

New York's main contract, light sweet crude for delivery in July, sank 78 cents to \$99.44 per barrel. Brent North Sea crude for July weakened by 87 cents to \$114.97 in late morning deals.

The market had fallen sharply on Friday after publication of dismal US jobs figures for May but recovered by the end of the day for a modest loss.

"Brent is trading this morning at \$115 a barrel while WTI is just under \$100. Disappointing US labour market data therefore knocked prices only briefly," said analyst Carsten Fritsch at Commerzbank.

"The weak US figures should increase the pressure on OPEC to raise production quotas at its meeting in Vienna on Wednesday, though.

"The International Energy Agency again urged OPEC on Friday to increase its oil production. OPEC itself is divided on this issue," he said.

INTERVIEW

Mechanism to control tourists stressed

Damber Parajuli is a well-known name in Nepal's travel trade circle, especially the adventure tourism segment. He is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Prestige Adventure (P) Limited, which is one of the leading companies handling expeditions, peak climbing and trekking.

Born in 1951 in Charambi Village Development Committee (VDC) of Bhojpur district, Parajuli has been with the tourism sector since 1980. A founder president of the Expedition Operators' Association-Nepal (EOA), he is also the treasurer of the Himalayan Rescue Association Nepal (HRA).

A graduate in Public Administration from the Tribhuvan University (TU), he is a licensed tour guide. He has traveled widely in course of business promotion. With good public relations skills, he has taken part in major tourism marts like WTM in London, FUTUR in Madrid and ITB in Berlin. The professional tour operator has also completed diploma in French language. Besides, he fluently speaks English, German, Spanish and Italian.

The experienced and avid entrepreneur has spoken to Ballav Dahal of *The Rising Nepal* on a couple of issues concerning the Nepalese tourism industry. Excerpts:

This year's spring is just over. How was the season in terms of business?

This spring was encouraging from the point of view of adventure tourism. Because Nepal is home to innumerable mountains, including the world's tallest one, a country of unparalleled beauty and cultural diversity has been known internationally as an adventure tourist destination. About 60-70 per cent of tourists visiting Nepal

go for one or the other adventure product.

The country is famous not only for mountaineering, peak climbing and trekking but also for many other adventure activities such as rafting, kayaking, skydiving, heli skiing and canyoning. Apart from these, various marathons like the Tenzing-Hillary Everest Marathon have been popular among adventure seekers from across the

world. We can lengthen the stay of tourists in the country by exploring new areas and products.

Even if tourist arrivals to the country fall due to various national, regional and international factors, the income from tourism will go up. So, we should focus on diversifying our products.

How far has the Nepal Tourism Year 2011 (NTY 2011) helped in bringing Nepal to limelight in the international arena?

Although we have yet to get any result of the national tourism campaign, we should continue to organise such events time and again even in the days ahead. This is just a tool to promote and market the country's vast tourism resources and build up additional physical infrastructures and formulate proper policies. The event is also expected to help in creating a more tourism-friendly environment in the country.

The NTY 2011 has a target of attracting one million international tourists. Even if we are unable to meet the target, we will not be losing something great. But we should work out plans to

hold other similar promotional events in the future.

Targeting just the number may not help contribute to the national economy as expected. Have you not realised the need for us to go for 'quality tourism'?

So far as this issue is concerned, Nepal has been known as the easiest and cheapest destination worldwide. This is because international visitors can get a visa upon arrival at the airport. They are enjoying a lot of freedoms while being here. There is no any mechanism to control tourists. But Bhutan has been applying a 'control policy' since the beginning.

In my opinion, we also can think of taking steps gradually to opt for quality tourism. All the stakeholders of tourism can reap more benefits if we can develop and promote the country as a quality tourist destination. We need to hold extensive discussions and do much homework.

During your long involvement in the adventure tourism sector, have you found

any new market trends in it?

There have been a lot of changes in the field of adventure tourism. In the past, expedition members and trekkers used to come to Nepal mainly from the Western



Damber Parajuli

Travel/Tourism

Europe, the United States, Japan and few other countries. However, for a couple of years, climbers and other adventure lovers from South Asian countries such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have been coming to the country. Interestingly, there has been a tendency among the climbers from different Indian States to compete for climbing mountains. Apart from the Indian

Army forces, several other climbers from various Indian States made their attempt on Mt. Everest and other peaks this spring.

Besides, Nepal receives some expedition members from the Middle East countries like Iran.

Many other new markets for adventure tourism in Nepal have also emerged. We now need to explore the Scandinavian countries and South American nations as well. Mountaineers from Russia and Poland are considered to be high paying clients for us.

As the market is growing, we now need to adopt strategies for tapping such newly emerged markets. However, at the same

time, we should not ignore the traditional markets.

What activities is EOA doing?

As the name suggests, the EOA is a forum of expedition operators in Nepal. The association has been playing a role as a coordinator between the government and the industry.

We have been lobbying hard for simplifying procedures and paperwork related to issuance of climbing permit and garbage deposit. Because of some unnecessary bureaucratic processes and dilly-dallying, climbers sometimes get harassed. If such procedures are made more practicable, tourists will feel comfortable.

We also have urged the policymakers to bring the Department of Immigration under the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation, as this office is directly related to tourists.

The practice of frequently changing employees at the tourism ministry and offices under it is another problem.

We have talked to the concerned officials regarding the issue of liaison officers. We are going to organise a workshop in the near future to seek solutions to the issue. However, things have improved recently.

The association has proposed a provision of a one liaison officer for one peak for one season. We also have its option—formation of a joint team comprising of the trained

hands related to communications, security and rescue operation—for a peak in one season.

Being an entrepreneur, how have you assessed the peace process in Nepal?

Peace and political stability are prerequisites not only for the development of tourism but also the country's overall development. There is no any doubt that the longstanding political unrest has obstructed the entire development process.

We have failed to achieve desired economic progress because of lack of political stability and farsightedness on the part of leaders. Political activities alone cannot bring about required transformations in the people's lives. So, they must focus on economic development.

Looking at our unrivaled topography and cultural harmony and richness, we can achieve economic prosperity in no time. The private sector will make a lot of investments in every sector once there is congenial investment climate coupled with political and policy stability.