

## Budget making process to begin after number of ministries is fixed

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Budget-making process, which has been stalled due to delay in cabinet expansion, will gain pace immediately after the cabinet fixes the number of ministries and appoints ministers, say government officials.

They added that budget ceiling for ministries, which is the initial task in the budget-making process, will be fixed immediately after the cabinet approves the merger of ministries.

CPN-UML Secretary Pradeep Gyawali said that preparation was underway to cap the number of ministries at 15. It will be decided by Thursday, he added.

Lean and thin federal government after cutting down the number of ministries and associated departments is expected to reduce resource allocation at the center while more resources will be funneled into provinces and local levels.

High-Level Administration Reform Suggestion Committee led by Kashi Raj Dahal has already recommended to the government to reduce the number of ministries to 15, which is about half of the total ministries today, and ministers, including assistant and minister of state, to 25.

Currently, there are 31 ministries including the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers.

Finance Secretary Shankar Prasad Adhikari said that the budget-making process will gain pace after the number of ministries is fixed and appointments of new finance minister and new vice-chairman of National Planning Commission are made. Likewise, NPC also has to decide which level of the government - federal, provincial or local -- will implement which types of projects. This allocation is also key to fixing the number of departments the federal governments will retain, said Adhikari.

Resource Committee which was led by the vice-chairman of National Planning Commission Swarnim Wagle had held two meeting before Wagle stepped down on Sunday. But it could not take any decision on a budget ceiling as it felt it would be impractical to fix budget ceiling before until the number of ministries is fixed.

Gyawali also said that they were not only making federal government lean and thin but also has reduced the number of ministries in provinces to seven even though the constitution allows provincial governments to have 20 percent of the member of provincial parliaments as ministers.

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