

FinMin stresses domestic tourism to boost country's economy

Minister for Finance Yuba Raj Khatriwada has said that expansion of internal tourism should be the priority if we want to achieve prosperity through tourism.

Speaking at a post-budget press conference organized in Kathmandu on Wednesday, Minister Khatriwada said that the government will give equal priority to promotion of internal and international tourism.

To promote internal tourism and encourage Nepalis to visit internal destinations first, the government has announced a campaign named 'Pahile Desh ani Bidesh'.

Responding to a query on achieving the tourist footfall targets, Khatriwada said that concrete programs have been put in place to boost foreign tourist numbers. "But we should focus on domestic tourism as well," he said, adding: "Expansion of domestic tourism can contribute to economic prosperity."

He also claimed that the budget for Fiscal Year 2018/19 has allocated sufficient budget for the promotion and expansion of domestic tourism.

Further, the government has brought a policy to send government officials on leave travel inside the country in order to promote domestic tourism.

"Our major bottleneck was infrastructure which we are developing gradually," he said, adding: "Gautam Buddha International Airport (GIBA) in Bhairahawa will come into operation by the next year and Pokhara International Airport will be ready to start operation within three years."

He also said that the government has allocated sufficient funds to these projects so that they are completed on time.

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Khatiwada also added that the government was holding needful discussions to implement the Second International Airport (SIA) project in Nijgadh of Bara under Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model.

“Airport is one of the major infrastructures needed for tourism. To achieve our goal of welcoming two million tourists by 2020, we need to upgrade capacity of our regional and international airports,” Khatiwada said in the press meet.

Timely completion of under-construction airports, and upgrading of Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) and other regional airports as well as commencing construction of new airport will certainly help to increase tourist arrivals, he added.

The government has set target of receiving two million foreign tourists by 2020. To achieve the target, the government has announced ‘Visit Nepal Year 2020’ campaign.

“The government has set a goal of welcoming two million tourists by 2020 and five million tourists by 2028,” he said. “The target is gettable.”

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