

## Make in Nepal–Swadeshi Meet & Greet 2026 concluded successfully



**T**he Make in Nepal – Swadeshi Meet & Greet 2026, organized on February 13 in collaboration with the Department of Industry (DoI). The half day policy dialogue and networking event attended by around 150 participants, including Chief Secretary, ministry secretaries, government officials, Swadeshi member industries ranging from large manufacturers to SMEs and MSMEs, agro-based and MAPs industries, sectoral associations, financial institutions, development partners, technical and vocational education bodies, policy organizations, and media representatives.

With welcome remarks, CNI President Birendra Raj Pandey outlined the vision to expand Nepal's economy to \$100 billion by 2035, emphasizing industrial growth, export promotion, legal and policy reforms, investment facilitation, and promotion of domestic consumption. He highlighted key initiatives such as the Agora platform, the Swadeshi collective trademark, B2B procurement portals, and TVET skill development programs, calling for coordinated efforts between the private sector and government to build a self-reliant, production-oriented economy.

The chief guest of the event Mr. Suman Raj Aryal, Chief Secretary, Government of Nepal, commended CNI for proactively addressing four key national priorities: agriculture, skills development, LDC graduation, and manufacturing challenges stressing that these interconnected issues require a holistic and coordinated approach for sustainable economic progress. He welcomed the formation of a public-private consortium as a practical platform for develop-

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ing impactful solutions and emphasized that bridging the skills gap is essential to improve productivity, competitiveness, and employment.

He noted that the provision allowing public procurement of domestic products at up to 15% higher cost is a positive step toward supporting local industries, while acknowledging existing implementation challenges and assuring prompt action to address them. Concluding, he encouraged continued government-private sector dialogue to strengthen trust, tackle challenges, and drive meaningful economic reforms.

Mr. Jitendra Basnet, Director General of Department of Industry, stated that all suggestions emerging from the four thematic presentations will be carefully reviewed and advanced in a structured and time-bound manner, reaffirming the department's commitment to converting stakeholder inputs into actionable policy measures that promote industrial growth and private sector development.

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### VP'S MESSAGE



**T**he Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) remains firmly committed to advancing sustainable industrial development in Nepal. We believe that strong collaboration between the government and the private sector is essential to build a competitive and resilient industrial ecosystem. By working together to promote exports, substitute imports, and strengthen domestic production, we can create long-term economic stability and prosperity for the nation.

At a time when many Nepali youths are seeking employment abroad, our industries are facing an acute shortage of skilled workers. This paradox highlights the urgent need for an integrated approach that connects our workforce with meaningful opportunities at home. Bridging the gap between industry demands and available skills is critical for sustainable growth.

CNI has been actively partnering with institutions such as Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) to narrow the skill gap. Through initiatives like the Sector Skill Council and leadership in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), we are aligning training programs with real industry needs.

Our vision is clear: a self-reliant Nepal driven by competitive industries and a skilled workforce empowered to build the nation's future.

**-Mr. Rohit Gupta**

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## CNI Supports Laboratory Equipment to NBSM



The Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) has handed over essential laboratory instruments and equipment to the Nepal Bureau of Standards and Metrology (NBSM) to strengthen quality testing for footwear and garments. The donation, valued at approximately NPR 2 million, will help the Bureau restore its capacity for product quality assessment.

The Bureau's laboratory was damaged during the fires and vandalism that occurred during the Gen-Z protest on Bhadra 23–24, which destroyed several testing devices critical for footwear and garment quality evaluation. This disruption had made quality testing difficult, affecting both the Bureau and the industries dependent on certification. With the newly donated equipment, both the Bureau and the footwear and garment sectors are now better equipped to ensure quality compliance. The handover took place on Tuesday, Magh 27, at the Bureau's premises.

Speaking at the event, CNI President Birendra Raj Pandey highlighted the importance of quality certification for promoting domestic products and facilitating market access. He said that by providing essential testing instruments for footwear and garments, CNI aims to support entrepreneurs and streamline the certification process. President Pandey also reaffirmed CNI's commitment to continuing such collaborative initiatives and expressed gratitude to the Bureau and its Director General for receiving the equipment.

Director General of the Bureau, Kumari Jyoti Joshi Bhatt, noted that the destruction of laboratory materials during the Gen-Z protest had made it challenging to assess the quality of domestic products. Without in-house testing facilities, samples previously had to be sent to neighboring countries, increasing both cost and time, which ultimately affected product competitiveness. She expressed appreciation for CNI's initiative, saying, "This support will make quality testing for footwear and garments much easier and will strengthen collaboration between the government and the private sector."

# CNI Budget Watch focused on Infrastructure and Energy sector



The Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) successfully held its CNI Budget Watch, focusing on infrastructure and energy development. The program, held on Monday, Magh 26, aims to provide constructive insights to strengthen government budget implementation and promote accountability.

Organized in collaboration with the Society of Economic Journalists Nepal (SEJON), the event featured a summary presentation by SEJON President Bhagwat Bhattarai, highlighting government budget performance for the first two quarters of the current fiscal year. Based on the Budget Watch booklet published by CNI, which tracks 74 key budget-related items in economic sectors, the report revealed that by mid-year, nine items were fully implemented, 45 had partial progress, and 20 had no progress.

The study also noted that capital expenditure as of the second quarter was the lowest in the past decade (12%), except for the year following the earthquake. Despite budget allocations for major ministries such as Physical Infrastructure, Energy, and Urban Development, implementation remained sluggish, reflecting overall underperformance. Of 14 budget items related to energy, infrastructure, and urban development monitored under Budget Watch, only three were fully implemented, eight showed partial progress, and three had zero progress.

Highlighting the need for fundamental reform, Chief Guest and Secretary of the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport, Keshabh Kumar Sharma, stressed that Nepal's budget framework must be revised

to improve execution. He noted that preparation at the project bank level is crucial, arguing that projects must be fully prepared before being entered into the budget to avoid implementation bottlenecks.

At the event, Ganesh Karki, President of the Independent Power Producers' Association Nepal (IPPN), raised concerns about the absence of formal communication regarding the "Take-and-Pay" mechanism in the current budget. He also highlighted initial steps toward public-private partnerships in solar energy development and stressed that, despite the Electricity Regulation Commission issuing the Open Access Directive, 2082 for transmission and distribution, clarity on implementation remains limited.

Ram Krishna Khatriwada, Chair of CNI's Infrastructure Committee, emphasized that attracting private investment in non-energy infrastructure requires initial government expenditure. "When the government spends one rupee, the private sector invests four, but without government spending, private investment is not incentivized," he stated.

CNI President Birendra Raj Pandey noted that including private-sector suggestions during budget preparation generates enthusiasm, but weak implementation during execution leads to disappointment. "Many policy suggestions from the private sector are included in the budget, which motivates us, yet implementation remains extremely weak, causing frustration," he said.

The program was attended by CNI Vice President Rohit Gupta, Director General Dr. Ghanshyam Ojha, and other senior officials

# CNI Tourism Committee Holds Interaction with CAAN Acting Director General



The Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) Tourism Committee held an interaction meeting with Deo Chandra Lal Karn, Acting Director General of the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN), on 22 February 2026. The discussion focused on key policy and operational challenges in Nepal's aviation sector and their direct impact on tourism growth and international connectivity.

During the meeting, CNI Tourism Committee Chair Pamfa Dhamal highlighted several critical issues and put forward policy recommendations to strengthen Nepal's aviation ecosystem.

The Committee stressed the urgent need to enhance the competitiveness of Nepal's national flag carrier to support tourism expansion and improve international connectivity. A strong and commercially viable national carrier is essential for sustaining long-term growth in inbound tourism and trade.

International stakeholders have repeatedly raised concerns regarding aviation safety governance in Nepal, particularly due to CAAN's dual role as both regulator and service provider. In line with international best practices, CNI emphasized the need to restructure CAAN into two separate entities—one responsible for regulation and oversight, and the other for service provision. This structural reform is crucial to restoring confidence among international partners and reviving direct air connectivity with Europe, which has remained suspended for several years.

The Committee highlighted the disparity in landing fees at Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA), where larger aircraft are charged significantly higher fees than smaller ones. This discourages airlines from deploying wide-body aircraft to Nepal, resulting in fewer seats and higher ticket prices. Reducing land-

ing fees for larger aircraft would encourage their operation, increase passenger capacity per flight, and ultimately make Nepal a more affordable destination.

Despite the inauguration of Pokhara International Airport and Gautam Buddha International Airport (GBIA), both airports continue to face operational challenges. The Committee recommended establishing a specialized administrative mechanism to ensure their effective operation. As foreign airlines have shown interest in operating from Bhairahawa, CNI suggested allowing experienced international operators to manage airport operations in a way that maximizes national benefit.

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In addition, CNI proposed introducing a Visa-Free policy for travelers from Buddhist-majority countries arriving at GBIA. The resulting increase in passenger volume and economic activity would significantly outweigh the loss of visa revenue, while strengthening Nepal's position as a major Buddhist tourism destination.

With TIA approaching its capacity limits, CNI underscored the strategic importance of constructing a two-runway international airport at Nijgad. Nepal's landlocked geography and growing trade demand require expanded air cargo capacity, particularly for high-value goods. Moreover, the multi-billion-rupee in-

vestment in the Fast Track (Kathmandu–Terai Expressway) further reinforces the urgency of developing Nijgad International Airport. Any delay would undermine tourism growth and infrastructure utilization; therefore, CAAN was urged to initiate the project without further postponement.

The Committee also raised concerns regarding the lack of dedicated Business Class service desks at TIA. Currently, Business Class passengers often queue alongside general passengers, causing inconvenience to high-value international travelers. Although dedicated desks were previously introduced following CNI's request, their discontinuation has drawn complaints. CNI called for the immediate reinstatement of these desks to enhance service quality and passenger experience.

CNI expressed serious concern over the imposition of Value Added Tax (VAT) on air tickets and airline parts. The Committee noted that this measure has increased travel costs, negatively affecting Nepal's tourism competitiveness. The adverse multiplier effect on the tourism sector far outweighs the limited tax revenue generated. While regional competitors are offering incentives to attract tourists, VAT on air tickets risks deterring visitors. CNI therefore requested CAAN to recommend the removal of VAT on air tickets in the upcoming national budget.

Responding to the concerns raised, Acting DG Deo Chandra Lal Karn acknowledged the issues and committed to prioritizing them to the extent possible within CAAN's mandate.

The meeting was attended by Airlines Operators Association of Nepal (AOAN) President Pratap Jung Pandey, CNI Tourism Committee Chairs Ashok Pokharel and Romi Aryal, CNI Director General Ghanashyam Ojha, along with CNI committee members and senior CAAN officials.



## Investor Interaction Program Highlights Bardaghat SME Village as Foundation for a Prosperous Nawalparasi

The Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) in coordination with Bardaghat Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Industry Trade Association Bardaghat, and the CNI Youth Entrepreneurs Forum (CNIYEF) organized an interaction program where Investors have expressed strong confidence that the proposed Bardaghat SME Village will become a key driver of economic prosperity in Nawalparasi.

Speaking at the event, Acting President of CNI, Nirvana Chaudhary, said the CNI remains committed to promoting entrepreneurship and emphasized that the Bardaghat SME Village should be advanced as a pilot project and developed into a model industrial village. He noted that the initiative could significantly boost small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the region. Highlighting that entrepreneurs are often required to invest nearly one-third of their capital in land acquisition, he stressed the importance of developing industrial villages. With large industries already operating in Nawalparasi and improved road infrastructure in place, he expressed confidence that productive industries would expand in the area. He also informed that CNI is running the “Make in Nepal – Swadeshi” campaign and pledged support for the development of the SME Village.

Former Government Secretary Arjun Pokharel stated that the SME Village is being promoted under the “One Municipality, One Industrial Village” concept. He emphasized that such initiatives cannot succeed without active cooperation from the private sector.

Immediate Past President of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and In-



dustrial, Shekhar Golchha, said industrial villages would significantly contribute to Nepal’s industrialization. He noted that the Golchha Group is positive about bringing industries to the region. Stressing the country’s growing employment challenge, he said that job creation depends largely on the private sector and that industrial expansion is essential. While acknowledging environmental concerns such as dust and smoke, he urged stakeholders to view industrial development pragmatically, as it leads to employment growth and economic progress. He further underscored the need to encourage investment to achieve a \$100 billion economy and emphasized respect for lawful returns on investment.

Former CNI President Vishnu Kumar Agrawal pointed out that the contribution of manufacturing industries to Nepal’s GDP has

declined to around five percent. He stressed the need to increase the industrial sector’s share in the national economy. Citing examples from Bangladesh and India, he said Nepal should offer similar facilities to make industrial parks and villages successful. He also expressed interest in expanding MAW Skill Academy to the region, noting that it is already operating in Kathmandu and Janakpur.

CNI Vice President Rohit Gupta shared that, with local support, he was able to establish a Kajaria Tiles industry in Bardaghat within one year. He emphasized that along with large industries, SMEs are equally necessary to create value addition, reduce production costs, and generate employment. He suggested that this integrated model should be replicated in other parts of the country.

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# CNI and MBUST Convene Roundtable on Leveraging University Research and Economic Growth

The Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) and Madan Bhandari University of Science and Technology (MBUST) hosted a roundtable discussion on “Fueling Economic Growth” on 7 February 2026 in Kathmandu. The event focused on how industries and academic institutions can forge partnerships to create an enabling environment for economic growth in the industrial, agricultural, and service sectors through university research. Participants included representatives of industrial enterprises and organizations, government officials, prominent national and international experts on economic development, and members of academia.

At the outset, CNI Chair Birendra Pandey and MBUST Board of Trustees Chair Padma Jyoti delivered welcome addresses. Dr. Jamil Salmi, a tertiary education specialist, provided an overview of the contribution of universities to economic growth. Prof. Seeram Ramakrishna, Chair Professor at Tsinghua University, discussed good practices in research funding, while Prof. Shantanayan Devarajan of Georgetown University elaborated on who should finance research initiatives. Mr. Birendra Pandey presented a paper titled “Meeting Research, Development, and Innovation Demands of Industries,” and MBUST President Prof. Rajendra Dhoj Joshi highlighted the university’s



initiatives to strengthen research and address policy gaps.

Following the presentations, participants engaged in group work across five thematic areas: Research Demand of the Economy; Opportunities to Expand Enterprise Investment

in R&D; Scope and Modality for Research Funding; Aligning Public Policy to Accelerate Industry Engagement in University Research; and Designing a Supportive STI Ecosystem to Scale Academia–Industry Collaboration. The roundtable was moderated by Dinesh Bhuju.

## CNI Hosts SSF Orientation and Interaction Program in Biratnagar

The Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI), in collaboration with the Social Security Fund (SSF), organized an orientation and interaction program in Biratnagar, Koshi Province, bringing together Business and Industry Associations (BIAs), industries, and trade unions.

The program was inaugurated by CNI Koshi Province Acting President Prakash Mundra. Discussions centered on key challenges in SSF implementation, including limited medical coverage, bottlenecks in health insurance claims, and the need for stronger incentives for employers to encourage wider participation. The discussion session was facilitated by Deepak Bhatta, office of Labour Office, Biratnagar.

CNI Vice President Bhim Ghimire reaffirmed CNI’s commitment to supporting member industries and pledged to advocate for practical, industry-friendly solutions with the federal government to strengthen the effectiveness of the Social Security Fund.



# CNI Welcomes Newly Elected Leadership of FWEAN

The Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) extended a warm welcome and congratulations to the newly elected President and Executive Committee members of the Federation of Women Entrepreneurs' Associations Nepal (FWEAN).

Welcoming the new leadership, CNI President Birendra Raj Pandey emphasized the need for strong and meaningful collaboration to promote women entrepreneurship as a key driver of Nepal's overall economic growth. He highlighted the importance of increasing the consumption of domestic products and shared that CNI is actively advancing the Make in Nepal – Swadeshi campaign to strengthen indigenous industries. President Pandey expressed confidence that deeper co-operation between CNI and the Federation would create new opportunities for women-led enterprises and contribute significantly to national development.

On the occasion, newly elected President of the Federation Darshana Shrestha underscored the importance of strategic partnerships to fur-



ther empower women entrepreneurs across the country. She reaffirmed the Federation's commitment to working closely with CNI in various sectors to enhance capacity, innovation, and market access.

The meeting also included discussions on potential areas of collaboration and joint initiatives. CNI Vice President Amit More and Director General Dr. Ghanashyam Ojha were also present at the program.

## Make in Nepal...

He informed participants that the modality for Production-Linked Incentives (PLI) in the manufacturing sector is currently being finalized and expressed confidence that its implementation will soon move forward, providing a meaningful boost to domestic production, value addition, and industrial competitiveness. He further noted that several existing policies and regulatory frameworks are under revision to create a more enabling and investment-friendly business environment, reiterating the government's commitment to continuous reform, constructive collaboration with industry, and the development of a more predictable and supportive ecosystem for growth and investment. Mr. Nirvana Chaudhary, Senior Vice President of CNI, presented the manufacturing sector issues and the possibilities. He focused on ensuring policy stability, applying the principle of "Industries First," implementing tax reforms, establishing Online One-Stop Service Centers, offering production-linked incentives, maintaining quality standards through NS and ISI equivalency, and controlling unauthorized trade to create a more competitive environment for Nepalese manufacturers.

Ms. Prashi Agarwal, Chair of the Make in Nepal – Swadeshi Campaign, underscored the campaign's focus on transforming manufacturing and agriculture, creating jobs, developing skills, reforming public procurement, and mobilizing investments, drawing lessons from the Make in India and Australian Made campaigns to accelerate industrial growth, boost domestic

production, and position Nepal as a competitive, self-reliant economy.

Dr. Ramhari Lamichhane, Skill Experts, presented the skills gap in industries, highlighting workforce deficiencies, global and national skill mismatches, and reduced productivity. He emphasized mitigation strategies, including private-public partnerships, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and targeted programs for emerging sectors such as IT, renewable energy, high-tech agriculture, and tourism, while reviewing Nepal's National TVET Sector Strategic Plan (2023–2032).

Dr. Paras Kharel, Executive Director, SAW-TEE, examined the implications of LDC graduation, analyzing global trade changes, geopolitical tensions, tariff impacts, regional trade developments, and export readiness challenges, and emphasized the need for strategic policy measures to support industries during the post-LDC transition.

CNI Director General, Dr. Ghanashyam Ojha presented agriculture and medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs) sectors issues, discussing import-export statistics, value chain challenges, production, processing, market access, export readiness, sustainable practices, and best practices for scaling domestic production and enhancing global competitiveness.

CNI Vice President Mr. Rohit Gupta presented a comprehensive summary of the key issues raised during the interaction, reflecting the collective concerns and recommendations of participating stakeholders. In his remarks, he underscored the vision and objectives of the Make in Nepal–Swadeshi Campaign,

emphasizing its critical role in strengthening domestic industries, promoting self-reliance, and reducing excessive dependence on imports. He highlighted that the campaign is not only an economic initiative but also a national movement aimed at encouraging local production, enhancing value addition within the country, generating employment, and improving Nepal's trade balance. Mr. Gupta further stressed that coordinated efforts from the government, private sector, and consumers are essential to successfully implement the campaign and achieve sustainable industrial growth.

Er. Umesh Kumar Gupta, Executive Director, Industrial Enterprise Development Institute (IEDI) highlighted efforts to promote startups, entrepreneurship, and regional enterprise development through the Triple Helix Model, encompassing government, university, and industry collaboration. He discussed the Startup Enterprise Credit Flow Program, Business Incubation Centers, the Startup Nation 2030 Secretariat, women entrepreneurship initiatives, and orientation programs in Bagmati Province and Hetauda. The program reinforced public-private collaboration and policy advocacy, reflecting a strong commitment to promoting domestic products, industrial competitiveness, investment facilitation, skill development, and sustainable economic growth. Through these presentations and discussions, the Swadeshi Campaign advanced actionable insights to support Nepal's vision of a self-reliant, production-oriented, and globally competitive economy.

# CNI and National Statistics Office to Collaborate on National Economic Census 2082



**T**he Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) and the National Statistics Office Nepal held an interactive session focused on the National Economic Census, 2082. During the event, the two institutions agreed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate on data collection, analysis, and research.

Deputy Chief of the National Statistics Office, Dhundhiraj Lamichhane, assured the private sector that their concerns would be addressed and that strict confidentiality would

be maintained in accordance with the Statistics Act, 2079. He emphasized that the census is not intended to bring businesses under tax scrutiny or penalties, but rather to generate accurate economic indicators for research and policy-making. "This initiative cannot succeed without the active participation of the private sector. That is why we seek close collaboration with organized institutions like CNI," he said. The National Economic Census, 2082, carries the tagline: "Economic Census for Measuring the Economic System."

Director of the National Statistics Office, Dr. Bed Prasad Dhakal, presented on the objectives of the census, highlighting its role in estimating the true size of the informal economy and understanding the real economic landscape of Nepal. CNI Director General, Dr. Ghanashyam Ojha, emphasized that CNI will play a leading role in private-sector data collection. He noted that accurate data is essential for both entrepreneurs and the government to plan effectively, underlining the need for active engagement of the private sector in this process.

## Investor Interaction...

Lekhnath Neupane, President of Bardaghat Chamber of Commerce and Industry, highlighted the need for an industrial village to promote small industries and expressed confidence that both local and nationally established industries would invest in the area. Lilahar Paudel, Vice President of Industry Trade Association Bardaghat, said Bardaghat's strategic location near the Indian border provides advantages for importing raw materials and exporting finished goods. He noted that reliable electricity, transportation networks, and availability of skilled and semi-skilled manpower make the area attractive for investment. He identified agriculture-based industries, cottage and small industries, tourism and religious tourism, warehousing, logistics services, energy, and green industries as promising sectors. CNI Lumbini Province President Ejaz Alam stated that the region's proximity to Rupandehi



and its existing infrastructure make it suitable for operating new industries, including large-scale enterprises.

Chief Executive Officer of Nabil Bank, Manoj Gyawali, said the region holds strong potential in agriculture, tourism, and large industries. With more than 250 financial institutions present in the area, he noted that access to finance is robust. He added that Nabil Bank has been implementing entrepreneurship and skill development programs and sees the region as suitable for industrial establishment in every respect.

Rajan Kasaju, President of the CNI Youth Entrepreneurs Forum Lumbini, emphasized the need to encourage young entrepreneurs who aspire to build businesses within Nepal. He said only supportive policies that promote entrepreneurship can help retain youth and discourage outward migration. More than 100 industrialists and business representatives participated in the interaction program.