

Monthly Bulletin



RIGHTS Nepal

Digital Transformation | Human Security |
Good Governance | Strategic Engagements

Monthly Bulletin

RIGHTS Nepal is a think tank founded in 2020, based in Kathmandu with the mission of focusing on nationwide policies, decisions, plans, actions and their justified need, development and outcome.

This publication has been specifically designed to assess the important events of the past month on the basis of four major pillars: **Strategic Engagements, Good Governance, Digital Transformation and Human Security.**

The content of this report is validated as accurate news extracted and summarized at the time of publishing. The report in itself is to be viewed and treated as an unbiased and impartial source of information.

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Digital Transformation

Fonepay and NMB Capital Limited sign an IPO advisory service agreement ahead of a public listing

Fonepay Payment Service Limited (Fonepay), Nepal's leading Payment Systems Operator (PSO), and NMB Capital Limited, a prominent merchant banker, have joined forces to provide comprehensive IPO advisory services. This collaboration marks a significant milestone for Fonepay as it takes a momentous step towards becoming a publicly listed company in Nepal's capital markets, according to a press release issued by the company. The agreement between Fonepay and NMB Capital will enable Fonepay to take the first steps in preparing to issue its common stocks to the general public, with NMB Capital leveraging its expertise and strengths to deliver tailored IPO advisory solutions.

Speaker's directive to implement electronic attendance in Federal Parliament

Electronic attendance (e-attendance) is going to be kept in the Federal Parliament. Today on 30th May, 2023 the meeting of the Consultative Committee of the House of Representatives decided on this matter.

After the meeting, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Devraj Ghimire, instructed the secretariat to prepare for e-attendance. Similarly, the presence of MPs will also be made public through the website. Speaking to Tekpana, Assistant Spokesperson and Information Officer of the Parliament Secretariat, Dashrath Dhamala informed him that the work will be carried forward soon.

Government scheme to increase investment and quality in technical education

The government of Nepal is going to invest in technical education and improve its quality. In the budget brought by Finance Minister, Dr Prakash Sharan Mahat, it is mentioned that education will be made life-useful, modern, based on science and technology, professional, and research-oriented. In addition, the budget also mentions the development of an educated and dignified society by increasing the access of the common people to quality education.

Now 2 per cent tax on Social Media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Netflix and the like

Digital service tax (DST) will be levied at a rate of two per cent on the transaction value of electronic services provided by non-residents to consumers in Nepal. According to the Economic Bill 2080 announced by the Ministry of Finance on Monday, the person who provides electronic services will have to file their business details and taxes according to the income year. This tax will be applicable only to companies whose annual turnover is above 20 lakh rupees. It is mentioned in the bill that no tax will be levied on transactions in electronic services up to 20 lakh rupees per year.

In order to implement this policy, the government has already issued the Procedure for Electronic Service Tax (Digital Service Tax), 2079. According to the procedure, electronic services are goods and services that require information technology and are provided automatically through the Internet with minimal human intervention.

Digital Transformation

The government is now going to distribute tax payment certificates with QR codes

Presenting the budget for the next fiscal year 2080–81 at the joint meeting of the Federal Parliament on Monday, Finance Minister Dr Prakash Sharan Mahat said that he is going to make such arrangements to make the revenue administration healthy, transparent, technology-friendly, professional, and taxpayer-friendly. He also said that voluntary tax participation and tax compliance will be enhanced.

In addition, according to the policy that the services provided by the tax administration will be integrated into the automatic system, all taxpayers will be able to receive a tax payment certificate with a QR code, he said.

National Information Technology Center abolished; now government data center under Information Technology Department

The government abolished the National Information Technology Center. Through the budget for the next fiscal year (2080–1981), the government has cancelled the center that has been operating and managing the government data center. It is mentioned that now all the work done by the National Information Technology Center will be done by the Information Technology Department. It has also been announced that Radio Nepal and Nepal Television will be merged through the budget. 20 institutions, including additional post offices, are to be abolished and merged.

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Human Security

Cases have been filed in district court against 30 people as part of a fake Bhutanese refugee fraud

30 people, including the former deputy prime minister Top Bahadur Rayamajhi and the former home minister Bal Krishna Khand, were charged with crimes by the District Attorney's Office in Kathmandu on Wednesday in connection with the alleged fraud involving Bhutanese refugees. According to the attorney's office, each of them has faced charges related to treason, organized crime, fraud, and forgery.

Eastern hill districts lack the resources to combat the rising number of fire events

There are a few exemplary instances of fires that wreaked havoc on people's lives and property in the eastern hilly areas of Koshi Province. Every year, fire occurrences, including residential fires and wildfires, result in significant losses of life and property in the districts of Panchthar, Ilam, Taplejung, Sankhuwasabha, Dhankuta, Khotang, Tehrathum, Okhaldhunga, and Bhojpur. Over the past eight months, Koshi Province has reported 842 fire incidents, resulting in the deaths of 15 persons and the injuries of numerous more. Records at the Provincial Police Office show that 445 homes and 182 barns were completely destroyed by fire, displacing at least 141 families across the region. In all, 1,211 domestic animals perished in the fire events. According to authorities, flames in the province destroyed properties worth roughly Rs757 million.

The Kathmandu Valley has over 5,000 incidences of financial crime and banking fraud

In the Kathmandu Valley, there have been 5,312 incidences of banking fraud and financial crime reported. The District Police Range in Kathmandu reports that during the current fiscal year, the Kathmandu Valley has seen the largest number of cases of banking fraud and financial crime.

Increased import liquor smuggling has done serious damage to the nation's finances

The market shares of comparable foreign alcohol brands that are lawfully imported into Nepal are continuously being eaten away by brands that are smuggled in through the country's porous border. Despite the government's import embargo enacted in response to the government's declining foreign exchange reserves, the scale of smuggling is such that imported liquor brands are readily available and dominate the market. While there had been no formal Imports by authorized dealers for more than a year, all foreign brands were available on the market.

The supply system was hampered by the Russia-Ukraine war: President Paudel

The economy of the nation is having issues, according to President Ramchandra Paudel, as a result of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The external sector of the economy of the country has been under strain, and the supply chain has also been impacted, he claimed, due to a number of factors connected to the Russia-Ukraine war. According to him, the state of investments should also be enhanced by enhancing the economy's external sector and the state of the industry.

Human Security

Threats to Nepal's hydropower projects are highlighted by the landslide at the Arun III dam

The Arun River in Phaksinda in Makalu Rural Municipality, Sankhuwasabha, was blocked by a landslide. The building location for the Arun III hydroelectric power plant was where the landslide occurred. The local government had informed residents in the settlements downriver of a potential flood after the tragedy. A team made up of geologists and experts from the Nepal Army, the Armed Police Force, and the hydroelectric project arrived at the blockage site by army helicopter in the late afternoon to assess the situation. There is a limit to hydropower development in the Himalayas, according to a 2018 study that was published in the journal Geophysical Research Letters, as the nation's extreme climate events and natural calamities become deadlier and more frequent.

Experts advise against letting your guard down when it comes to Covid-19 after the WHO downgrade

At the Seti Provincial Hospital in Dhangadhi on May 4, 2023, a 30-year-old man passed away from problems brought on by Covid. Due to vascular issues, he has been hospitalized since April 30. According to hospital officials, the individual had Covid-19 infection after a polymerase chain reaction test on swab samples from him revealed this. He also had a positive dengue virus test two days later. 11 additional deaths caused by Covid since April 11 are not included in that case. They are among the 12,031 persons who have already perished in Nepal as a result of the illness. Covid-19 is no longer a public health emergency of international concern, according to a Friday statement from the World Health Organization. But the virus isn't going anywhere, according to virologists and experts in infectious diseases in Nepal.

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Good Governance

Prime Minister places great hope in his upcoming trip to India

On Saturday, May 20, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal declared his intention to make history with his impending trip to India. From May 31 to June 3, Dahal will explore the southern neighbour. Finalising his schedule, the delegation's make-up, the agendas, and other arrangements for the visit are a top priority for officials in Kathmandu and New Delhi. The establishment of a chemical fertilizer plant in Nepal, energy, trade, transit, the building of an integrated checkpoint in Nepalgunj, air entry routes, development of hydropower projects, receiving the report of the Eminent Persons' Group on Nepal-India Relations, connectivity, infrastructure, border and boundary, and other agreements are on the agenda, according to officials. The prime minister stated, "I have a suspicion that India is also conducting thorough preparation for my visit."

LSP is a member of the Madhesi government and is granted the Forest Ministry

Loktantrik Samajbadi Party (LSP) is participating in the Madhes provincial government today (May 25) under the leadership of LSP Madhes Province Provincial Assembly member Ramesh Patel. LSP Executive member Jitendra Sonal said that it has been decided to go to the government by taking the responsibility of the Ministry of Forest and Environment. He informed that Patel will be sworn in as the Minister of Forest and Environment.

Project to provide drinking water in Panchkhal: 7,000 homes to immediately benefit

With the aim of supplying water to 7,000 families, the Panchkhal Urban Water Supply and Sanitation (Sector) Project has gathered momentum. By adding a year, the project will now be finished by mid-January of the following year. In order to complete the project by mid-January 2023, an agreement was made in 2019 between the Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Project, Town Development Fund, Panchkhal Municipality, and drinking water customers. The coronavirus pandemic and other factors caused the agreed-upon project term to be prolonged by a year.

Record-breaking cardamom exports of Rs6.36 billion were made in just 9 months

In the first nine months of the current fiscal year, Nepal sent cardamom worth an all-time high of Rs 6.36 billion, solidifying its position as the spice's top exporter in the world. The Trade and Export Promotion Centre reports that a rise in output was a major factor in exports, which increased by 65% year over year to 7,871 tons. Traders predict that by the middle of July when the fiscal year ends, the export value of huge cardamom may reach an annual high.

'Hop-on Hop-off' bus services are now available in Nepal for the convenience of travellers

A simple and hassle-free bus service for tourists to see the key attractions in the Kathmandu Valley, namely the world heritage sites, was launched by Nepal on May 2023. Sajha Yatayat will offer tour services from the tourist bus park in Lalitpur using two electric buses. The journey ends at the Sajha Yatayat's station in Pulchowk after passing by the Mahankal Temple, Basantapur Durbar Square, Narayanhiti Royal Palace, Kamalpokhari, Pashupati Gaushala, Taragaon Museum, Bouddhanath Stupa, and Narayan Gopal Chowk.

Good Governance

Mahabir Pun and the government sign a seven-point agreement

Mahabir Pun, the head of the National Innovation Center, reached an accord with the government after a four-day protest. Pun initiated the protest on April 28, calling for the government to prioritize innovation, research, and entrepreneurship in Nepal to generate employment opportunities. On May 1st, Deputy Prime Minister Purna Bahadur Khadka, along with Minister of Defense Ishwor Pokhrel and Minister of Law, Justice, and Parliamentary Affairs Gyanendra Bahadur Karki, signed the agreement. According to the agreement, the government will allocate a minimum of 1% of the annual development budget to support innovation and research activities. The upcoming fiscal budget, to be presented to the federal Parliament on May 29, will incorporate these provisions.

Energy consumption rises as petroleum imports decline

Nepal has experienced a decrease in petroleum imports for the first time in a decade. This reduction can be attributed to increased power production and improved supply quality, leading to urban households adopting electric cooking and industries reducing fuel usage for energy generation. This decline in petroleum imports aligns with Nepal's commitment to Sustainable Development Goals, including achieving zero emissions by 2050 and reducing LPG usage by 30%. The Nepal Electricity Authority, under the leadership of Managing Director Kul Man Ghising, has played a significant role in this positive development.

Dahal pledges to investigate the true cause of the bogus refugee scam

The top echelons of Nepali politics have been rocked by the developing scheme involving the fabrication of false Bhutanese refugees. A senior CPN (Maoist Centre) leader told the Post that the administration is hoping that when Parliament resumes its session on Sunday, members will bring up the subject of bogus refugees prominently, giving investigators the confidence to move forward with their inquiries without bias. According to Hitraj Pandey, chief whip of the CPN (Maoist Centre), "the action against those involved in this scam is an effort to promote good governance and strengthen nationality." The meeting's leaders emphasized the need for tough measures against all parties implicated. After his discussion with Oli (CPN-UML chair), prime minister Puspa Kamal Dahal vowed that the government will continue resolutely with its efforts to prosecute individuals who indulge in corruption. "The government will proceed as required by law while the fight against corruption continues." rephrase it and summarize it in short.

The Siddhababa tunnel project's preliminary construction, worth Rs7.34 billion starts

Although the Siddhababa tunnel project's design has not yet been authorized, the preliminary construction has begun. A contract was inked in March of last year for the project to be finished by the China State Construction Engineering Corporation. It will take five years to complete the project. No matter the potential cost overruns, the contract obligates the contractor to complete the project by the deadline and at the agreed-upon cost.

Good Governance

Financial Ministry releases the FY 2022–23 Economic Survey

Nepal's Finance Minister presented the Economic Survey and Annual Situation Review on May 28, 2023, stating that the global economic crisis and structural issues had affected Nepal's economy. Economic activity decreased, leading to a predicted growth rate of 2.16%. Reduced imports, declining demand, and increased costs of petroleum and raw materials further strained the economy.

Nepal's budget for 2080/81 focuses on sustainability, equality, and prosperity

The government has implemented a series of measures to promote equality and efficiency in the country. In an effort to discourage opulent imports and consumption, certain luxury items have been subjected to levies instead of a complete prohibition. The budget focuses on narrowing the wealth gap by reducing the number of government institutes, streamlining operations, and promoting digitalization through e-Bidding. To enhance transparency and efficiency in procurement, all government offices will adopt the digital platform. Government vehicles, furniture, and building purchases will cease, with scrapped cars being sold at auction. Financial stipends will be provided to government workers with official vehicles. The budget also emphasizes sustainable growth, including the investigation of therapeutic cannabis cultivation, the development of the briquette industry to reduce coal dependency, and encouraging the use of cement instead of bitumen on public roads. These policies aim to create a more equitable society while promoting sustainability.

Good Governance

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Strategic Engagements

The MCC office extends an invitation to Chinese bidders, albeit with a condition

There is uncertainty regarding the participation of the Chinese businesses given that the Millenium Challenge Accounts-Nepal (MCA-Nepal) has already opened bids for the construction of transmission line projects under the Millenium Challenge Corporation Compact, a US funding agreement. The ostensible goal of the \$500 million US program is to assist Nepal in building high-capacity transmission lines and enhancing the country's roadways, both of which are essential for economic growth. Chinese companies have not been prohibited from participating in the tender process, according to the MCA-Nepal.

Minister Rijal and Chinese Ambassador Song discuss bilateral trade

On May 22, Ramesh Rijal, the Minister for Industry, Commerce, and Supply, had a courtesy call from Chen Song, the Chinese ambassador to Nepal. They discussed bilateral ties, aid for development, and the establishment of border crossing points during the meeting that was place at the ministry.

Watts, an assistant foreign minister from Australia, visited Kathmandu

During a ceremony planned at the Patan Museum, a wooden tunala (temple strut) from Ratneshwar Temple at Sulima Square will be given to the local community as the highlight of Mr Watts' visit. Assistant Minister Watts will meet with both Foreign Minister Narayan Prakash Saud and Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal during the visit. He will express how grateful Australia is for Nepal's close cooperation over the course of their 63-year diplomatic relationship and their strong people-to-people ties.

Japan's healthcare industry wants to hire people from Nepal

Due to a labour shortage in the caregiving industry, Japan, known for having a large senior population, is looking to hire workers from Nepal. Following the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation to send Nepali workers with the status of resident, Japan opened its labour market to Nepalese as specifically skilled workers in March 2019. Although Nepal was supposed to hire people from Nepal in 14 different industries, including nursing care, agriculture, food and beverage manufacturing, and the food service sector, in May 2022, the machine parts and tooling, industrial machinery, and electric, electronics, and information industries were combined into one sector.

Visit to New Zealand by Chairman Madhav Kumar Nepal

The former prime minister and chairman of the CPN (Unified Socialist) Madhav Kumar Nepal is travelling to New Zealand on May 2023, for a week. The former prime minister will speak at the "70th Mount Everest Celebration Day" on Monday in Auckland, New Zealand.

Strategic Engagements

With an Indian transmission connection, Nepal will probably sell electricity to Bangladesh

During a meeting held in Bangladesh, the joint directorate committee comprising energy secretaries from both Bangladesh and Nepal reached an agreement to import 40 megawatts of electricity from Nepal through the Indian transmission line. This collaboration between the two countries paves the way for electricity trading to commence in the upcoming wet season, spanning from June to November. To utilize high voltage direct current power systems in Bheramara, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bangladesh have mutually agreed to request permission from India to enable the export of 40-50 MW of electricity from Nepal to Bangladesh in the initial stage.

100 Years of the Nepal-UK Treaty

Both Nepal and the United Kingdom jointly arranged the recent celebration of the 100th anniversary of the signing of the 1923 treaty in London. According to a statement issued by the Nepali Embassy in the UK, the friendship treaty, which was signed in 1923, provided the framework for the development of the relationship between Nepal and the UK. Bharat Raj Paudyal, secretary in the Ministry of foreign affairs, spoke at the occasion. According to him, the bilateral ties between the two countries have expanded to encompass cooperation in multilateral fora on topics of mutual interest, development partnerships, commerce and investment, tourism, British Gurkhas, and inter-ethnic ties.

King Charles' coronation Nepal connection

The Coronation Ceremony of King Charles III and Queen Camilla was held at Westminster Abbey, attended by Honorable Narayan Prakash Saud, Nepal's Minister for Foreign Affairs. President Ramchandra Paudel sent a congratulatory telegram to King Charles III, recognizing his previous contributions as the Prince of Wales to global issues like environmental protection and sustainable development. The President also emphasized the expanding areas of collaboration and shared interests between Nepal and the United Kingdom.

Celebration of Israel's 75th Independence Day in Kathmandu

A celebration was held in Kathmandu to mark Israel's 75th anniversary of independence on May 11, 2023. The event, organized by the Israeli embassy in Nepal, was inaugurated by Vice President Ramsahay Prasad Yadav. In 1960, Nepal and Israel established diplomatic ties, demonstrating Nepal's courageous decision despite regional opposition. Over the past 60 years, enduring relationships have been forged in various fields such as agriculture, health, and education. Last year, 7,000 Israelis visited Nepal, and the number continues to increase annually. Additionally, many Nepalese are currently employed in Israel. The camaraderie and understanding between the two nations have garnered praise from Nepalese residents in Israel and Israeli tourists in Nepal. The Israeli ambassador to Nepal is Hanan Goder-Goldberger, who delivered a speech at the celebration emphasizing the strong bond between Israel and Nepal.

Strategic Engagements

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