

# 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.**



## RIGHTS Nepal

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.

For further inquiries, contact: [info@rightsnepal.org](mailto:info@rightsnepal.org)

# Digital Transformation

## New bylaw to allow consumers to make claim for service interruption

Nepal's telecom regulator is implementing a new bylaw from April 14 that will allow consumers to make a monetary claim in the case of inconvenience caused by issues like untimely loss of network services. The regulator Nepal Telecommunications Authority said that the telecom service operators would have to compensate their customers if the service is hampered due to network failure.

The new bylaw will supersede the existing bylaw related to telecommunication service quality. The new bylaw has determined the quality of service which needs to be followed by telecommunications service providers, mobile service providers, and internet and data service providers.

Both the telephone and internet service providers' representatives were present when the bylaw was drafted.

# Human Security

## Hundreds of landless refugees protest against Mayor Shah

After KMC issued a public notice giving the ultimatum of seven days to clear the encroached land around the river banks of the city, hundreds of landless refugees residing inside the Kathmandu metropolis staged protest in Kathmandu on March 27. However, with no proper alternatives available, the refugees have been refusing to comply with the KMC's order to leave the place.

They have also asked the government to withdraw false accusations filed against land activists. Earlier on 28 November 2022, after unarmed municipal police personnel were injured after the refugees hurled stones and bricks, the KMC filed a case against four people for attempted murder. Amidst the threat from the KMC to evict the area, protesters have warned that they will intensify the protest if the KMC does not withdraw the notice.

# Good Governance

## Province 1 named Koshi

Province 1 has officially adopted Koshi as its new name. A meeting of the provincial assembly on Wednesday approved the new name. An overwhelming majority endorsed the name proposed by the CPN-UML. Besides the UML, assembly members from the Nepali Congress, the CPN (Maoist Centre), and the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) voted in the proposal's favour. Article 295 (2) of the constitution states that the name of a province has to be endorsed by a two-thirds majority of the total members of the provincial assembly concerned.

Eighty-six members barring the Speaker participated in the voting in the 93-strong assembly, with 82 members endorsing the name and four members from the CPN (Unified Socialist) voting in opposition. Six members were absent. In the 93-strong provincial assembly, the UML has 40 seats, the Nepali Congress 29, the CPN (Maoist Centre) 13, the RPP 6, the CPN (Unified Socialist) 4 and the Janata Samajbadi Party has one seat.

E-governance Commission (Formation and Operation) Order, 2022 was issued by the federal government to promote the use of electronic systems in the provision of public services and government operations.

The government will establish an eight-member E-governance Commission that will be co-chaired by the Minister of Communications and Information Technology and led by the Prime Minister. The chief secretary of the Prime Minister's Office and Council of Ministers, the secretary of the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, two individuals, including at least one woman, appointed by the government, and the commission's chief executive officer are also members of the commission.

## Nepal set to head grouping of Least Developed Countries for three years

Nepal is set to add another feather to its diplomatic cap as it is taking the chair of the group of the least developed countries (LDCs) for this year. There are 46 countries on the list of LDCs and the countries' status is reviewed every three years by the Committee for Development (CDP). This opportunity comes at a time when Nepal is working to graduate from a least-developed country to a middle-income developing country by December 2026.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Physical Infrastructure and Transport Narayan Kaji Shrestha on Friday is leading the Nepali delegation to the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5) being held on March 5-9 in Doha, Qatar.

In order to graduate from the LDCs category, Nepal has prepared a five-year country strategy plan. A country wishing to graduate from the LDC must meet three criteria—gross national income per capita of \$1222, over 66 scores in the human assets index, and below 32 scores in the economic vulnerability index—set by the UN. According to Durga Bhattacharai, since Nepal may not get several foreign aid, grants and other benefits that it has been enjoying for decades, it should carefully engineer a support system to cushion the impact. In terms of the human assets index (HAI) and the Economic and Environmental Vulnerability Index (EVI), Nepal could meet the criteria but it is halfway through meeting the criteria for the gross national income.

# Good Governance

## Nepal bans solo trekking, makes guides mandatory from April 1

Nepal will ban solo trekking for foreigners from April 1, making it mandatory to take a guide along to ensure the safety and well-being of the visiting guests. The new rules apply to international tourists of all experience levels on treks in Nepal's national parks. Trekkers can still embark on solo hikes outside of national parks, such as around the city of Kathmandu. The new rules broaden a 2017 mandate that banned solo climbing on Nepal's mountains, including Mount Everest, the world's tallest peak.

The Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) took the decision in this regard which would come into force from April 1, confirmed director Maniraj Lamichhane.

The board has also increased the price of the TIMS permit to Rs 2,000 per person. Prior to this, people who travelled in large groups paid Rs 1,000 for the TIMS card while those who travelled alone paid Rs 2,000. TIMS permit for SAARC nationals has also increased to Rs 1,000.

In 2019, before the pandemic, more than 400,000 tourists travelled to Nepal's national parks for mountaineering and trekking, according to government figures; about 46,000 of them went hiking alone, Lamichhane said. Climbers came primarily from the United States, Britain, China, Germany, India and Japan. Last year, there were about 22,000 solo trekkers in Nepal, as tourism recovered, even though the number was still down from the years before the pandemic, Lamichhane said. He added that he hoped the new rule would help create jobs for guides and other workers in the tourism industry.

## Supreme Court orders its administration to take petitions against Prime Minister Dahal

The Supreme Court ordered its administration to register two writ petitions against CPN (Maoist Centre) chair and prime minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal for claiming responsibility for 5,000 insurgency-era deaths three years ago.

According to Advocate Kalyan Budhathoki, the 20 writ petitioners, who were conflict victims, have demanded the Supreme Court hold Dahal accountable for the deaths of 17,000 people in the Maoist insurgency and not only of the deaths of 5,000 people.

On January 15, 2020, while addressing a Maghi festival celebration event in Kathmandu, Dahal said that he, as the leader of the Maoist party that led the decade-long insurgency, would take responsibility for the deaths of 5,000 people and that the state should take responsibility for the remaining deaths.

The Supreme Court issued a show cause notice against Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal asking him to clarify why he should not be booked for insurgency-era killings as demanded by the petitioners. The final hearing on the petitions will commence when Dahal furnishes a written clarification as per the court's order.

# Good Governance

## KMC signs law students for free legal help at wards

For the first time in its history, the Kathmandu Metropolitan City is providing free legal assistance at all of its 32 wards starting March 15. The City plans to deploy students from the Nepal Law Campus at ward offices to help service seekers with legal work.

The students will help them with writing applications, lodging complaints, and furnishing replies. This is expected to especially help those who are uneducated and unfamiliar with legal work. On January 17, the City and Nepal Law Campus signed an agreement, deciding to deploy as many as 50 students, including 44 pursuing a BA-LLB degree and six LLM students, for the drive, which is under the judicial committee led by Deputy Mayor Sunita Dangol.

According to Acharya, who is also a legal adviser to the KMC, 32 BA-LLB students will be deployed in all wards from mid-March. Three LLM students will be stationed at the City's head office as legal advisers, while the remaining ones will be deployed alternatively. The City will pay Rs15,000 a month to each student for their services. As per the agreement, the pilot exercise will end in mid-June. Officials said senior citizens and people with disabilities will get priority for such services.

## Poudel caps his career with the presidency

Federal and provincial lawmakers voted Ram Chandra Paudel, a senior leader of the Nepali Congress, as the country's third President on March 9.

Backed by 10 parties, the Congress veteran garnered over 64 percent of the votes while his rival Subas Chandra Nembang of CPN-UML got around 29 percent. Out of 52,628 weightage-based votes, Paudel secured 33,802 while Nembang got 15,518 votes.

## PM Dahal to virtually take part in Summit for Democracy on March 30

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal has decided to virtually participate in the second Summit for Democracy to be hosted by the US President Joe Biden on March 29 and 30. The United States will co-host the second Summit for Democracy with the governments of Costa Rica, the Netherlands, Republic of Korea, and Republic of Zambia.

In December 2021, former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba had participated in the summit. Samantha Power, administrator of the USAID, during her Nepal visit on February 8 and 9, had confirmed that Prime Minister Dahal had been invited to participate in the summit.

# Good Governance

## IMF calls for audit of banks to check financial health

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has asked Nepal Rastra Bank to have some of the country's largest commercial banks audited by international auditing firms as it is suspicious about the quality of loans provided by them. Representatives of the IMF's Article IV mission called for the audit to bring clarity about the state of the asset quality during a meeting with central bank officials.

The audit of 10 large commercial banks through international auditing firms is one of the conditions set by the IMF for approving the \$395.9 million ECF facility. As part of fulfilling the conditions, the central bank will need to ensure that there will be an in-depth on-site inspection of Nepal's 10 largest banks.

Any bank found to be undercapitalised based on the diagnostics will be required to present a recapitalisation plan, said the central bank official who conversed with the mission in Nepal in late February. The IMF is particularly concerned about the quality of loans as large loans were sanctioned to firms under regulatory measures to help revive the economy.

## Ram Sahay Prasad Yadav wins Vice President race

Ram Sahay Prasad Yadav of the Janata Samajbadi Party has been elected as the new Vice President of Nepal.

Out of the total 52,628 weighted votes, Ram Sahay secured 30,328 while Asta Laxmi Shakya of the CPN-UML received 16,328 and Mamata Jha of the Janamat Party got 2,537 in an election held on March 17. Fifty-two-year-old Ram Sahay garnered 58.02 per cent of the votes, while his closest rival Shakya secured 31.23 per cent. Likewise, Pramila Yadav of the Janata Samajbadi Party, who had announced a withdrawal of her candidacy, got 48 weighted votes.

## Nepal Bankers Association caps base interest rate on loans to 5 percent

Nepal Bankers Association on Thursday decided to cap the interest rate on loans, a move they said would protect consumers from excessive interest rates and make taking loans more affordable.

The base rate on loans has been reduced to 5 per cent from 6 per cent. The interest rate on saving accounts and call deposits has been reduced by 0.42 per cent. The interest rate on fixed deposits of individuals has been kept at 11 per cent. The revised interest rates will be effective from March 15, according to the association.



# Good Governance

## Women's leadership summit ends with an eight-point declaration

The International Women Leadership Summit organised on March 27 in Kathmandu concluded with an eight-point Declaration. The two-day event was organised by the Confederation of Nepalese Industries Women Leadership Forum which underscored the effective implementation of policies that enable women to be economically self-reliant.

Furthermore, the international summit concluded that women should have more access to digital and financial literacy and women leadership should be promoted in various areas and sectors such as international trade and regional alliances. They concluded that the mobilisation of skills and knowledge to optimise results in enterprises was stressed in the Declaration for which the government should also expand the scope of the loan for small and medium-scale enterprises.

# Strategic Engagements

## British State Minister Trevelyan in Kathmandu

British Minister of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Anne-Marie Trevelyan arrived in Kathmandu on a three-day visit on Wednesday. An official of the British Embassy in Kathmandu said the visit marks 100 years since Britain and Nepal signed the treaty of friendship in 1923 which formalised relations between the two countries. Nepal established diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom in 1816, the first country in the world with which Nepal forged such a relationship. British Minister of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Anne-Marie Trevelyan held a meeting with Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal at Baluwatar on March 10.

According to the British Embassy in Kathmandu, Trevelyan and Dahal held discussions on matters of mutual interests and bilateral relations. Trevelyan's visit marks 100 years of the signing of a treaty of friendship between Britain and Nepal in 1923 which formalised relations between the two countries.

## Nepal's LDC status

Nepal has taken the chair of the group of the least developed countries (LDCs) at the fifth UN Conference on Least Developed Countries held in Doha on March 5–9. Though Nepal is currently leading the 46 countries enlisted as LDCs, it will no longer be in a position to lead this group as it is set to graduate to a developing country on November 24, 2026.

Nepal has already met two criteria, HAI (Human Asset Index) and EVI (Economic and Environmental Vulnerability Index), in three successive triennial reviews in 2015, 2018 and 2021.

## Anti-money laundering grouping asks Nepal to curb private sector corruption

The Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering has pointed out Nepal's failure to criminalise corruption involving the private sector as one of the country's deficiencies in complying with the standards on anti-money laundering and terrorist financing.

Nepal's constitution authorises the CIAA, the anti-corruption authority, to investigate and prosecute only the malpractices involving public officials. However, Nepal in 2011 ratified the United Nations Convention Against Corruption that calls for preventive measures and criminalisation of the most prevalent forms of corruption in both public and private sectors.

# Strategic Engagements

## Nepal, India agree to formulate a modality to supply electricity to Indian states via Bihar

Nepal and India have agreed to formulate a modality to enable Nepal to export power to multiple Indian states by using the infrastructure owned by the neighbouring Indian state of Bihar. The agreement was reached between Ghising and Ashok Kumar Rajput, a member (power system) of India's Central Electricity Authority.

The 14th meeting of the bilateral Power Exchange Committee held in New Delhi on March 17 decided to prepare the modality under which the transmission infrastructure of the Bihar state of India will be used to carry Nepal's electricity to the central grid system of India and deliver Nepal's electricity to different Indian states.

According to Kulman Ghising, Managing Director of NEA, it will ensure additional markets for Nepal's surplus energy during the wet season.

