

NEPAL

# GOVERNANCE

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## New Birth Registration Circular Under Fire for Reinforcing Patriarchy

Photo from Seto Pati

On April 5th, 2023, the Civil Registration Department, a government body under Nepal's Ministry of Home Affairs, issued a new circular on birth registration that has sparked controversy among women's rights advocates. While the circular includes three new provisions to benefit children born to single mothers, it reinforces patriarchal norms and reinforces the government's dual stance on gender equality.

The provisions state that if a child is born to a single woman before her marriage, whose paternal lineage is unknown, and he or she lives with the mother and her current husband, then the child will be provided birth certification based on her maternal surname, while the certificate will be issued from the mother's current address. If the child lives with the maternal family, the certificate will also be provided from the maternal address with the mother's permission. However, if the father's address is discovered after the birth registration is completed, the original birth certificate will be dismissed, and a new one will be issued from the father's address as per the law.

These provisions, in themselves, were necessary, and no criticism has been made around it, but the use of the term "maternal surname" has been heavily criticized by women's rights advocates, arguing that it reinforces patriarchal norms and implies a lack of agency for women. Instead, they suggest that the provisions could have simply used the term "mother's surname" or "mother's surname and address while the child was born."

This incident highlights the Nepal government's apparent progressive facade that masks deeply ingrained patriarchy. While the government claims to preach about gender equality and pledges to grant equal rights to women, it subjugates women and portrays them as second-class citizens through various means. Women's rights advocates are calling for the government to make holistic mechanisms to reduce structural issues that perpetuate gender inequality.

Read more: [Seto Pati](#)

### Governance Issues of the Week

1. According to recent reports, Civil Hospital has been buying 60 to 90 oxygen cylinders every day from commercial suppliers instead of using its own two internal oxygen plants which have been inactive for over a year. This decision is costing the hospital approximately NRs. 1.6 million per month, which is NRs. 900,000 more than what it would cost to run the plants.

Read more: [Naya Patrika](#)

2. A school textbook published by Ekta Books has been found to be involved in plagiarism. Various lessons on environmental science taught in Class 9 were found to have been copied from websites like Wikipedia, Britannica, and Google Books. Meanwhile, the Curriculum Development Center, in charge of preventing plagiarism and intellectual theft, is entirely unaware of the issue.

Read more: [Online Khabar](#)

3. The problems that arise from traffic congestion, such as the oil consumption of vehicles, air and noise pollution, its impacts on health, accidents, etc are reportedly costing NRs. 1.16 billion yearly to the Kathmandu Valley. Despite the existence of the "Urban Area Public Transport Management Act-2079," its implementation is insufficient, leading to ongoing issues.

Read more: [Seto Pati](#)

4. The government has significantly reduced its economic growth targets following a mid-term review. The earlier projection of 8% growth has been reduced to 4.5% due to several factors, including the import ban, low capital spending by the government, liquidity crisis, global commodity shock from the Russia-Ukraine war, and slow economic growth of only 0.8% in the first quarter of the year.

Read more: [The Kathmandu Post](#)

5. Nepal is currently experiencing a surge in coronavirus cases, with 358 confirmed cases of XBB.1.16, a sub-variant of Omicron, already reported. However, due to reduced funding for COVID-19 infrastructure, only a limited number of polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests are being conducted, and vaccines are available only for priority groups.

Read more: [The Kathmandu Post](#)

6. The Nepal Intermodal Transport Development Board (NITDB) has initiated plans to construct five new dry ports at key locations along the Nepal-China border, including Nechung (Mustang), Olangchung Gola (Taplejung), Yari (Humla), Kimathanka (Sankhuwasabha), and Tinje Dolpa (Dolpa). Presently, only two dry ports, Tatopani and Rasuwagadhi, exist along the Nepal-China border.

Read more: [The Annapurna Express](#)

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