

NEPAL

# GOVERNANCE

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## Nepal's Fake Refugee Scandal Exposes Corruption and Kleptocracy

Photo: from The Kathmandu Post

Corruption and nepotism continue to plague Nepal, as evidenced by a recent scandal involving the creation of fake Bhutanese refugee identities. This practice is a clear example of kleptocracy in action, with those in power using their authority to exploit the helplessness of individuals for their own profit. It also raises concerns about the integrity of bureaucrats and officials and the values passed on to the younger generation, given the involvement of officials' children in corrupt practices.

Several high-profile individuals have been implicated in the scheme, including Teknarayan Pandey, the current secretary at the office of the vice-president, UML secretary and MP Top Bahadur Rayamajhi, his son Sandeep Rayamajhi, and Indra Jit Rai, the former home minister's secretary advisor, and his son. They have been arrested for creating fake documents in the name of Bhutanese refugees eligible for third-country resettlement.

According to the District Police Office in Kathmandu, 20 complaints have been filed involving a total fraud of 232.5 million rupees, and more are expected to come forward in the days ahead. The investigation has uncovered a wide nexus of kleptocrats involved in manufacturing fake refugees, and there is a possibility that other big names will be implicated in the process.

The scandal has also raised questions about the accountability of a task force group established by the then-Home Minister, led by former Joint Secretary Balkrishna Panthi, on June 13, 2019, to find a solution to the Bhutanese refugee problem. The group was provided with falsified reports to aid the fraudsters, casting doubt on the integrity of the task force's work.

The scandal surrounding the fake refugees can potentially harm the 6,365 genuine Bhutanese refugees who have been languishing in Nepal for the past three decades, hoping to find a home in a third country. It is also an opportunity for Nepal to cleanse its corrupt political and bureaucratic systems. However, this will require cooperation among those in power to ensure that the case is investigated and concluded logically, without any interference.

The question now is whether the big fishes will escape the net or serve a delicious dinner for hungry Nepali citizens who have been starving themselves with shady political games. The answer remains to be seen.

Read more: [Naya Patrika](#)

### Governance Issues of the Week

1. The Department of National Identity Card and Civil Registration is considering registering the births, deaths, and other vital events of the refugees living inside the country. As of now, the government only allows the birth registration of refugees. IDs will help them with essential tasks like school enrolment and opening bank accounts.

Read more: [The Kathmandu Post](#)

2. Renting the ambassador's residence and offices for Nepal's mission abroad costs almost \$1 billion annually because the government policy to purchase houses and land for its missions abroad has not been implemented. Nepal has 30 embassies, three United Nations Permanent Missions, and 6 Consulate Generals abroad. However, only nine embassy offices and 11 ambassador residences are owned or leased.

Read more: [Kantipur](#)

3. The Nepal government has recently passed a procedure to provide the NRs. 200,000 to the former Maoist Combatants disqualified for integration into Nepal Army in 2007. As per the procedure, the responsibility of identifying the disqualified combatants and disbursing funds to them will be given to the District Administration Offices.

Read more: [Naya Patrika](#)

4. The recent report published by the Auditor General hints at the rise of corruption and irregularities within the provincial governments. In the previous fiscal year alone, provincial governments accumulated arrears totaling NRs. 8.46 billion.

Read more: [Annapurna Post](#)

5. The protest led by Mahabir Pun and his supporters stopped after a seven-point agreement with the government. As per the agreement, the government promises to allocate at least one percent of the annual development budget to research and innovation. It will prepare and table a bill to manage the fund in the upcoming parliament session.

Read more: [Setopati](#)

6. A record number of climbers are attempting to ascend the highest mountain in the world- Mount Everest. The Department of Tourism reports that 466 climbers in 43 groups have all secured permits. Among them, 368 are men, and 98 are women. Climbers from China, India, the USA, Hungary, Canada, Russia, and the UK have received the permit.

Read more: [The Himalayan Times](#)

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