

NEPAL

# GOVERNANCE

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## Bhutanese Refugee Scandal Timeline

Exposes Deep Governance Flaws in Nepal

In a shocking revelation, the Bhutanese Refugee Scandal has shed light on the functioning of Nepal's governance. It has unveiled a web of collusion among political leaders, institutions, and brokers, who prioritize their own interests over the well-being of the public. Here is a timeline that chronicles the unfolding of the case, highlighting how different actors took advantage of the situation at various stages.

- **30 Jestha 2076:** Ministry of Home Affairs, headed by Ram Bahadur Thapa, establishes a working group led by former Joint Secretary Bal Krishna Panthi to find a permanent solution to the Bhutanese Refugee issue in Nepal.
- **1 Kartik 2076:** The working group submits its report to former Home Secretary Prem Kumar Rai, which includes recommendations for third-country rehabilitation and identifies 429 refugees missing from earlier records.
- **11 Falgun 2077:** The KP Oli-led government presents the report to the Social Committee, which decides to implement certain recommendations through the refugee division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by 30 Poush 2078.
- **29 Ashad 2078:** Nepali Congress forms a government under former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and appoints Bal Krishna Khand as Home Minister.
- **30 Poush 2078:** Some recommendations are implemented, but according to Panthi's report, only refugee applications verified by the UNHCR and the Refugee Management Unit in Jhapa are considered final. This decision does not bode well for the brokers who had already begun their illicit activities.
- **18 Jestha 2079:** Another working group, led by Deputy CDO of Jhapa Chomendra Neupane, is formed through ministerial and secretarial decisions to address the issue of exempt refugees and revise Panthi's report.  
During this period, former Home Secretary Teknarayan Pandey is arrested, and police seek evidence against Minister Bal Krishna Khand.  
Despite several circulars from the Home Secretary, Neupane and the group didn't revise the report, as controversial news is circulating outside.
- **Chaitra 2079:** Police apprehend several brokers involved in the case, including Keshav Dulal, Sanu Bhandari, Tek Gurung, and Sagar Rai. They are charged with extorting Bhutanese refugees and facilitating their illegal migration to America. Investigations reveal that these brokers have affiliations with or proximity to various political leaders.  
As the investigation progresses, it comes to light that the original report produced by the Panthi-led working group in the Ministry of Home Affairs has been stolen and replaced with a counterfeit version. This fake report includes a list of fictitious Bhutanese refugees who were promised resettlement in America. The brokers allegedly collected funds from 849 individuals under this pretense.
- **Baishak 2080:** Several high-profile politicians and officials, including Bal Krishna Khand (former Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister), Indra Jit Rai (former MP and Advisor to the former Home Minister, Ram Bahadur Thapa), Top Bahadur Rayamajhi (former Secretary, Communist Party of Nepal (UML)), and Tek Narayan Pandey (former Home Secretary), have been arrested in connection with the case so far.

Read more: [Online Khabar](#), [Naya Patrika](#)

### Governance Issues of the Week

1. The Family Welfare Division under the Department of Health had recommended to the Ministry of Health and Population to grant six months of maternity leave to women as the number of breastfeeding women is gradually decreasing. The government is preparing an amendment of subsection (1) of section 13 of the Safe Maternity and Reproductive Health Rights Act, 2075.  
Read more: [Online Khabar](#)
2. Numerous stores lie vacant in Kathmandu and other major cities as the recession has led to problems, such as rising rents and reduced customer flow. According to the Confederation of Nepalese Industries, around 35% of the businesses have shut down due to the current liquidity crisis. The retail and wholesale sector, which accounts for 15.39 percent of the GDP, plunged 2.96 percent.  
Read more: [The Kathmandu Post](#)
3. The integrity of the judicial system is called into question due to a significant backlog of unpaid prison sentences exceeding 100,000 years. As per the findings of the Auditor General report, fines totaling NRs. 17.75 billion remain unrecovered up until the fiscal year 078/79. More than NRs. 50 million have been discovered as unaccounted for within the Supreme Court and its subordinate institutions.  
Read more: [Naya Patrika](#)
4. According to Rastra Bank, the remittance inflow has increased by 24% as 9 trillion 3.39 billion rupees have entered the country through remittances in the nine months of the current fiscal year. As the remittance surged, the country's forex reserves and balance of payment improved by 1 trillion 80 billion rupees. Although external indicators are strong, the domestic economy is in recession.  
Read more: [Kantipur](#)
5. In the last month, three helicopters have crashed in Nepal - Air Dynasty at Hams Hospital helipad, Everest Heli at Dhaulagiri Himal base camp, and Simrik Air helicopter. Back-to-back incidents have increased the concern about Nepal's air safety. Instead of addressing the issue, stakeholders are involved in new projects and contracts.  
Read more: [Online Khabar](#)
6. Pakistan security forces arrested former Prime Minister Imran Khan at Islamabad High Court. Cricketer-turned-politician Khan was arrested in connection with a corruption case. Since Khan was removed from office in a parliamentary vote in April of last year, more than 100 lawsuits have been filed against him.  
Read more: [The Kathmandu Post](#)

Nepal Governance Weekly is an analytical update of Nepal's current affairs based on media and real sources mining, to sensitize the communities on hot news on various governance issues from the perspective of accountability.

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