

GOVERNANCE

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Gold Smuggling Exposes Flaws in Nepal's Airport Customs Department

Photo by Online Khabar

In a startling revelation, a significant gold smuggling operation has shed light on serious flaws and unaccountability within the customs department of Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA). Customs officials recently discovered a massive quantity of gold that had evaded inspection and cleared the checks at TIA's Customs Office, leaving authorities baffled.

The smuggled gold, ingeniously hidden within the brake shoes of motorcycles and scooters, was estimated to be worth a staggering Rs 1 billion, making it one of the largest gold recoveries in Nepal's history. The investigation traced the gold back to Ready Trade Private Limited, a company that had imported multiple shipments of brake shoes in the past two months. This has raised concerns among authorities, prompting them to explore the possibility of previous gold smuggling attempts using similar tactics.

The incident has reignited concerns about the persistent issue of gold smuggling in Nepal, despite a decline in gold recoveries following a major 2018 case that exposed a smuggling racket involving police officers and customs staff. Smugglers have adapted their techniques, making detection more challenging by coating gold onto various materials and transporting it in semi-solid forms.

Although Nepal's police have reported a decrease in the amount of gold seized over the last five years, experts point to several factors hindering effective law enforcement. Smugglers have shifted their tactics to use land routes, avoiding the heightened scrutiny at the international airport. Moreover, the continued demand for gold fuels illegal activities, making it crucial for authorities to invest in intelligence gathering and international collaboration to combat the issue effectively.

Read more: [Online Khabar](#)

Governance Issues of the Week

1. The Communist Party of China launched the "Silk Roadster" platform in Nepal to commemorate the BRI's tenth anniversary. It includes five "small-but-practical" projects implemented through Nepali political parties and social organizations, but questions are being raised regarding the shift from large-scale projects to smaller ones through the BRI.

Read more: [The Kathmandu Post](#)

2. Nepal's government faces a rising debt burden, surpassing Rs 2.2 trillion, with domestic borrowing exceeding external loans. A budget deficit of Rs 397.87 billion is attributed to the gap between government expenditure and revenue, leading to concerns among economists about higher interest rates and potential limitations on private-sector investment.

Read more: [My Republica](#)

3. The Karnali Highway, once celebrated, has become a death trap with 1,800 road accidents, 991 fatalities, and over 1,500 severe injuries in the past decade. Urgent attention and improvements are deemed to be important to ensure the safety of commuters.

Read more: [Annapurna Post](#)

4. The pharmacy chief at the Manmohan Cardiothoracic Vascular and Transplant Center in Kathmandu died by suicide amid various allegations, leading to four arrests. The investigation suggests he took his own life due to distress caused by accusations of irregularities, blackmail, and coercion by colleagues, raising concerns about potential harassment and prompting authorities to take action.

Read more: [Naya Patrika](#)

5. Nepal has been removed from the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) gray list, marking significant progress in its efforts to combat money laundering. It receives one year to implement reforms, offering Nepal a favorable opportunity to strengthen its anti-money laundering measures and enhance its financial system's integrity. Authorities stress the importance of ongoing vigilance and continuous improvements to address remaining risks.

Read more: [EKantipur](#)

6. Government employees in Nepal formed the Civil Service Protection Group to address a surge in retaliatory actions and protect civil servants' rights. They oppose political interference and attacks on the civil service, voicing their concerns over the recent arrests related to the Lalita Niwas land case, as stated in their joint statement led by Sirjana Tiwari, Pashupati Pokharel, and Vivek Ghimire.

Read more: [Ekarmachari](#)

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