



GOVERNANCE

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Nepal's 'Best Civil Servant' Award: A Missed Opportunity for Recognition

WEEKLY

Photo by The Kathmandu Post

The government celebrated its annual Civil Service Day on 7 September 2024, recognizing outstanding employees within the civil service. However, for the eighth consecutive year, the award for "Best Civil Servant" was not given out, as no suitable candidate was identified among Nepal's 86,000 civil servants. Official sources attribute this to a lack of qualified and capable candidates. Nonetheless, 40 civil officers were honored with other two award categories "Excellence in Civil Service Award" and the "Civil Service Award" as per the Civil Service Regulations 1993.

The Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration reported that 162 names were recommended from various ministries and federal offices for different awards. However, none of these candidates were deemed eligible for the 'Best Civil Servant' award. The criteria for this award are not particularly difficult to attain: candidates must have served in a permanent position for at least 15 years, achieved 100% in performance evaluations over the last five years, and must not have faced any departmental actions in the past 15 years. Additionally, they must not have unresolved personal financial issues during the year of recommendation and must have regularly submitted property details.

One of the common reasons cited for not awarding the 'Best Civil Servant' accolade is also the fear of potential mockery if the recipient is later found to be underperforming, as seen in the case of Surya Prasad Gautam, who was discovered to be grading his wife's public service examination papers. Despite these risks, the award should still be given. Choosing not to award it may be more damaging than facing potential controversy. In an era of growing public dissatisfaction with both elected officials and civil servants, the decision not to recognize a single deserving candidate for the 'Best Civil Servant' category is likely to exacerbate public discontent and frustrate young civil servants. Moving forward, the criteria for the civil service awards should also include thorough evaluations of how employees disclose and manage 'conflict of interest' related issues.

Given this context, Accountability Lab Nepal itself has been awarding the "Integrity Icon" to honest and exemplary civil servants for the past 11 years. What began as a local initiative has expanded to over 15 countries, creating a network of 49 distinguished employees in Nepal alone. These individuals have gone above and beyond to drive positive reforms within their institutions and advance good governance. The Integrity Icons as a network is also promoting anti-corruption efforts and systemic reform. The government should also take inspiration from such initiatives and consider ways to build and strengthen a network of integrity within the civil service, rather than neglecting it.

Read more: [The Kathmandu Post](#)

Governance Issues of the Week

1. The Special Court has convicted four individuals, including former secretary Gajendra Thakur, and three contracting companies in a corruption case related to the Melamchi Drinking Water Project. The officials were found guilty of making illicit payments to contractors using government funds. The guilty parties have been ordered to pay over NPR 15.6 million in compensation and fines. The sentencing is scheduled for 23 September 2024.

Read more: [Nayapatrika](#)

2. The 18-story view tower in Damak, constructed during the COVID-19 pandemic with an initial cost of NPR 1.38 billion (later increasing to 1.45 billion), has remained non-operational for five years since its completion. Spread across 5 bighas, Damak Municipality is eager to take ownership but is still awaiting approval from the Ministry of Urban Development. The tower also requires additional infrastructure, such as access roads, to fulfill its original purpose for tourism and commercial use.

Read more: [Kantipur](#)

3. A nine-member team has been established to evaluate whether the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) should have the power to investigate private organizations. The proposed amendment to the Corruption Prevention Act would bring private institutions, like banks and medical universities that receive government funding, under CIAA oversight. While some MPs back the proposal, others argue it could deter investment and create a climate of intimidation for businesses.

Read more: [The Kathmandu Post](#)

4. The government has formed several committees over the years to recommend reforms for Nepal Airlines Corporation, but no action has been taken to implement any of them. Recently, on September 6, a Nepal Airlines flight from Delhi to Kathmandu was delayed by seven hours. The airline attributed the delay to essential aircraft maintenance, but critics pointed to mismanagement within the corporation as the real issue.

Read more: [Ukaalo](#)

5. The World Social Protection Report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) reveals that countries most affected by climate change, including Nepal, have not invested enough in social security systems. The report notes that while over half of the global population has social protection, 93% of people in the twenty most vulnerable countries do not. This lack of social protection is concerning, as it plays a crucial role in addressing the impacts of climate change on health and income.

Read more: [Kantipur](#)

6. In response to allegations that government employees, especially at Singha Durbar, are not completing their assigned tasks, the government has banned share-related transactions during working hours. The CIAA monitored the situation and sent a letter to the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers. As a result, the Prime Minister's office has instructed all relevant bodies to refrain from using the Trading Management System (TMS) during office hours.

Read more: [The Himalayan Times](#)

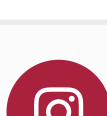
Join us for the Regional Policy Park on Democracy and Elections in South Asia!

Accountability Lab Nepal (ALN) is organizing a regional Policy Park titled "South Asia in 2024: Democracy at Risk Amidst the Rise of Electoral Populism" on September 19, 2024, Thursday at 3 PM NPT. The virtual dialogue will explore unique trends and challenges observed in the recent election cycles across South Asia. Experts from Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan will present their insights on dominant practices, agendas, threats in their countries, and explore regional parallels. The discussion will also address the implications of the election outcomes on democratic practices and processes, along with providing space for collaboration and exchange of ideas.

Learn more about the event [here](#), and use this link for [registration](#).

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.

Presented by



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