

GOVERNANCE

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Cyberattack on Nepal's Passport Department Exposes Security Vulnerability

WEEKLY

The recent cyberattack on Nepal's passport services highlights vulnerabilities in the country's digital infrastructure. After detecting a malware in its system, the Department of Passport had indefinitely halted its service, including registration and distribution. The service has now partially resumed. The service disruption severely impacted the immigration services which sees over 1500 passport applications on a daily basis. Despite the department's assurance that there was no data breach, the potential dangers of such attacks on sensitive systems is always severe.

This isn't the first attack on a government database or website or even the passport department; Nepal has been facing a 380% hike in cyberattacks on an annual basis, and the passport department was also the victim of a similar attack in 2017. In January 2023, Nepal faced its biggest cyberattack, where an estimated 1500 government websites were targeted with a Distributed Denial of Services (DDoS). However, the government failed to confirm if any data was even breached in this attack. Similarly, in 2017, around 58 government websites were targeted. The hackers had targeted the Government Integrated Data System (GIDS), now the Integrated Data Management System (IDMS), which is the government's centralized database. Many local governments and other institutions have similarly been impacted.

Considering the amount of data that can be accessed by breaching government websites, the security measures need urgent strengthening to prevent large-scale data compromise. The government's reactive approach to data security is partially the reason for the lack of preventive measures. For instance, the passport department was a victim of malware attacks in 2017 and the incident repeated in 2024. It shows a lack of attention on the pressing issue of cyber security. The government has established the National Cyber Security Center, tasked with identifying necessary policies and making arrangements to strengthen the cyber security infrastructure in Nepal. However, the center is facing shortages in equipment and lacks a dedicated office space. The government must urgently strengthen such institutions and build preventive measures to address these vulnerabilities.

Read More: [BBC](#)

Governance Issues of the Week

1. NEA's Deadline on Trunk Line ends: The 15-day deadline suggested by the Council of Ministers and approved by the Nepal Electricity Authority on 10 November, for industries remaining to pay overdue power bills on dedicated and trunk lines has expired. However, no payments have been made by the defaulting companies. The government has, meanwhile, formed a new committee to further examine the Time-of-Day meter readings, further prolonging the collection of dues.

Read More: [The Kathmandu Post](#)

2. New Bill on Police Personnel Underway: A bill designed to amend and integrate Acts relating to police personnel, including the Police Act 1955 and the Armed Police Act 2001 has been submitted to the The Council of Ministers. The key changes proposed include eliminating the 30-year service period for police officers and allowing junior officers to retire after 16 years. The changes are also aimed to align the agencies to constitutional, human rights, and democratic standards.

Read More: [myRepublica](#)

3. REEEP-GREEN launched to support energy efficient practices: A new program under the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Programme - Green Recovery and Empowerment with Energy in Nepal (REEEP-GREEN) was introduced on 21 November 2024, with the aim to assist businesses and industries in implementing energy-efficient practices. The program, managed by Rastriya Banijya Bank Limited (RBBL), will provide grants to businesses to cover a portion of their total investment in energy efficiency upgrades.

Read More: [The Kathmandu Post](#)

4. Survey Planned for Gender Minorities: The National Statistics Office is conducting a survey targeting the sexual and gender minorities as the exact data of the community couldn't be determined in the 2021 Census. The census had recorded 2,928 individuals of the community, but it failed to provide a complete picture of their social, economic, and familial conditions. The new survey will adopt a more sensitive approach and will also document the diversity within the LGBTIQ+ community.

Read More: [Nayapatrika](#)

5. Organ Donation Support Increased: The Minister of Health has announced that bereaved families of organ donors would receive NPR 200,000 instead of NPR 100,000, and an increment in the support given to hospitals for organ donation from NPR 50,000 to NPR 75,000 in a bid to promote organ donation. The finance ministry has, however, contested the move and asked the health ministry to manage funds from internal sources.

Read More: [The Rising Nepal](#)

6. TU Investigates Professors on Leave: The Tribhuvan University has instructed its offices to report on professors who took study leave but did not return. Over the past decade, 893 professors took study leave, costing the university over NPR 1.76 billion in salaries. Among them, 54 remain untraceable, with recoverable dues exceeding NPR 80 million. University regulations require professors to serve 3-5 years after their study leave.

Read more: [Onlinekhabar](#)

E-Governance Survey:

Accountability Lab Nepal (ALN) is conducting a survey to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of Nepal's e-governance framework and services. Share your insights and contribute to this important research!

<https://ee-eu.kobotoolbox.org/x/LvGc7K6j>

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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