

GOVERNANCE

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Nalikchowk Helipad Corruption Case: Civil Aviation DG and Five Others in CIAA Net

Corruption in Nepal's aviation sector has come under renewed scrutiny. The Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) has filed a [corruption case](#) against Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) Director General Pradeep Adhikari and five others over irregularities in the construction of the Nalikchowk Helipad in Bhaktapur. Adhikari and former Director, Murari Bhandari have thus been arrested. The CIAA case in Special Court seeks fines totaling NPR 135.7 million per defendant, with jail terms ranging from 10 to 14 years for the main accused.

CIAA's probe revealed that the helipad was constructed without an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), proper feasibility studies, or consultation with local communities. Required legal procedures were bypassed, leading to potential loss of public assets. Investigations highlight that the helipad site, covering approximately 32 ropani of land, could affect 300–400 households, lacked critical security infrastructure, and posed operational risks due to nearby high-voltage power lines.

The project began under former DG Rajkumar Chhetri and involved engineer Samriddhi Shrestha and then-director Murari Bhandari, who prepared and endorsed preliminary feasibility reports. Despite Chhetri's conditional approval to proceed only after proper feasibility studies, these studies were never conducted. Bhandari illegally approved the Detailed Project Report (DPR) without necessary authorization. Similarly, ineligible consultants and contractors were appointed in violation of procurement laws, which required international letters of intent if Nepali firms lack experience in heliport construction.

The construction agreement, signed by Bhandari in January 2022 with a six-month timeline, was handed over to the contractor shortly after Adhikari became DG. The helipad was inaugurated in June 2024 by DG Adhikari and then-Tourism Minister despite warnings from 47 helicopter pilots about operational hazards and safety risks. Internal investigations by CAAN in July 2024 also reported absence of critical infrastructure, including screening areas, communication buildings, refueling facilities, and seasonal visibility measures, making the site unsafe for full-load helicopter operations.

This case once again has highlighted the broader irregularities within Nepal's aviation sector. Similar allegations of corruption worth [NPR 14 billion](#) have been reported at Pokhara International Airport, and investigations continue at Bhairahawa Airport and CAAN's 12-story building in Sinamangal, where Adhikari has been implicated. The Nalikchowk helipad case underscores the urgent need for transparency, accountability, and stricter oversight in the aviation infrastructure projects.

Election Watch

The Karki administration is drafting an ordinance to grant voting rights to Nepalis living abroad. While the Election Commission says it is ready for the upcoming polls, it cautions that implementing overseas voting would require at least two years of preparation, fresh voter registration, and agreements with host nations. The challenge is especially significant given that most Nepali migrant workers reside in Middle Eastern countries where elections are not permitted. [Read More](#)

Governance Issues of the Week

- 1. Prabhu Management founder charged by CIAA:** The CIAA has sued Prabhu Management founder D.P. Bhattachan and director Kusum Lama for allegedly cheating over a thousand cooperatives by withholding remittance and deposit funds collected through Prabhu Remit. Three others, including Prabhu Bank CEO Ashok Sherchan, were arrested but not made defendants. Internal records show over NPR 1.88 billion involved, though only NPR 65.2 million has been formally claimed. [Read More](#)
- 2. Madhesh Government Collapses After 22 Days:** Madhesh Chief Minister Saroj Kumar Yadav resigned following the Supreme Court's December 2 directive to secure a vote of confidence within 24 hours. Yadav stepped down citing the absence of opposition members in the provincial assembly. His tenure lasted just 22 days, marking the second consecutive government in Madhesh to fall in under a month. [Read More](#)
- 3. Nearly 28,000 Jobs Expected from New Investment:** In the first quarter of the current fiscal year, 196 industries—16 large, 16 medium, and 164 small-scale—were registered with a total investment commitment of NPR 70.22 billion, projected to generate 12,162 jobs. During the same period, 312 Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) projects were approved, totaling NPR 35.16 billion and expected to create 15,751 employment opportunities. Combined, these initiatives are set to produce nearly 28,000 new jobs across Nepal. [Read More](#)
- 4. Cash transaction ceiling halved:** The ceiling on cash transactions for purchase of goods and services has been reduced from 1,000,000 rupees to 500,000 rupees, effective from mid-January. Transactions beyond this limit must be made via cheque, mobile banking, RTGS, IPS, ConnectIPS, or other banking services, according to Nepal Rastra Bank. Cash deposits at banks and financial institutions are exempt from this limit. [Read More](#)
- 5. Unseasonal Rains Cause NPR 6.67 Billion Agricultural Loss:** Unseasonal rainfall in Ashoj and Kartik led to agricultural damages totaling NPR 6.67 billion. Paddy crops were the hardest hit, suffering NPR 3.53 billion in losses across over 30,800 hectares, reducing expected output by more than 100,000 tons. In September, Madhesh faced the greatest impact with NPR 3.35 billion in damages, while Mangshir rains caused the highest losses in Koshi, also amounting to NPR 3.35 billion. [Read More](#)

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