

Nepa GOVERNANCE WEEKLY



Nepal Police Seeks Expanded Communication Interception Powers Amid Privacy Concerns!

As digital and transactional fraud, cybercrime and technology-enabled misconduct become increasingly sophisticated, Nepali authorities have been under growing pressure to strengthen the country's legal and technological capacity to investigate such crimes. The challenge, however, is to balance law enforcement and introduce advanced tools, but without impacting the citizens' right to privacy and data protection.

Nepal Police Headquarters in Naxal has once again proposed obtaining legal authority to intercept telephone calls and digital communications in real time for criminal investigations. The National Investigation Department had made similar appeals in the past, including provisions to monitor, intercept and track phone calls, text messages and video communications. The [proposals](#) faced widespread criticism over potential surveillance and privacy violations, eventually contributing to the government dropping the Special Services Bill, 2076.

The debate also has a significant judicial precedent. During the investigation into the 2021 [murder](#) of Supreme Court Justice Rana Bahadur Bam, police reportedly collected more than 500,000 call records and over 30,000 text messages. The Supreme Court subsequently intervened, with then Chief Justice Kalyan Shrestha and Justice Devendra Gopal Shrestha ruling that investigating a crime did not give authorities unrestricted access to communication data.

Currently, call records only give information about meta data: the numbers involved, duration of calls and the cell towers used, which can indicate a person's approximate location. Police argue that this information is increasingly inadequate as criminal networks rely on encrypted and sophisticated digital communication. Real-time interception would allow investigators to access the content of communications and address what they describe as a growing technological advantage enjoyed by criminals over investigators.

Clarifications adding that the proposal doesn't seek unlimited access to public communications have been made in regards to it. The interception would be followed by legal safeguards like judicial approval as a requirement to collect communications data and intervention. Additionally, officials have argued that it would only be used for serious criminal investigations and not for general monitoring of citizens. Likewise, the possibility of interception authority being abused shouldn't prevent police from having legitimate investigative tools.

However, the central question remains who controls this power and how its use is constrained. Rights experts do not necessarily reject interception authority outright but argue that it must operate within strict legal boundaries. Senior Advocate Satish Krishna Kharel has called for clearly defined statutory conditions, independent judicial authorisation rather than approval by police or intelligence agencies, oversight mechanisms to detect abuse, and public reporting after interception. Without strong and independent safeguards, expanded interception powers risk repeating the very concerns that have stalled similar proposals in the past.

Weekly Snapshot



- **Federal intervention requested amid antivenom shortage in Madhesh:** As snakebite risks peak during the summer, Madhesh Province is facing a critical shortage of snakebite antivenom, increasing the risk of serious health complications and deaths across the province. Hospitals are left with a negligible stock forcing patients to seek emergency care elsewhere. While officials emphasize on the lack of sufficient budget to steady the antivenom supplies, local authorities request urgent federal intervention to address the crisis. [Read More](#)



- **Sugarcane farmers yet to receive subsidy from the government:** Despite repeated appeals to the government, sugarcane farmers from various districts plan to travel to Kathmandu to demand accountability over unpaid subsidies from the 2024/25 crushing season. Farmers have received only half of the promised NRs. 70-per-quintal subsidy. They are also demanding subsidies for farmers affiliated with specific sugar mills, VAT exemptions on agricultural electricity, and payment of outstanding dues from three mills. Farmers say repeated government commitments have failed to resolve these longstanding concerns. [Read More](#)

- **9 Districts to have under secretaries as CDOs:** Nepal's Home Ministry has revised its organizational structure, cutting joint-secretary positions for chief district officers (CDOs) in nine districts namely: Baitadi, Dadeladhura, Achham, Jumla, Salyan, Jajarkot, Rolpa, Bhojpur and Khotang. The new set up will include deputy-secretary-level CDOs, based on population, workload and security needs. Overall, nine joint-secretary positions were reduced, adding 95 new positions, including six deputy secretaries. The restructuring also establishes a Department of Narcotics Control and has merged and abolished several low-workload offices. [Read More](#)



- **Weak regulatory and monitoring gaps of rehabilitation centers in Madhesh:** Suspicious deaths and alleged abuse at rehabilitation centers in Madhesh indicate significant regulatory and monitoring gaps. Although families have reported cases of abuse and deaths to authorities, there is no dedicated system for tracking fatalities and irregularities within these facilities. Despite around 40 registered institutions in the province, human rights activists have raised concerns over weak oversight and non-compliance with existing guidelines and the dire need of adequate care, infrastructure, medical support, and environments free from physical abuse. [Read More](#)

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