

# GOVERNANCE

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## Political Parties Prepare for the 2026 Elections!

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With the general elections approaching on March 5, 2026, major political parties in Nepal have begun recalibrating their candidate selection strategies. The Election Commission has also set deadlines for the submission of candidates under the proportional representation (PR) system and for first-past-the-post (FPTT) constituencies. Across the political spectrum, parties are signaling a growing reluctance to repeat long-serving figures and controversial individuals, particularly through the PR route. Although the PR system was introduced to diversify Parliament and ensure the inclusion of marginalized communities, it has frequently been criticized for enabling elite recycling and rewarding party loyalty over representation.

Against this backdrop, the rise of the Gen-Z movement has amplified public scrutiny of patronage, favoritism, and opaque candidacy decisions. As a result, political parties are facing mounting pressure to prioritize merit, inclusion, and accountability in their candidate selection processes.

The Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) had earlier unveiled [a new framework](#) to elect candidates for the Rupandehi by-elections, even before the Gen-Z protests. The party commits that the candidates will be evaluated through a weighted system: 50 percent from internal primaries, 25 percent based on performance at the party's Leadership Academy, 20 percent on political proximity, and 5 percent on inclusivity. For the upcoming elections, the party is preparing to conduct primary elections, with selections determined by votes cast by party members through the party's mobile application.

The Nepali Congress (NC) has also signalled a more selective approach to the PR lists. Senior leaders have publicly stated that former PR representatives are unlikely to be re-elected and also have asked lower-level committees to include names of incumbent representatives at local and provincial units and the National Assembly. However, the candidate selection towards FPTT seats, however, continues to be shaped by traditional dynamics including recommendation from party cadres, central leadership discretion, factional bargaining and projected electoral success. In Koshi province alone, [323 aspirants'](#) names have been recommended by party-workers.

The CPN-UML has also similarly hinted at avoiding repetition of former PR-beneficiaries. Compared to other parties, UML maintains a tighter central control over ticket distribution, with the party chair and secretariat playing decisive roles in candidate selection. While the local committees propose candidates, the final decisions prioritize electoral strength, loyalty to the leadership and factional bargaining power.

Meanwhile, the Nepali Communist Party, formed after the union of almost a dozen leftist parties and groups, remains stalled, having failed to form a central committee. Many newer Political Parties are also finalising the candidacy process.

The candidacy decisions of political parties for PR quotas will be set based on the revised PR quotas as per the 2021 national census. The Madhesi cluster has increased from 15.3 percent to 16.2 percent, gaining one additional PR seat and emerging as the only cluster to register growth. In contrast, the Tharu share declined slightly from 6.6 percent to 6.5 percent, Dalits from 13.8 percent to 13.4 percent, Indigenous Nationalities from 28.7 percent to 28.2 percent, and the Khas Arya cluster from 31.2 percent to 30.3 percent—resulting in one fewer PR seat compared to the 2022 elections.

The forthcoming candidate nominations will be a critical test for Nepal's political parties. The competence and inclusivity of those selected will indicate whether parties are prepared to move beyond tokenistic practices and whether the core demands emerging from the Gen-Z movement are genuinely reflected in electoral politics.

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### Governance Issues of the Week

- 1. Urgent need to address the Iraq-Nepal labor ties:** An estimated 30,000 Nepalis are still working in Iraq. Nepal stopped issuing labor approvals after 12 Nepali individuals were brutally killed by insurgents in 2004. About 75% of all Nepalis employed in Iraq are women. Iraq remains legally closed to Nepali workers, this causes workers to travel through illegitimate means exposing them to legal, financial and security risks. Workers are discouraged from a safe return to Nepal fearing loss of employment and passport expiration. This deadlock in policy risks thousands of Nepali lives and livelihoods. [Read More](#)
- 2. First labour Agreement to be signed between Nepal and Saudi Arabia:** The first-ever bilateral labor agreement between Nepal and Saudi Arabia is to be signed in late January during the World Labour Market Conference. This is a positive step to formally protect legal rights of Nepali Workers, and the agreement is expected to address minimum wages, working hours, leave, insurance, health services, fair recruitment and penalties for contract violations in line with ILO standards. About 400,000 Nepalis work in Saudi Arabia facing persistent problems related to wages, working hours, restricted mobility and limited social protection. [Read More](#)
- 3. SC dismisses writ against Karki Commission:** The Supreme Court has delivered its verdict on the writ filed against members of the Karki Probe Commission formed to investigate the violence unfolded in Sep 8 and Sep 9. The writ filed by Advocate, Binod Dhakal, alleged the Chairperson and two members of the commission were biased and not neutral on the subject matter, arguing that the appointment violates the principle of Natural Justice has been dismissed. [Read More](#)
- 4. Fake School made for embezzlement:** UML leader Nandasingh Budha has been found guilty of corruption by the Special court, on charges of running a 'fake school' in Dolpa which was in turn used for embezzlement. The court has sentenced Budha and his accomplices to 1 and a half years in prison. NPR 750,000 has been demanded from four individuals including Budha. [Read More](#)
- 5. Pokhara Cooperative victims being paid back in phases:** The Pokhara Savings and Credit Cooperative has begun the process to refund deposits of 350 clients with savings below NPR. 100,000 in the first phase of paybacks. The refunds are being initiated by the Chairperson and seven other directors and staff, who were released by the POLice on the condition of returning deposits within three months and submit a weekly progress report. The chairperson has stated that after the first phase, paybacks will be initiated to cover 274 depositors with more than NPR 100,000 in savings totalling approximately NPR 365 million. [Read More](#)
- 6. Ramesh Lekhak to testify:** Ouster Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak has declared to testify before the Karki Commission related to the events of September 8 and September 9. Ousted PM Oli however has not agreed to testify. The government has proposed a middle ground for Oli where the commission's members will visit Oli's residence in Gundu, however no decision has been made yet.

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