

# GOVERNANCE

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## The Election Commission Actively Preparing for the March Polls!

The Election Commission of Nepal has intensified preparations for the upcoming House of Representatives elections scheduled for March 5, 2026. All processes, including candidate nominations, polling arrangements, and security coordination are progressing according to the approved electoral schedule. For the proportional representation system, 64 parties have submitted their closed lists, with 54 parties contesting under their own election symbols while 10 parties are sharing four symbols. Here are some others major preparations that are underway:

**Voter list and polling station finalisation:** EC has published the final voters' list, confirming 18,903,689 eligible voters, an increase of 915,119 compared to the 2022 elections. The polling infrastructure has been expanded, with 10,967 polling stations and 23,112 polling centres designated, which is 75 stations and 885 centres more than in the previous election.

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• **Procurement of election materials:** EC has begun the process for the procurement of election materials, focusing on items not already in stock from previous elections. Out of the 51 types of materials to be purchased, 14 will be procured centrally while the EC has decentralized procurement for the rest by authorizing provincial and district offices to carry out. The EC has assured that the previous stock of ballot boxes, paper, stamps, rubber mats, ink, and stamp pads will be reused wherever possible, with only shortfalls being purchased to ensure cost-effective management.

• **Security arrangements and temporary police recruitment:** The Finance Ministry has allocated Rs 10.28 billion for election security, which is roughly half of the amount initially requested by the Home Ministry. The Nepal Police and Armed Police Force (APF) will recruit temporary personnel once the budget is secured. Approximately 133,000 temporary police will be deployed through the Nepal Police, and 15,000 through the APF, who will also serve as the second security layer during the elections.

• **Voter education and invalid votes:** EC has already initiated discussions with local-level organizations to strengthen voter education programs. Local governments are encouraged to conduct programs in local languages, reaching citizens directly to improve awareness and turnout. Historical data indicate a rising trend in invalid votes, from 4.4% in the 1991 general election to 6.6% in the 2022 House of Representatives election, largely due to inadequate voter education. EC assures enhancing outreach and awareness remains a key priority.

The EC's preparations indicate a structured, cost-conscious, and inclusive approach to managing elections. But the overall success depends on the efficient administration and management with engagement of local and provincial level in voter education and creating an enabling environment for a peaceful election.

### Governance Issues of the Week

1. **Rasuwagadhi-Kerung border reopens:** The Rasuwagadhi-Kerung border, closed since the July 2025 floods destroyed the Miteri Bridge linking Nepal and China, has reopened. Operations resumed after China completed a Bailey bridge to restore connectivity. While the checkpoint was initially expected to reopen in September, a second round of flooding caused delays. For now, traffic is limited to one-way, as the road from Syafrubesi to Rasuwagadhi remains damaged. China has pledged to repair and upgrade the road once bridge construction is fully completed. [Read more](#)

2. **Government forms committee to hold talks with activist Dr. Bhusal:** The Nepal government has formed a negotiation committee, coordinated by Prime Minister's chief advisor Ajaybhadra Khanal, to engage with Dr. Nicholas Bhusal, who has been on hunger strike for 10 days. His five-point demands include action against culprits of the September 8-9 incidents, constitutional amendments, abolition of the National Assembly and provincial structures, and implementation of a direct-executive prime minister election system. His health has deteriorated, and he has been transferred to Bir Hospital for treatment. [Read more](#)

3. **Nepal tourism nears pre-pandemic peak in 2025:** Nepal welcomed about 1.15 million tourists in 2025, slightly below the 2019 record of 1.19 million, according to the Nepal Tourism Board. Arrivals rose 3.9% from 2024, despite being affected by the September Gen Z movement and two natural disasters. While tourist arrivals from SAARC countries declined 2.3%, visitors from other regions, including Asia, Oceania, Europe, and the Americas, increased. The figures signal a strong recovery and a positive outlook for Nepal's tourism sector. [Read more](#)

4. **Students seek action over UAE education scam:** Thirty-two Nepali students placed in 11 colleges and universities not recognised by the UAE's Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) have filed complaints against the education consultancies. Following the complaints, the education ministry has issued No Objection Certificates only for CAA-accredited institutions since November 14. However, the students are demanding the formation of a high-level investigation committee and the immediate arrest of consultancy owners accused of misleading them. [Read more](#)

5. **Gandaki University controversy on staff appointment:** Gandaki University has once again been entangled in a scandal attempting to convert its contract teachers and staff into permanent employees through internal exams and appointments. This is completely against the university's own legal framework. About 72 contract staff, including administrative and academic positions as well as support roles, were fast-tracked for permanent status without required public notices, exam notice and open competition, leading to the controversy and even legal action in the form of writ complaint at Pokhara High Court. [Read More](#)

6. **Increase in the transaction on virtual assets despite the ban:** Although Nepal has legally banned activities related to virtual assets, a recent study by the Financial Information Unit (FIU) shows that suspicious virtual asset (which includes digital holdings such as cryptocurrencies, non-fungible tokens (NFTs), stablecoins, and gaming tokens) transactions increased by over 19 percent in 2025 compared to 2024. The report highlights that young people aged 21-30 account for the largest share (35 percent) of individuals involved in these activities, raising concerns about regulatory enforcement and financial awareness among youth. [Read More](#)

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