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Analysis

Inclusion and Proportional Representation in Nepal Elections 2026

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Inclusion and Proportional Representation in Nepal Elections 2026

Debates around electoral inclusion have once again come to the forefront as Nepal heads toward the House of Representatives (HoR) elections scheduled for March 2026. The discussion was reignited following the submission of political parties' initial proportional representation (PR) candidate lists at the end of December 2025—lists that, for many, fell short of the constitutional spirit and mandate of proportional representation.

A closer look at the [submitted PR lists](#) revealed a troubling pattern across both established and newer political parties. Individuals from economically and politically well-connected families dominated the lists, with mainstream parties nominating relatives, loyalists, and favourites over representatives from historically marginalised communities. This trend directly contradicts the core purpose of the PR system. Constitutionally, the PR mechanism was introduced as a corrective measure to address long-standing exclusion from political power. It was designed to ensure meaningful representation of women, Dalits, Indigenous nationalities, Madhesis, persons with disabilities, sexual and gender minorities, and other excluded groups who face structural barriers in accessing mainstream politics.

However, political parties have increasingly treated PR lists as tools of political accommodation rather than inclusion. The Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), for instance, included celebrities and business figures in its PR list—possibly reflecting its limited grassroots reach and organisational depth. Similarly, the Nepali Congress (NC) included senior leaders and relatives of top political figures such as Arjun Narsingh KC and former defence minister Bhimsen Das Pradhan among others. In response to mounting public pressure—particularly on social media—many candidates also withdrew their name ahead of the deadline to finalise the closed PR lists. Particularly, [85 candidates](#) across different political parties have withdrawn their names.

The growing discontent around lack of inclusion with political parties' practices also stand in sharp contrast to the recent [10-point agreement](#) between Gen-Z groups and the government, which explicitly calls for the institutionalisation of inclusion and the rejection of tokenistic representation. The current conduct of parties suggests a widening gap between the aspirations of youth-led movements and the realities of party politics.

Moreover, the concerns around inclusion are even more pronounced within the First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) system. With political parties set to finalise their FPTP candidate lists this week, early indications have been discouraging. Despite constitutional guarantees, marginalised communities—particularly women—continue to be sidelined in competitive constituencies. Nepal's Constitution mandates that at least one-third of members of the federal parliament must be women. While parties are permitted to fulfil this requirement through PR if they fall short under FPTP, this provision has increasingly been used as a fallback rather than an exception. This practice has normalised the idea that women and marginalised groups are suitable primarily for proportional seats, while "winnable" constituencies remain dominated by elite, male, and politically entrenched candidates.

Now as the deadline for finalising candidates approaches, political parties face a decisive moment. Their choices will signal whether inclusion remains a constitutional checkbox—or a genuine democratic commitment reflected across electoral systems. Meaningful political reform cannot be realised if foundational principles such as inclusion are routinely compromised. Nepal cannot afford to allow new political movements or moments of reform to undermine the hard-won gains of past democratic struggles.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE NEWS

- **Privacy Concerns Over ECN's Decision to Share Digital Voter Lists:** The Election Commission of Nepal (ECN), through the [first amendment](#) of the House of Representatives (HOR) Member Election Directive, 2082, has allowed political parties and independent candidates to obtain digital copies of the voter list upon payment. The data will be provided electronically, excluding voters' date of birth, citizenship number, and mobile number. However, Digital Rights Nepal (DRN) has submitted a memorandum to ECN objecting to this [citing privacy risks](#). DRN argues that sharing voter numbers, age, gender identity, and parents' names violates constitutional and legal privacy protections, warning of profiling risks and harm to gender minorities.
- **ECN Sets Up Election Offices Ahead of 2026 Polls:** The ECN will [open election officers' offices in all 165 constituencies](#) from January 16 to manage the HOR election. Nominations for candidates begin on 19 January. A total of 77 Chief Election Officers (from district judges) and 88 Election Officers (from second-class judicial service) have been appointed, with training completed on 12–13 January. Officers will oversee all election processes, supported by staff from district government offices.
- **Meta and TikTok Reportedly Pledge Support for Fair Elections:** As reported Meta and TikTok have [responded positively](#) to the ECN's request for technical support ahead of the HOR election. Both platforms will assist in monitoring and controlling false election-related information on social media. ECN stated that efforts are also underway to engage other platforms. The Commission aims to ensure that all provisions of the election code of conduct are effectively implemented online, preventing any violations and supporting a free and fair election.
- **Cyber Police Deployed to Monitor Online Misinformation:** The government has decided to [deploy cyber police teams](#) to curb cybercrime and the misuse of social media during the elections. According to the Home Ministry, the teams will monitor and control the spread of false information, rumors, misleading propaganda, hacking, fake accounts, and digital fraud, while also ensuring voter privacy and digital security. Cyber police from the Cyber Bureau will coordinate with the ECN, central command post, and election cell, with deployments at the valley, provincial, and district police offices. A special Cyber Bureau team will also be stationed at the ECN to analyze and investigate misleading online content.

NEPAL ELECTION 2026

EXPENDITURE CEILINGS FOR FPTP CANDIDATES

 25 Lakh	 27 Lakh	 29 Lakh	 31 Lakh	 33 Lakh	
Constituencies	Constituencies	Constituencies	Constituencies	Constituencies	
5	17	30	35	23	
Kathmandu-1,3,6,7,8	Terathum-1, Parsa-1,2,3, Rasuwa-1 Kathmandu-2,4,5,9,10, Bhaktapur-2 Lalitpur-1,2,3, Manang-1, Kaski-2, Rukum (East)-1	Jhapa-1,2, Morang-4,5,6, Sunsari-3,4, Udayapur-2, Saptari-1,2,3,4, Siraha-1,2,3,4 Dhanusha-1,2,3,4, Mahottari-1,2,3,4, Sarlahi-2,4 Rautahat-1,2,3,4, Bara-2,3,4, Parsa-4, Nuwakot-2 Bhaktapur-1, Chitwan-2, Gorkha-2, Kaski-1, Syanjha-2, Mustang-1, Baglung-1,2, Gulmi-2, Palpa-1,2, Rupandehi-2,3,4 Kapilbastu-3, Banke-2,3, Nawalparasi (West)-1,2, Dailekh-1,2, Achham-1,2, Kailali-1,2,3,4, Kanchanpur-1,2,3	Ilam-1,2, Jhapa-2,3,5, Bhojpur-1, Dhankuta-1, Morang-1,2,3, Sunsari-1,2, Okhaldhunga-1, Udayapur-1, Sarlahi-1,3, Bara-1, Sindhuli-1,2, Dhading-1,2, Nuwakot-1, Sindhupalanchwok-1,2, Chitwan-1,3, Kaski-3, Tanahu-1,2, Syangja-1, Nawalparasi (East)-1,2, Myagdi-1, Parbat-1, Gulmi-1, Rupandehi-1,5, Kapilvastu-1,2, Dang-2,3, Banke-1, Mugu-1, Jumla-1, Kalikot-1, Surkhet-1,2, Rukum (West)-1, Bajura-1, Kailali-4, Darchula-1, Dadeldhura-1	Taplejung-1, Panchthar-1, Sankhuwasabha-1, Solukhumbu-1, Khotang-1, Dolakha-1, Ramechhap-1, Kavrepalanchwok-1,2, Gorkha-1, Lamjung-1, Arghakhachi-1, Rolpa-1, Pyuthan-1, Dang-1, Bardiya-1,2, Salyan-1, Dolpa-1, Humla-1, Jajarkot-1, Bhajang-1, Doti-1, Baitadi-1	

Source: www.election.gov.np



Priyanjana Bhattarai

(Founder, Kala Legal; Partner, Synergy Law and Chambers)

My message to the candidates, “We really need stronger IP laws to protect Nepal’s growing creative sector.”

As Nepal approaches for the pivotal general elections on March 5, 2026, the political landscape is buzzing with fresh energy. The Gen Z-led protests in September 2025 that toppled the then government over corruption and economic woes, has created space for civic engagement and renewed hope. Amid the calls for accountability and reform, one issue that is not the part of mainstream election discussion but should be is the protection of intellectual property through stronger copyright and royalty systems.

Nepal's creative sector spanning music, film, literature, and digital art has exploded in the digital era. Platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and streaming services have widespread access, allowing Nepali artists to reach global audiences. But this boom comes with pitfalls: rampant piracy, unauthorized reproduction, and unfair revenue sharing that leave creators shortchanged. Under Nepal's Copyright Act of 2002, artists are entitled to economic rights like reproduction, distribution, and public performance, along with moral rights to protect their work's integrity. Yet, enforcement remains weak, with low awareness among artists and businesses leading to frequent infringements. In a country where youth unemployment fuels unrest, bolstering these systems could create jobs and stimulate growth. Imagine a Nepal where digital creators thrive without fear of theft, contributing to GDP through exports of creative cultural content. But without updated laws addressing AI-generated works, streaming royalties, and online piracy, we are risking the erosion of our creative heritage.

What's exciting is the growing intersection between Nepal's creative community and politics. Artists have been engaging politically, using their platforms to convey societal realities, amplify calls for reform, and inspire resistance and resilience. Prominent figures like rapper-turned-Kathmandu mayor Balendra Shah's (Balen) rise from music to mayor is the prime highlight of how artists are leveraging their platforms for systemic change. Beyond Balen, many artists/creatives are now even contesting in the election. This surge reflects a broader trend: creatives recognizing that political engagement is key to securing better IP protections.

So why should copyright and royalties be on every candidate's agenda? First, stronger laws would combat the "brain drain" of talent, encouraging creatives to stay and innovate in Nepal rather than seeking opportunities abroad. Second, in a digital world, fair royalties ensure equitable wealth distribution vital for a nation recovering from economic frustration that sparked the 2025 protests. Third, aligning with global standards could attract foreign investment in Nepal's burgeoning creative industries.

While copyright and royalties may not dominate election debates today, they represent a future opportunity. Post-election policies that modernize copyright laws, improve royalty collection, and strengthen enforcement can ensure that creators are rewarded, cultural heritage is preserved, and the creative sector contributes meaningfully to the economy. Voters, especially the energized youth and artist communities, will have the chance to support these developments and hold leaders accountable.

This weekly newsletter is a joint initiative of Accountability Lab Nepal (ALN) and Digital Rights Nepal (DRN), specifically launched to provide comprehensive coverage and analysis of the 2026 elections in Nepal. During this time, this publication consolidates their regular newsletters, ALN's **Nepal Governance Weekly** and DRN's **Digital Rights Weekly**. Consequently, those will not be produced separately until the election cycle concludes.

This material aims to promote electoral integrity and enable informed citizenry by delivering non-partisan, evidence-based analysis, and rights-oriented perspective. It does not endorse or oppose any political party or candidates.

The data presented here is synthesized from diverse credible sources, including government agencies, international organizations, news media, social platforms, and our extensive local networks. The topic selection are based on their prevalence, relevance, and potential societal impact, ensuring all information is accurate and verified at the time of publication.

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