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# Ballot Bulletin Nepal

*A Weekly Election Governance Monitor*

## NEPAL HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ELECTION 2026

Reporting Period: February 21 to March 2, 2026

### What's Inside:

**01** Key Election Developments

**02** Incidents of Election-Related Violence



# 1. Key Election Developments

## Election Commission Directives and Enforcement

- On February 22, the Election Commission (EC) issued directives prohibiting the use of physical (three-dimensional) election symbols made from materials like metal or wood during campaigning, citing public safety and security risks. Parties are permitted to use printed symbols on cloth, flex, paper, or banners adhering to prescribed standards.
- In coordination with the Ministry of Home Affairs, the EC will impose a nationwide vehicle restriction from midnight on March 4 (Falgun 20) until voting concludes on March 5 (Falgun 21), allowing only essential services. A ban on alcohol sales and consumption was enforced from February 26 (seven days before the election) until final results are declared.
- On February 26, the EC fined CPN candidate Shakti Bahadur Basnet, independent candidate Dr. Nicholas Bhusal, and the Shram Shakti party NPR 25,000 each for code violations following unsatisfactory responses to complaints. The EC issued explanations to 87 individuals, parties, media, and organizations for code violations.
- On February 26, the EC requested the Press Council Nepal to remove a BBC World Service documentary on the Gen-Z protests of September 2025, citing concerns that it could disrupt the electoral environment. The video alleges police orders for lethal force during the protests.

## Operational Preparedness and Logistics

- On February 24, the government declared a three-day public holiday from March 4-6 to facilitate the election on March 5. This aligns with the Holi festival and weekend, creating a week-long break.
- On February 24, the government announced it would cover full medical

expenses for injured security personnel (Nepal Police, Armed Police Force, etc.) during the election and provide financial aid to families in case of fatalities.

- On February 26, the Nepali Army announced deployment of approximately 80,000 personnel nationwide for tasks including ballot security, transportation, rescue operations, bomb disposal, and patrols.
- On February 27, the District Administration Office Kathmandu banned stage performances, musical programs, fairs, large gatherings, and alcohol during Holi, citing election security needs. Election symbols or campaigning during Holi are prohibited.
- Voters can use documents like citizenship certificates, national IDs, passports, or driving licenses to vote, as per EC guidelines.

### **Court Interventions and Releases**

- On February 24, the Supreme Court ordered the release of Durga Prasai (habeas corpus), ruling his arrest unlawful, and of Nepal Communist Party Chairman Rishiram Kattel for announcing an election boycott.
- On February 26, the SC ordered the release of Nepal Communist Party (Bahumat) General Secretary Dharmendra Bastola, deeming his detention unlawful.
- On February 26, Setopati filed a writ in the SC challenging EC and Press Council directives to remove election analyses, arguing infringement on freedom of expression. A counter-writ demands halting such publications.

### **Party and Candidate Activities**

- On February 23, CPN (UML) Chairman KP Sharma Oli instructed party committees to form volunteer forces of at least 30 members per polling booth to “assist” police in maintaining peace and preventing booth capturing.

- Widespread code violations were reported in Dhankuta and Siraha, including unauthorized flags, banners, loudspeakers, gifts, and involvement of children and local officials in campaigning.
- On March 1, the Nepali Congress submitted a memorandum to the EC urging action against code violations, including misuse of physical symbols, child involvement, national flag misuse, and social media misinformation.

### **Grievance-Driven Political Mobilization**

- On February 25, victims of the Supreme Cooperative in Rupandehi approached CPN (UML) candidate Basudev Ghimire during campaigning, demanding recovery of NPR 1.03 billion in misappropriated savings affecting 10,000 depositors.

## 2. Incidents of Election-Related Violence

### Political Symbol Burning and Retaliatory Protests

- On February 21, police arrested 3 people in Tulsipur, Dang, for burning a CPN (UML) flag during an RSP event. UML supporters held protest rallies, attempting to attack an RSP office but were stopped by security.
- On February 21, a person was arrested in Saptari for removing and burning a CPN (UML) election flag.
- On February 27, Ujyalo Nepal Party supporters displayed black flags protesting RSP Chairman Rabi Lamichhane in Damauli, Tanahun. Seven were arrested for code violations. Subsequently, protesters blocked the highway and clashed verbally with the police.

### Clashes Between Supporters

- On February 21, police used lathi charge to disperse a clash between Nepali Congress and Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) supporters in Bhokraha Narsingh Rural Municipality-4, Sunsari, during election campaign. No major injuries reported.
- On February 25, a clash between RSP and CPN (UML) supporters in Lekh Tol, Dilasaini Rural Municipality-7, Baitadi, injured two UML youth members.

### Assaults

- On February 26, Hamromat Executive Editor Arjun Acharya was assaulted in Jhapa while covering a CPN (UML) door-to-door campaign led by KP Sharma Oli. Attackers, allegedly from a UML-affiliated volunteer force, seized his phone, broke his glasses, and injured him after he photographed supporter misconduct.

## Arrests for Anti-Election Activities

- On February 26, police arrested a person for detonating a cylinder bomb in Patukhola, Tulsipur, Dang, on February 18, linked to a shutdown call by Nepal Communist Party (Bahumat).
- On February 26, police arrested Revolutionary Communist Party leaders in Pyuthan for distributing election boycott leaflets.
- On February 26, Nepal Police arrested 8 individuals in Karnali Province affiliated with election-boycotting parties like Krantikari Communist Party and NCP (Majority).
- On March 1, Durga Prasai was rearrested in Bhaktapur for disturbing public peace.

## Code Violations Involving Potential Influence or Disruption

- On March 1, police seized a vehicle in Morang with NPR 449,000 cash and Nepali Congress campaign materials, suspecting vote-buying. Three individuals were detained briefly.
- On March 1, police seized 108 T-shirts with candidate photos in Kathmandu Valley, violating code limits on promotional materials.
- On March 2, police seized an RSP-flagged jeep in Salyan with rice, liquor, beer, and oil, suspected for voter influence. The driver and passenger were detained briefly; RSP denied involvement.
- On February 28, a RSP activist was arrested in Dhanusha for screening the BBC Gen-Z documentary using a projector on an Indian-plated vehicle.

## Suspicious Objects

- On February 27, a suspicious battery-like object was found in Thala Jung Maippte, Siranchok Rural Municipality-2, Gorkha.
- On March 2, a suspicious object was discovered in Ward No. 3, Rajpur Municipality, Rautahat.

## Misinformation and Fact-Checks

- Misinformation activity intensified during the reporting period, with both AI-generated content and misleading viral claims circulating widely across digital platforms.
- On February 28, the EC reported that 54% of misleading election-related content is deepfake or AI-generated, posing a significant challenge. The EC has coordinated with platforms like Facebook and TikTok for content removal and established an "Election Desk" with UNDP support for monitoring.
- A viral video falsely claimed NPR 20 lakh was seized from an RSP worker. Fact-check confirmed it was misleading, combining unrelated footage.
- An AI-generated video falsely depicted Sher Bahadur Deuba claiming cash at his house was "AI". Fact-check rated it 99% AI-created.
- On March 1, a person was arrested in Kathmandu for spreading false claims that Mayor Balen Shah was shot.

The pre-election period (February 21–March 2) shows escalating tensions as polling approaches, marked a surge in code violations, symbolic disruptions, and localized clashes reflecting competitive polarization. Incidents of physical violence remain limited but include clashes and assaults often tied to party rivalries or boycott calls.

Misinformation, particularly AI-generated content, has intensified, prompting interventions by the Election Commission. Institutional responses, including court releases, security deployments, and enforcement directives, demonstrate assertive governance to maintain integrity, though persistent violations indicate challenges in uniform compliance. Overall, the environment suggests a moderate-to-high risk of disruption, necessitating vigilant monitoring and rapid response to ensure a peaceful vote.