



# Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC)

## House of Representatives Election March 5, 2026

### Preliminary Report

The election for the House of Representatives was held today, March 5. It is estimated that around 55 percent voter turnout was recorded in this election. Under Nepal's Federal Parliament system, a total of 275 members are to be elected to the House of Representatives. Among them, 165 members are elected through the First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) system, while 110 members are selected through the Proportional Representation (PR) system. Each voter was provided with two ballot papers: one for the directly elected candidate and another for the political party's proportional representation list. Under the proportional representation system, political parties must obtain at least 3 percent of the total votes to qualify under the legal threshold.

Despite various doubts and concerns expressed since the announcement of the election date, the role played by the Election Commission in ensuring that the election was conducted peacefully is commendable. INSEC has been monitoring the electoral process from the announcement of the election to voting and vote counting from a human rights perspective. More than 230 observers from INSEC monitored this election.

This election, held amid political instability and the transitional circumstances following the demonstrations led by the younger generation on September 8 and 9, has been widely regarded as extremely significant for the restoration of democracy and the institutional stability of the state. The election was announced after the dissolution of the previous House of Representatives in order to obtain a fresh mandate from the people, which will determine the country's political direction and the formation of the next government.

According to the Election Commission, around 18.9 million voters were eligible to cast their votes in this election. Among them were a significant number of first-time young voters. The growing political awareness and participation of the younger generation are expected to deliver new messages through the election results. In this election, more than 3,400 candidates from various political parties and independent backgrounds contested, while more than 60 political parties participated in the electoral process.

On the eve of the election, special emphasis was placed on the implementation of the election code of conduct, voter education, security management, and heightened vigilance in border areas. A large number of security personnel were deployed to ensure that voting could take place in a free, fair, and fear-free environment. Compliance with the silence period, control of campaign activities, and encouraging voters to exercise their voting rights freely were given priority.

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*For Human Rights and Social Justice*

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Politically, this election is not merely a process of selecting representatives. Taking place amid past political upheavals, public dissatisfaction with governance, and expectations for reform, the election will shape the future government's policies, priorities, and political culture. This general election represents another important test of democratic practice in Nepal. It is expected that active public participation, transparent processes, and credible results will strengthen public confidence in democracy. The decision now lies in the hands of the voters, who will determine the roadmap for the country's future political journey.

The enthusiasm demonstrated by citizens in this election, along with the participation of political parties, youth, women, and Dalit communities, reflects an increasing sense of public ownership over governance. This election is significant in delivering the constitutional rights of citizens to their doorsteps. In this regard, election management, security arrangements, and the enthusiasm of the general public were commendable. Positive aspects of this election include the use of voter rolls with colored photographs and the distribution of voter identity cards. The contribution made by the media sector in ensuring the successful conduct of the election has also been significant.

### Election-Day Observations and Findings

Voters across various parts of the country participated enthusiastically in the election despite anti-election activities in some areas and the harsh cold weather in the Himalayan and high hill districts. Preliminary information indicates that the election was conducted peacefully with only minor incidents reported.

- In two polling centers in Darchula, voters supported a “No Vote” stance. Voters at Gaurishankar Basic School, Nagu (Ward 1 of Nauged Rural Municipality) and Dudhila Basic School, Jhushku (Ward 3 of Api Himal Rural Municipality) decided not to cast their votes.
- In Beding polling center of Gaurishankar Rural Municipality–9 in Dolakha, local voters boycotted the election. According to locals, they expressed dissatisfaction, stating that no candidate or party representative visited their area to request votes, leading them to decide not to participate in voting.
- Locals in Manebhanjyang Tokshel of Okhaldhunga also boycotted voting. Until 5 PM, no voters arrived at Shahid Smriti Primary School, Satsalle polling center (Ward 7 of Manebhanjyang Rural Municipality). As a result, no votes were cast under the FPTP system. Only four election staff members (two women and two men) voted under the proportional system. The boycott was reportedly in protest against the provincial government's failure to begin construction of a promised provincial hospital, despite earlier assurances.
- In Dang district, no votes were cast at Janata Basic School polling station in Babai Rural Municipality–1 and Deuti Secondary School polling station in Babai Rural Municipality–7, according to polling officer Tek Bahadur Khadka.

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- In Chitwan Constituency–3, an election staff member stationed at Madi Secondary School polling center was taken into custody for allegedly soliciting votes in favor of the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP). Similarly, another staff member deployed at Lanku Secondary School polling center in Bharatpur Metropolitan City–4 (Chitwan–2) was also detained for allegedly requesting votes for the same party.
- In Manahari Rural Municipality–4 of Makwanpur, the CPN-UML operated a separate food arrangement for voters, while other active political parties jointly operated another food service area.
- In Biratnagar–3 near the Department of Drug Administration polling station, authorities instructed the Nepali Congress and RSP to stop providing food to voters.
- A complaint was filed on March 5, at the Office of the Chief Election Officer demanding the cancellation of the candidacy of Yuvaraj Dulal, a candidate of the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) in Sindhupalchok Constituency–2, for allegedly violating the election code of conduct. The complaint alleged that Dulal distributed money to voters in Thulosiruwari (Ward 13 of Chautara Sangachowkgadhi Municipality) on March 4 in exchange for votes. The complaint was jointly signed by representatives of Nepali Congress, CPN-UML, and RSP.
- Voting that had been halted at Malu polling station in Dolakha resumed at 5 PM.
- In three polling stations in Dhading, journalists and observers were denied entry. Observers and journalists were restricted from entering Bageshwari Secondary School polling center in Baireni, Bageshwari Primary School polling center in Galchhi Rural Municipality–4, and journalists were barred at Mahakali Secondary School polling station. Observers were also prevented from monitoring at Nilkantha Secondary School polling center in Dhadingbesi. Although the Chief District Officer Bijay Subedi stated that the issue had been addressed, journalists were reportedly turned away from the gate.
- Observers were also prevented from monitoring at several polling stations in Dhanusha Constituency–2, including Janata Secondary School polling centers (A) and (B) in Ward 3 of Aurahi Rural Municipality, and polling centers in Ward 5 of the same municipality, as well as polling centers at Mithila Secondary School in Ward 8 of Mithila Bihari Municipality under Dhanusha Constituency–4, according to observer Baliram Kumar Shah.
- In Shankhadevi and Manarupi Secondary School polling centers in Dhading, voting was temporarily halted due to reports of fake voting, but later resumed. Additionally, in Nilkantha Municipality–8, INSEC representatives reported that the polling station was captured and one-sided voting took place.
- In Akthali of Khaniyabas Rural Municipality–2 in Dhading, stones were reportedly thrown from a cliff above the road in an attempt to block voters from reaching the polling station. More than 200 voters heading to Bendidevi polling center were stranded due to the obstruction.
- In Rautahat Constituency–2, police arrested Arje Hayat, 18, for attempting to vote in the name of Mohammad Asik at the Bairiya Orphanage polling station in Rajpur Municipality–9.

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- Some polling centers were physically narrow, which slowed down the voting process and caused inconvenience for voters.
- At the polling center located at Bandhu Secondary School in Budhinanda Municipality– 1 of Bajura, journalists and observers were not allowed to enter the polling premises.

### Conclusion

The House of Representatives election has been successfully completed. Although voter turnout was relatively low, the election was conducted peacefully, orderly, and in a comparatively fair environment, which should be viewed positively.

In a democratic system, periodic elections are the primary means through which citizens exercise their sovereign rights. Conducting such an important process without major disruptions, violence, or widespread disputes is both a test of responsibility and institutional capacity for the concerned state authorities. The Election Commission and the government played significant roles in managing the necessary preparations, security arrangements, and the management of polling centers. Although minor issues were observed in some areas, the overall peaceful conduct of the election can be considered a positive sign for democratic practice.

However, the relatively low voter turnout remains a matter of concern. Voter participation is a key indicator of the vitality of democracy. Low turnout may reflect public frustration, dissatisfaction with political parties, indifference toward the electoral process, or other socio-political factors. Therefore, it is essential for both the state and political parties to seriously work toward restoring public trust and encouraging active participation in democratic processes in the future.

Nevertheless, the successful completion of the election without major obstruction is itself a significant achievement. While the low turnout should be taken as a matter for reflection, it is appropriate to acknowledge the Election Commission and the government for successfully conducting the election in a peaceful manner. Learning from this experience, further efforts should be made to ensure that future elections become more participatory, credible, and effective, thereby strengthening democratic governance.

**Bijay Raj Gautam**  
Chairperson

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