

NEPAL

Date of Elections: 9 May 1981

Purpose of Elections

Direct elections were held for 112 members of Parliament in accordance with constitutional amendments promulgated in December 1980*. Previously, the national legislature was a perpetual body elected by lower-tier (village, district, zonal) assemblies (councils); no general elections had taken place since 1959.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Nepal, the National *Panchayat* (Assembly), is composed of 140 members. Of these, 112 are elected and 28 are appointed by the King. The term of the Assembly is 5 years.

Electoral System

All Nepalese citizens aged 21 or above are entitled to vote.

National *Panchayat* candidates must be Nepalese citizens at least 25 years of age who do not hold public office nor have previously been recalled from office as *Panchayat* members on grounds of misconduct or incapacity. They must, moreover, be members of one of the class organizations (peasants, workers, women, youth, adults, ex-servicemen) as prescribed by the Constitution.

Since many citizens were illiterate, candidates were identified on the ballot paper by pictorial symbols. Each candidate is obliged to pay a deposit of Rs. 1,500, which is forfeited if he does not obtain at least 5% of the votes cast in his constituency.

Deputies are elected by simple majority vote in 75 districts, 38 being allocated one seat each and 37 two seats each. By-elections are held to fill parliamentary vacancies which arise between general elections.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

In December 1980, constitutional amendments were promulgated and provided, *inter alia*, for a new membership of the National *Panchayat* (Parliament) such as described above.

In March 1981, it was announced that the first poll under the new system would be held on 9 May. As before, the elections continued to be on a non-party basis, the electorate having decided against the reintroduction of a multi-party system in a referendum in May 1980**.

*See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 19.

** See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections and Developments XIV (1979-1980)*, pp. 21-22.

Some 1,110 candidates (39 of them women) vied for the 112 elective seats. Several banned party leaders called for a boycott of the poll, but voters largely rejected this call.

In accordance with the new constitutional provisions, the newly-elected Parliament met to elect the Prime Minister on 14 June. Mr. Surya Bahadur Thapa, who had held this post previously, was chosen. He subsequently formed his Council of Ministers.

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections

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| Number of registered electors . . . | 7,800,000 (approx.) |
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