

Mayor Balen to skip upcoming HoR polls, complete mayoral term
His closest aides say he will neither form a new party nor contest the upcoming election.
He will complete his current term as Mayor of KMC.

KATHMANDU, Nov 3: The political earthquake triggered by the Gen Z movement, which Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) Mayor Balendra Shah (Balen) backed, toppled the KP Sharma Oli-led government and sent traditional parties reeling. In the aftermath, speculation swirled around Balen: would he form a new political party, join an existing one or contest the upcoming elections?

For now, Balen is drawing a line. According to his close aides, he will not contest the March 5 elections and will instead serve out his remaining term as KMC mayor. "He will neither form a new party nor join any existing one," the aide said. "However, he will support parties or candidates that genuinely carry forward the agenda of the Gen Z movement while respecting all constitutional provisions."

Yet, the path to this decision has not been straightforward. In the immediate aftermath of the Gen Z uprising, as the Oli-led government collapsed, some members of Balen's secretariat explored political alignments with the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), driven by the country's power vacuum and prevailing uncertainty.

"Many urged Balen to take the helm as interim prime minister, but he declined, insisting that his term as mayor was yet to conclude and that he was not ready to step into central politics," the source explained.

Still, political pressures persisted. Talks were quietly held with the RSP, including central figures Pukar Bam, Ganesh Karki, Tika Sangraula (Jwala), and even Minister Kulman Ghising. Reports suggested that RSP Chairman Rabi Lamichhane was ready to make Balen or Ghising the party chair. But when news of these discussions leaked, internal resistance from ambitious RSP leaders like Sobita Gautam, Dr Swarnim Wagle, and Deepak Bohara stalled any progress.

As the RSP option fizzled, Ghising reportedly began preparations to form a new party, potentially collaborating with former RSP lawmaker Sumana Shrestha. While rumours circulated about Balen joining this new venture, he has firmly dismissed such claims, the source reported.

Instead, Balen has chosen a role as a supporter rather than a contender. He will back parties or independent candidates who uphold the Gen Z movement's vision and operate within constitutional bounds. "If they embrace the agenda of the Gen Z movement and adhere to the Constitution, he will support them and even assist in their campaigns," the source said.

Questions about Balen's stance on federalism, secularism, proportional representation, and the directly elected executive head have lingered. His aides confirmed that he supports all constitutional provisions, with a particular emphasis on delegating more power to local levels. If the new House of Representatives (HoR) pushes for a directly elected executive head system, Balen is expected to support it.