

Local Level Election- 2079

Preliminary Report

Local level elections have been held in all the districts of the country today (May 13, 2022). In some of the local levels of Dang and Kapilvastu, the polling has been postponed due to the death of the candidates. The election has been completed in 751 local levels and in some of the wards people's representatives have already been elected undisputedly.

INSEC had received the permission of election observation from the Election Commission and 234 observers were delegated in more than 250 polling stations in 75 districts. According to the information received from the observers of INSEC, today's election was peaceful except for very few disputes, clashes and violation of code of conduct.

This election has ensured the continuity of the local level government. It is believed worldwide that periodic elections should be free, impartial, fearless and peaceful if not done so a state of distrust is formed towards the government, political parties and the Election Commission.

Democracy is a political system that reaches citizens legitimately policies maintaining the rule of law. Therefore, periodic elections are inevitable in a democratic system. Voting in elections is a sovereign and fundamental right of the voters. Voters can choose the right representatives only if there is a clean, credible, dignified and impartial election. Only fair elections can contribute to the consolidation and development of the democratic system.

The enthusiasm of the people seen in this election, the wide and strong participation of the younger generation, the wide representation of women and Dalits will strengthen democracy. This election will play an important role in bringing the rights provided by the new constitution to the doorsteps of the people.

Observation of Today's Election

- Like in previous elections, voters with disabilities found it difficult to cast their ballots in some places. Polling stations were not seen to be disability friendly. It was found that the voters with disability were deprived of wheelchairs at Adarsh Secondary School in Ranja, Banke.
- Some polling stations in Kathmandu and other places were congested because of which the polling was delayed and the voters were bothered. Some polling stations in Bhaktapur were found to be in disarray.
- It was seen that it took time to search for the names of the voters who had taken voter ID cards for the last election due to different serial numbers and this delayed the voting process. In some polling stations, voter identity cards were not found, but in some places, voter ID cards were sent to one polling station and the names were found in another polling stations.
- Voters were found to be confused about the polling process it showed that voters' education was inadequate.
- The lines of male and female voters were segregated at the polling stations and arrangements were made for easy voting for senior citizens, pregnant women, people with disability and unwell voters.
- Mohan Ram BK, 30, a voter at the polling station at Basudev Secondary School, Liskita in Surnaya Rural Municipality-2 of Baitadi, was beaten. According to Prakash Luhar, an Executive Member of Surnaya Rural Municipality, BK's right leg was fractured.

- Kamal Singh Bista, 68, of Tundegair in Patan Municipality-6 of Baitadi District lost his life while going for polling.
- According to Dhanusha Representative Dipendra Prasad Singh, Phulmaya Dimdung, 37, a voter of Janata Rastriya Aadharbhut Primary School Polling Station (A) in Mithila Municipality-8, Jamuniwas, has been deprived of her right to vote. When she reached the polling station to cast her vote, Phulmaya complained that she was not allowed to cast vote as it was found had somebody else had already voted on her behalf.
- According to Mahottari representative Ajay Kumar Sah, bullet firing took place at a polling station in Balwa Municipality-5. Police fired one round during a dispute at the polling station.
- Polling was obstructed in Kattike Deurali Prabha Secondary School centre of Chaurideurali Rural Municipality-6, after the destruction of backup ballot box at around 10am.
- As per the information provided by Ganga Prasad Paudel, DSP of district police office, Dolakha, police launched one round of air fire following the dispute between the voters in ward office centre of Baiteshwor Rural Municipality-1.
- Due to the dispute in some of the polling centres at Ramechhap district, the polling was obstructed and the police had to air fire to control the situation. Police launched few rounds of air fire after the cadres of congress attacked the queued voters at Sikral polling centre of Manthali Municipality-12.
- The husband of Sushila Devi's, 34, snatched the ballot paper from her hand and cast the vote himself without listening to anyone at Bhediyahi elementary school of Sarlahi district, Malangwa Municipality-1 at 9:25.
- According to Nanda Singh, INSEC Humla representative, polling officer Krishna Prasad Acharya, helper Kala Rokaya and voter Lila Shahi have been injured in the clash between supporters of alliance party and independent candidates at Mahadev secondary school's centre. They were rescued by Nepal Army's helicopter and sent to Surkhet.
- Despite good security facilities in the polling centres, some of the centres lacked security in outer spheres.
- Polling was found to be confusing and crowded due to the stationing of polling booth on inappropriate places.

- Overall, the polling centres led by women were found to be well managed.
- No hurdles were created for the entry of observers in the polling centres. However, monitoring of the polling centres weren't easy.
- Behaviour of officials and police toward the observers was respectful.
- Cadres of Nepali congress tore all the ballot papers after finding out that one set of ballot paper was distributed for voting without the signature of polling officer at Bhagwati secondary school polling centre of Simta Rural Municipality-1, Surkhet.

Conclusion:

While acknowledging that the government, political parties along election commission didn't leave any stone unturned in order to make the election impartial and fear free, several incidents of violation of code of conducts, blame games and attacks have been documented. The value of

election will be increased only if the election is free, impartial and fear free. It is adamant that the value of election will further be strengthened if the drawbacks seen in the implementation of code of conducts is addressed and action is taken against the violators of the same. We are of a view that it would be better if the election commission holding the responsibility of conducting upcoming federal and provincial level election make an action plan with due consideration to the lessons learned via former election.

People couldn't trust the action procedures implemented by the commission upon the lodged complaints of violation of election code of conduct, since no reliable information on the same has been disseminated. This is also found to be one of the reasons as to why the cases of violation of code of conduct didn't decrease.

There were instances where voters were influenced with inappropriate campaigning, misuse of money during the period of electoral silence, parties and so on and so forth. It triggered the realization that the elections are becoming costly and the idea that they need to win the election by hook or by crook is being developed amongst the political parties. The value of election will be increased if the drawbacks seen in the implementation of election code of conduct are addressed and action is taken against the violators.



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For Human Rights and Social Justice

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