



LOCAL LEVEL ELECTION – 2022 (PERIODIC UPDATE II)

Mobilization and Incidents Surrounding Local Level Election

(This update is produced by Collective Campaign for Peace (COCAP) in collaboration with partners. It covers electoral developments, instances of violence, and contestations from April 16 to 30, 2022)

Highlights of the Update

- Candidate selection was the primary driver of discord and rift in various political parties that resulted in protests, demonstrations, and clashes.
- 27 election related non-violent and violent contestations were recorded throughout seven provinces between April 16 to 30, 2022.
- The Supreme Court set to rest the confusion on candidacy of incumbent local representatives by requiring them to resign before filing the nominations if they wished to contest in local level election.
- Of the total candidacy filed by males, 44.11% are for executive positions¹ whereas, only 9% of the total female candidacy are for these positions.
- Female candidacy for Ward Chairperson's position stands at a dismal 3% compared to male candidacy.

Electoral Development from April 16 to 30

Election related incidents have intensified over the past two weeks with less than two weeks remaining until the polling date on May 13, 2022. The first week in this period was characterized by debates on candidature of incumbent representatives and contractors in local level elections, which were decided by the supreme court.

The second week consisted of important programs in the election cycle that included **registration of candidates (April 24-25), publication of the final list of candidates by the election commission (April 28), along with**

providing the election symbol to the candidates (April 30).

The election programs followed their schedule despite escalation of political tensions over selection of candidates in different parties. The last week of April was marked by intra-party disputes over candidacy in executive positions by aspirants.

Political parties found it difficult to manage the aspirations of many leaders and cadres who were vying for candidacy in the local election. Aspirants who failed to secure candidacy blamed

¹ Executive positions include - Mayor/Chairperson, Deputy Mayor/Deputy Chairperson, and Ward Chairperson

the centralized decision-making tendency of the parties and unfit electoral alliance.

They resorted to protests, demonstrations, padlocking and clashes in some cases. For instance, cadres of CPN-UML padlocked the party's election campaign office in Mahottari on April 25, expressing dissatisfaction on candidature for local level election.

Some aspirants who were denied candidacy by their parties filed nominations as independent candidates outside the party mechanism. For instance, Jagannath Poudel, contender for the position of Mayor in Bharatpur Metropolitan from Nepali Congress (NC) filed an independent nomination as his party opted to remain out of the Mayoral polls to support the candidate of CPN (Maoist Centre) of the electoral alliance.

Candidature of Incumbent Representatives and Contractors

The supreme court on April 19, 2022 scrapped its interim order that allowed existing elected officials to run for the upcoming local elections without resignation from their current position. **This means, the elected representatives who wish to run for local election need to resign before filing the nominations for May 13 local elections.**

The decision helped create a level playing field for all the candidates which otherwise would have provided more favors for the incumbents. Former chief election commissioner, Nilkantha Uprety also defended the provision in the electoral code of conduct stating it as essential for fair and free elections.

The election commission issued Local Level Election Guideline-2022 on March 29, that requires local-level election candidates to self-declare while registering candidacy. One of the points of the self-declaration requires **the aspirant candidates to declare that they are not involved in contracts at the local level and have not been involved in the transaction of immovable/movable property.** However, the supreme court on April 20, issued an interim

order to not implement the arrangement that prevents contractors from contesting the local level election. It paved the way for contractors to field their candidacies and contest in the upcoming local elections.

Contractors hold a significant influence across policy circles and politics in Nepal at all levels. As per the Federation of Contractor's Associations of Nepal (FCAN), more than 300 of its members have been elected to mayoral positions in the local government elections in 2017. **This implies that among 753 mayoral positions, more than 43% of those who were elected were contractors.** Their presence further enlarges, when looked into other subordinate positions of ward chairperson and ward members in local government.

Elected representatives can be from any profession. However, a **general tendency of misusing their authority by awarding the contracts to themselves or to their favorable groups and renting out their equipment to local governments were seen among the contractors who were elected last term.**

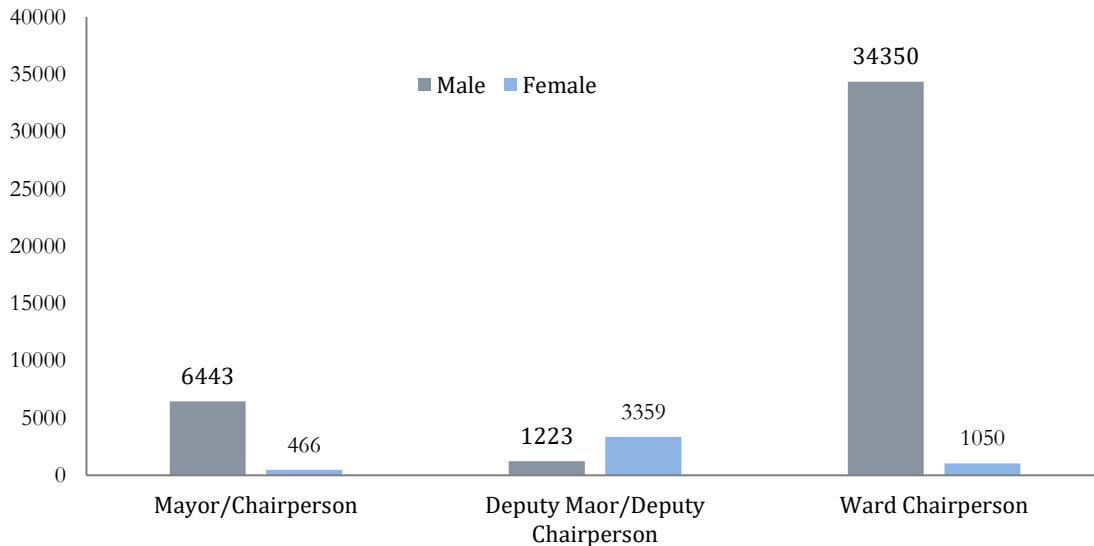
Gender-wise Distribution of Candidates in Local Level Election

Out of 1,53,220 total candidates for 33,715 positions at the local level election, 57,967 candidates are female, among which only 4875 candidates have filed candidacy for the executive positions. **Though the nomination of women makes 37.83% of the total candidacy, only 8.41% of the candidates are for executive positions, according to the election commission. In contrast to this, the male candidacy for executive position stands at 44.11% of the total male candidacy.**²

The graph below shows a comparison of male and female candidates in the executive

positions. The candidacy of females is significantly lower than males in Mayor/Chairperson. **Female candidacy for Ward Chairperson's position stands at a dismal 3% compared to male candidates.**

The candidacy of females is however higher than males in Deputy Mayor/Deputy Chairperson's position. This is due to the provision in **the Local Level Election Act-2017, section 17(4)** which requires parties to guarantee 50% representation of women while fielding the candidacy either in mayor/chairperson or deputy mayor/ Deputy Chairperson positions.



Gender wise distribution of candidacy in local level elections-2022

Source: Election Commission Nepal

² The figures are taken and derived from the data on candidacy published by the Election Commission

Nepal in Local Level Election E-Bulletin on April 29, 2022.

While a party must field chief and deputy candidates of different genders, the same rule does not apply to a coalition of different parties. An analysis of nominations filed by parties in electoral alliances clearly showed that the parties have exploited this loophole while fielding candidates for executive positions and confined women to reserved seats; namely, Women Ward Member and Dalit Women Ward Member.

The lack of participation and inclusion of LGBTIQ and other gender minority groups in electoral process remain a concern. The data published by the election commission showed dismal number of 183 people from gender minority groups registered as voters with none filing the nominations for any positions in the local elections.

Election Related Contestations

The selection of candidates for local elections was the primary driver of electoral contestation between April 16 to 30. 27 incidents related to electoral contestation were recorded across the country during this period. Protests, demonstrations, padlocking, and clashes were seen as aspirant candidates and their supporters expressed disgruntlement upon being denied candidacy by party leadership.

Province-wise details of incidents in different districts recorded by NepalMonitor are listed below:

Province 1

- **Morang:** Women leaders and cadres of Nepali Congress (NC) staged a demonstration in Morang on April 24 citing neglect towards their representation in local level elections. The demonstrators stated that their representation in the candidacy for the local level election guaranteed by the law was being undermined due to the coalition.

Similarly cadres of the ruling coalition parties comprising Nepali Congress (NC), CPN (Maoist Centre), Janata Samajwadi Party (JSP), CPN (Unified Socialist) picketed the office of chief election officer in Biratnagar demanding the annulment of CPN-UML's candidacy for Biratnagar Metropolitan City which according to the them went against the election code of conduct.

- **Khotang:** Nepali Congress (NC) cadres padlocked the party office in Diktel on April 25 protesting against the recommendation of Dharmaraj Pokhrel as candidate for the post of mayor of Diktel Rupakot Majhuwagadhi municipality by the party's Province 1 chairperson. The irate cadres physically assaulted Pokhrel on April 26 according to reports.
- **Jhapa:** Cadres of CPN (Maoist Centre) vandalized the office of Buddhashanti Rural Municipality in Jhapa on April 25 during a dispute within cadres of the party while registering candidacy for the post of Deputy Mayor. The angry cadres physically assaulted Maoist Centre's official candidate for the post of Deputy Mayor Pawan Timsina while he was registering his candidature for the post of Deputy Mayor as Maoist Centre's official candidate.

Madhesh Province

- **Dhanusha:** Nepali Congress (NC) cadres staged a demonstration in Janakpur against the party leadership on April 20. Protesting the decision of the coalition to award the candidanship for Deputy Mayor of Janakpur Sub-metropolitan City to Janata Samajwadi Party (JSP), NC cadres chanted slogans against NC president Sher Bahadur Deuba. NC cadres stated that NC could win the local election in Janakpur Sub-metropolitan on its own and the coalition was not needed.

In another incident related to dispute over candidate selection, 10 persons were injured when Janata Samajwadi Party (JSP) cadres and leaders clashed over the nomination of party candidate for the post of the Mayor of Charnath Municipality, Hansapur Municipality and Shahid Nagar Municipality in Dhanusha.

- **Parsa:** Women leaders from different political parties staged a demonstration in Parsa on April 23 demanding women's rightful representation in candidacy of the local level election. The women leaders stated that their rightful representation was fraudulently being snatched away in the upcoming local elections. The demonstrators claimed that the ruling coalition in the Birgunj Metropolitan City and the leadership of the CPN-UML were shunning established practice of having a woman as candidate for the local level Chief or Deputy Chief.
- **Mahottari:** Cadres of CPN-UML padlocked the party's election campaign office in Mahottari on April 25 expressing dissatisfaction on candidature for local level election. They claimed that the party nominated people who used to criticize the party's leadership as candidates for local election and demanded to know the party's candidate selection criteria.

In another instance of political competition and bitterness within parties for candidacy in local election, Ajay Kushawaha, Mayoral candidate for Gaushala Municipality from CPN-UML was physically assaulted by Devendra Mahaseth (contender candidate for the same post) on April 25, at the office of the Election Officer in Gaushala Municipality.

Bagmati Province

- **Ramechhap:** Political row over candidate selection was also reported in Ramechhap. In a dispute related to nomination of candidates for the post of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Khandadevi Rural Municipality in Ramechhap, CPN-UML central member Madhav Dhungel was physically assaulted by another member of the party on April 18, according to reports. Dhungel's wife Sarita Dahal sustained minor injury in the incident while she was trying to save her husband.
- **Makawanpur:** A group of Nepali Congress (NC) cadres padlocked the Hetauda Municipal Committee Office of NC on April 19 protesting against possible alliance with other parties for the local election in Hetauda Sub-Metropolitan City. They claimed that NC will lose crucial positions to partners if they enter an alliance for the election.

- **Chitawan:** The candidacy for the post of Mayor of Bharatpur in Chitawan has been a bone of contention within the Nepali Congress (NC) party. NC's central leadership decided to award the candidacy for the post to CPN (Maoist Centre) as a part of the coalition. Local NC leaders and cadres in Bharatpur padlocked the party district chairperson's office in Chitwan protesting this decision on April 22.
- **Kavrepalanchowk:** Supporters of Kunsang Lama, a contender for candidacy of mayor of Namobuddha Municipality in Kavrepalanchowk from Nepali Congress (NC) attacked Roshan Pandey, another contender for mayoral post from NC on April 24 at Banepa Village resort during a meeting of the party. Pandey sustained injury in the attack and was sent to Shir Memorial hospital in Banepa for treatment
- **Sindhupalchowk:** Police fired tear gas to disrupt a clash between two groups of CPN (Maoist Centre) cadres at Chautara Municipality of Sindhupalchowk on April 25. The clash took place between supporters of the party's official candidate for the Mayor's post and the supporters of the opposing group. Maoist Centre's local leaders stated that the party was making those staying in Kathmandu candidate instead of local aspirants.
- **Sindhuli:** Seven persons were injured during an attack at the contact office of Nepali Congress (NC) in Sindhuli's Dudhouli Municipality-2 Bhanuwahi on the night of April 29. According to NC ward chairperson and candidate for the post of Chairperson of ward 2 Jit Bahadur Bhujel, CPN-UML cadres were involved in attack and vandalism. NC demanded action against the attackers. CPN-UML candidate for the post of ward 2 chairperson Ritesh Raut claimed that he was unaware of the attack.

Gandaki Province

- **Kaski:** Nepali Congress (NC) cadres padlocked the party's district office on April 20, in Pokhara, protesting the decision of the party to give the candidacy of the Mayor of Pokhara to CPN (Unified socialist) as a part of the electoral coalition.

Later, on April 24 NC cadres locked the local leaders including district committee members inside the party office demanding the candidacy for mayor of Pokhara Metropolitan City be given to NC instead of CPN (Unified socialist) of coalition. Police were deployed to prevent the situation from escalating.

(NC) cadres also vandalized the party's office at Pokhara Metropolitan City-3 Tersapatti on April 28 protesting against the party's order to withdraw their candidacy for the post of Chairperson of Ward 18 and Ward 24 to comply with electoral alliance.

- **Gorkha:** Nepali Congress (NC) cadres padlocked district party office and NC's working committee office in Gorkha on April 25 protesting the decision of party's provincial committee to recommend Bishwadev Shrestha as the candidate for the post of Gorkha Municipality's mayor. Shrestha also

reported that he sustained injury after being physically assaulted by seven NC cadres on the same day.

Lumbini Province

- **Banke:** Nepali Congress (NC) central member Maikulal Balmiki reported an attempt of physical attack on him from NC cadre and member of Nepalgunj Sub-metropolitan city Ward 10 Manoj Shahi on April 29. Shahi, an aspirant candidate for the post of Ward 10 Chairperson from NC was unhappy at being denied the candidacy.

Karnali Province

- **Dolpa:** DSP Niranjana Thapa sustained injury on his head while intervening at a clash between two groups of CPN-UML cadres in Dolpa on April 25. The CPN-UML cadres were fighting over registration of candidates from the party for the post of Deputy-Mayor of Thuli Bheri Municipality in Dolpa for the election.

In Chharka Tangsong Rural Municipality, Dhawa Gurung, a local aspirant for Chairperson of Ward 5 was **physically assaulted** by the cadres of incumbent Chairperson Sonam Sangwo Gurung on April 25. Locals claimed that Gurung was physically assaulted for trying to register his candidacy.

- **Jumla:** A CPN (Maoist Centre) cadre was injured when supporters of two contenders for the candidacy of Deputy Chairperson of Hima Rural Municipality of Jumla clashed on April 27.

Sudur Paschim Province

- **Darchula:** Two persons were injured during a clash between cadres of Nepali Congress (NC) and CPN-UML in Shailyashikhar Municipality-6 Gwani of Darchula on April 21. CPN-UML cadre Rajesh Bista stated that NC cadres threw stones and glass bottles at cadres of CPN-UML who were holding a peaceful rally. Police stated that a minor clash had occurred between NC and CPN-UML cadres during door-to-door campaigning for local elections.

PREPARED BY



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