

(The Speech of Chief Election Commissioner Dr. Ayodhee Prasad Yadav delivered on June 17 during the press meet at the Media Center of the Election Commission on the election preparations for the second phase of the local level elections scheduled for June 28)

Respected voters, brothers and sisters,

1) As per the 'Constitution of Nepal' promulgated by the Constituent Assembly, the first phase of the local level elections was held on May 14 for 283 of the total 744 local levels in 34 districts of Province No. -3, 4 and 6. Except for Bharatpur municipality, the election results of 282 local units have already been announced. The Election Commission would like to cordially thank all, including the Government of Nepal, political parties, candidates, and security agencies, staffs deployed in the elections, media outlets and voters, for extending all kinds of support to make the first phase of the elections a success.

2) You all are already informed that the 'Government of Nepal' has just decided to hold the elections of the local levels only in Province No-1, 5 and 7 on June 28 at a time when the Commission had accomplished all preparatory works for conducting the local elections in all the remaining four provinces. According to the new decision of the government, the June 28 elections are going to take place only at 334 local levels of 35 districts in the three provinces, except for Province No- 2. As per the government decision, the elections of Province -2 will be deferred to September 18. The registration of candidacy nominations for the second phase of the elections was scheduled for June 16 but rescheduled for June 18.

3) I would like to inform all voters, common people, political parties and other stakeholders that the Commission has completed all preparations for the second phase of the elections on June 28. The second phase elections are going to take

place at one metropolitan city, 7 sub-metropolitan cities, 111 municipalities and 215 rural municipalities and as many as 64,32,765 voters are eligible for the elections. The June 28 elections will pick a total of 15,028 representatives. Altogether 8,364 polling centers have been fixed at 4,581 polling locations for the June 28 elections. Furthermore, 66,900 staffers, apart from security personnel, will be deployed during the second phase elections.

4) The representation of women in the local levels has been given top priority during the local elections as per the provisions of the 'Constitution of Nepal' and the Local Level Election Act 2073 BS. The political parties have taken the compulsory provision of fielding 50 percent women candidates for the posts of mayor and deputy mayor at municipality and president and vice-president at rural municipality very positively. At the ward level as well, 50 percent women representations have been guaranteed. Furthermore, there is also a provision to waive 50 percent of total fee for the nomination of Dalit candidates. The aspiring candidates can file their candidacies at the respected offices of the chief returning officers and returning officers on June 18 between 8 am and 4 pm.

5) We hope that the political parties and candidates, that had fought long for democracy, republic and federalism, and have dedicated the most fertile time of their lives to the causes, will pay a full respect to the sovereign rights of the voters to elect their desired candidates during the second phase of the elections. The Commission is also confident that the security personnel deployed for the elections will actively discourage the activities of stoking situation and imposing blockages by anyone on the path of the election process, including candidacy nomination to vote counting, and maintain law and order on the ground. The chief returning officers and returning officers have been directed to make all logistic arrangements to facilitate the candidates to register their nominations, and the voters to cast their

votes in a safe, simple and trouble-free atmosphere, and fight the possible hostility of the nature on June 28, the Election Day.

6) I would like to remind all that the Election Commission has enforced the Local Level Election Code of Conduct 2073 on March 1 in order to make the local elections free, fair, independent, transparent and credible. The Commission has formed the Election Code of Conduct Monitoring Committee at the central level and also set up a committee to look into the election related disputes, under one of its Election Commissioners. Regional administrators, chief district officers, chief returning officers, returning officers and chief election offices have also been authorized to monitor the violations of the code of conduct. There is also a provision to forward unsettled disputes from the districts to the Center, and the Election Disputes Resolution Committee has the rights to take final decision on the disputes. The Commission has also assigned several high level monitoring teams to start monitoring the election activities after the election campaigns will begin. Those teams will monitor the enforcement of the election code and they will punish those violating the code as per the election laws. Micro-observers will also be deployed in some sensitive districts. The Commission is confident that all sides, including political parties and candidates, will comply with the election code.

7) The Election Commission has been operating the voter education drive extensively to guarantee the representation of women, Dalits and minorities as per the constitutional provisions. That is why the voter education drive is being carried out by putting women voters as well as women candidates on top priority. As per the policy of the Commission to make the voter education more effective, sufficient trained voter educators have been sent to the doorsteps of the voters. At least, one voter educator has been deployed at one polling center and thus, altogether 8, 350 voter educators with all required materials have been deputed for

the second phase of the elections. Additionally, election-related information and messages are also being disseminating through local print outlets, radios, televisions and FM radios in local languages. Voter education materials have been prepared in 16 national languages. The Commission hopes that it will receive sufficient support from the mass media, political parties and candidates to make the voter education more effective. The voter educators have also been made more responsible for the effectiveness of the voter education. The Commission has also made all arrangements for distributing voter education materials in local languages and observing original ballot papers for the voters at the polling centers. Street dramas and mock elections have also been conducted in some districts. Besides, special voter education programmes are also being conducted to encourage the representatives of woman, Dalit and minority communities.

Respected voters, brothers and sisters,

8) The Government of Nepal has made strong commitment to managing all required security arrangements for the June 28 elections. The Commission is fully confident of the reliable security arrangements for all, including the officials and staffs of the Commission, the staffs deployed in the elections, the election materials, management of the material transportation, polling locations, voters, offices of political parties and candidates. The Commission hopes that the government will not leave any stone unturned to make the security arrangements of the second phase elections more effective and election-friendly, also based on the experiences of the first phase of the elections.

9) The Commission had, as per its policy, urged national organizations of observers for the observation of the local level elections. The Commission has granted permission to a total of 7089 observers from 47 organizations to observe the June 14 elections. The Commission had allowed the representatives of the 12

diplomatic missions in Kathmandu to pay inspection visit to the polling centers in the Kathmandu valley during the first phase of the local elections on May 14. Although the Commission has made all arrangements for the representatives of the diplomatic mission to pay inspection visits to polling stations at eight different cities in province 1, 2, 5 and 7, now it is making preparations for their inspection visit at the polling stations only in Biratnagar and Dhankuta of Province-1, Bhairahawa and Palpa in Province-5 and Dhangadhi and Dadheldhura of Province-7 on June 28. The Commission will take a decision about the diplomatic representatives' inspection visit of the September 18 elections in Province - 2 later.

10) The Commission has already established the Joint Election Operation Center (JEOC) on April 5 at the EC headquarters to coordinate among the election offices, collect information from its line agencies and immediately update about the election activities. The Call Center is also being operated at the EC headquarters to pass the election-related information and notices in a simple and easy manner. The Commission has made all arrangements to conduct direct monitoring of some sensitive polling stations from its headquarters by exploiting modern technologies. The Media Center is also being operated on the premises of the Commission to facilitate the smooth flow of information and messages related to the elections.

Respected media persons and journalists

11) I, on the behalf of the Commission, urged all the stakeholders, including the entire voters, political parties, civil society and media sector, to be sure that the local elections of Province -1, 5 and 7 would be held on the stipulated date, June 28.

12) The role of the mass media in the elections has always become prominent. The constitution has guaranteed a complete freedom to the press. Therefore, the

Commission believes that the common voters will benefit for the news items disseminated by the media outlets utilizing the freedom of press.

13) Finally, on the behalf of the Commission, I once again appeal to the candidates of the political parties and independent voters to enthusiastically take part in the nomination process of candidacy rescheduled for June 18. Besides, I humbly request all the stakeholders to accomplish the nomination process peacefully.
Thank You.

*** This is an unofficial translation