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Nepal: Oli's Govt Fall Imminent: Dahal Pulls the "Rug"- Update No. 335

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On 12th July, the Maoist Centre of Nepal led by Dahal formally withdrew its support to Oli's government. The next day a no confidence motion against Oli was filed in the Parliament.

Oli Defiant!

Oli has remained defiant. He has declared that he would go by constitutional provisions. In his view though a no confidence motion can be passed against him, no new prime minister can be elected under Article 298 of transitional provisions of the Constitution.

Legal experts differ whether a new Prime Minister can be elected. At the worst they say that article 298 could be amended.

The best course would be for Oli to tender his resignation as his government has lost its credibility and whatever be the provisions in the constitution, his continuance as Prime Minister when he has lost his support in the assembly is untenable.

Oli had been there for hardly nine months as the 22nd Prime Minister since the 1990 Constitution. Roughly Nepal has had a Prime Minister almost every year. It was only late G.P.Koirala who remained as a Prime Minister for a longer period, soon after the Jana Andolan II.

NC Joins the Maoists to topple Oli:

Before the no confidence motion was filed, Dahal of CPN Maoist Centre entered into a seven-point agreement with the Nepali Congress and

the understanding is that Dahal would give way to the Nepali Congress after eleven months. The latter is to ensure that national elections take place well before Jan. 21 2018, the mandatory date given in the Constitution.

The seven point agreement is as usual wishy washy and vague enough not to do anything at all. There is a mention of addressing the Madhes based movement. Peace, security and good governance are also to be ensured!

It is not clear why the Nepali Congress teamed up with Dahal to topple Oli's government. If they expect that Dahal will be able to form a consensus government, they are mistaken. The UML is not going to oblige. If they think that toppling Oli who is riding on a huge "ultra nationalist" wave will weaken him once he is out of power, they are equally mistaken. If Deuba is to take over after eleven months as is likely and for the fourth time as PM, it is not going to be different from what he did or achieve in his last three stints as PM.

The UML has a fairly efficient and well-networked organisation and would continue to be a factor in Nepali politics though they would lose considerably in the Terai.

Dahal wants blanket amnesty and freedom to move around!

The agenda of the Maoists appear to be different. Dahal wants to become a Prime Minister again. He is desperate. His efforts to get Oli hand over the leadership of the government on the basis of a "Gentleman's agreement" failed and he had to withdraw support to Oli. It is said that he cancelled his recent visit to Australia on the fear that he may be arrested. Now as Prime Minister, he will be able to move about freely!

What is more important, Dahal is looking for a "blanket amnesty" of crimes committed by the Maoists during the ten-year old insurgency. But the international organisations and Donors will not permit this.

Madhesi Vs Pahadis:

The Madhesi Front has declared its support to the no confidence motion. They are said to be in a mind to support the new government under Dahal, though they may not be a part of it. There is an expectation in the Madhesi circles that their demands to a large extent may be met by the new government. The Madhesi leaders are still going back to their 26 point demand and for two provinces in the Terai. They are going to be disappointed yet again.

One can sense a complete polarisation between the Hill leaders and the Madhesi. No Hill leader has sincerely and openly come out in support of the Madhesi cause and in the plains the anger against the "Pahadis" is palpable. Unless some major and genuine concession is made, the Madhesi problem will continue to simmer.

For the first time it is seen that demand for secession is gathering force in the Terai. If a major and popular leader emerges (though none at present), India will soon have a problem on hand.

Problems and Challenges:

The problems that will be faced by the new government are immense. For the second successive monsoon, the victims of the earthquake have no cover over their heads. The political parties are squabbling over mode of payment, whether to be given in one or many installments. There is no

sense of urgency even now with the NRA. They continue to have a bureaucratic approach- they are slow and inefficient and the sufferers are the victims of the earthquake.

The TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) has received over 52000 cases and all these cases will have to be decided in the next seven months. An impossible task by any standards!

The budget is yet to be passed. At least there should be a consensus among parties to get the budget through no matter whether Oli steps down or not. Diplomatic appointments to a large number of countries are yet to be confirmed. It does not look that Oli's efforts to divert trade and get more from China has worked so far. He has promised many things like piped gas etc. which can only be a pipe dream.

Above all, national elections will have to be concluded before 21 Jan, 2018. Before that elections to the provinces and the local bodies will have to be concluded. The Election Commission is yet to provide a legal framework for a free and fair elections. The election laws are to be endorsed by the Parliament. The more difficult task will be the delineation of the local and provincial constituencies and the Commission constituted for the provinces is yet to make substantial progress. The government has made an impractical one year road map for these. But the government itself is getting replaced!

India Blamed:

It was no surprise that India is being blamed for the fall of Oli government. First the media suggested and later Oli himself has come out openly accusing India of trying to topple him. The atmosphere in the valley is such that there is no one who speaks well of India. Perceived Indian support to the blockade in the Madhesi agitation has brought a bad name. The Indian media has not been of much help either. There are suggestions that India has an "opportunity" now to restore good relations! I wish it could be so easy.

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