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Submitted by asiaadmin2 on Fri, 02/23/2018 - 13:02

Note No. 796

Dated 23-Feb-2018

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K.P.Oli, the chairman of the UML and now the 41st Prime Minister Nepal, in an interview with the South China Morning Post, Hongkong made three very significant points in Nepal's relations with China and India. These were

1. He wants to deepen the ties with China to explore more options and get more leverage in dealing with India and in keeping with the times.
2. He favoured a review of all special provisions of the Indo Nepal Relations, including the long established practice of Nepalese soldiers serving in Indian Armed Forces.
3. One cannot forget that Nepal has two neighbours and Nepal does not want to depend on one country or other.

He also said, not perhaps in the interview, that he will be rescinding the order of the previous government that cancelled the Burri Gandaki Project given to a Chinese company. He also envisioned quicker communication connection with the northern neighbour through rail and road.

Unlike other politicians who indulge in double speak, K.P.Oli was quite frank and blunt and he should be appreciated. **But what is troubling, is the open, brazen and arrogant declaration that he would be able to get more leverage from India by getting closer to China.**

In my meeting with one of the most experienced and perceptive analyst from Nepal, I learnt the following and this is relevant now in the

context of Oli's statement.

1. By frequent calls and visit of the Indian foreign minister, one gets the impression in Nepal that India having made the mistake of encouraging the blockade is out to make up at any cost.
2. India is seen to be desperate to mend its relations as **even friends of India feel that anti Indianism pays**. After all, Oli rode on a wave of ultra nationalism and anti Indianism.
3. For the present, India should not push for the Kosi High Dam or increase the capacity of Karnali dam and again it gives the impression that India is desperate to get these projects. This complicates the negotiations between the two countries. India should wait and not be in a hurry. Nepal will sooner or later realise that for economic progress, exploitation of water resources is a must.
4. There is a tremendous amount of goodwill for India and the democratic forces for the present are down but not out and given the right leadership and greater activity at the ground level, the Nepali Congress is sure to rise again. India can wait.

It is not that the right thinking people are aware that ultra nationalism can carry one through upto a point and not beyond. A recent article by Kedar Neupane, made two significant observations- one- Democracy without economic prosperity of the citizens becomes the source of delusion. Two- A self-reliant economy does not necessarily have to be nationalistic.

There is already a discussion in the Nepalese media whether Oli should first go to China than India and there was another suggestion that Oli could perhaps go to Bangladesh first. It should not matter to India whether Oli first goes to Bangladesh or not, as Oli will certainly be aware of the impact of such decisions.

Oli, for all his grandiose "nationalistic" statements (read anti Indian) cannot move forward towards economic prosperity without cooperation from India. This is not the place to go for examples, but it is for the Indian foreign policy bureaucrats and decision makers to **ensure that anti Indianism does not pay**. This applies not only to Nepal but to all neighbouring countries. I recall Dr. Tulsi Giri former Prime Minister of Nepal and an avid supporter of royalty telling me that they can get more from India by kicking it and not by routine negotiations!

I cannot but quote late Dr. Rajbahak of Tribhuvan University, telling me that **India is useless to friends and harmless to enemies!** This is something that Indian Policy Makers should ponder.

There is no doubt that some of the anachronistic provisions in the Indo-Nepal Friendship treaty and some of the attached provisions of that treaty will have to go in keeping with modern times as Oli has hinted. I do not know what the group of "eminent" persons have recommended specifically on the relations. What is important to see is that "in keeping with the times," let the relationship be based on fully reciprocal basis

and let Nepal decide what kind of relationship it wants with India. If Nepal decides that it is in the best interest of Nepal not to allow recruitment of Gurkhs soldiers, India should have no objections.

On the day Oli took over as Prime Minister, members of the Maoist Centre including Dahal were absent in the ceremony as the two parties had not been able to work out an agreement. After a long personal meeting between the two leaders Oli and Dahal, a seven-point agreement was arrived at which briefly is as follows:

1. Unified party to be called Nepal Communist party.
2. A General Convention will take a final call on the party's ideology.
3. Until then, Marxism and Leninism will be the ideological stand of the party.
4. The strength of the Standing Committee, Politburo and the Central Committee will be small. (said not to exceed three digits for the central committee, less than two dozens for the standing committee- and in the proportion of 60-40 between UML and the MC)
5. Oli and Dahal to take turns as Prime minister. (said to be three years for Oli and two for Dahal and vice-a-versa for party chairmanship)
6. Post of President and Dy. Speaker to go to UML and Vice president and Speaker to go to the Maoist Centre.
7. Ministerial berths as decided.

The important thing to note is the power sharing arrangement and the most controversial and difficult aspect-ideology has been put under the carpet for the present. The agreement looks good on paper and one can expect immense problems particularly in the period leading to and during the general convention. Will the UML give up the party's "people's multi party democracy?" One should wait and see.

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