

South Asia Analysis Group

Published on *South Asia Analysis Group* (<http://www.southasiaanalysis.org>)

[Home](#) > Nepal: Prime Minister Oli and the Madhesi Problem:

Nepal: Prime Minister Oli and the Madhesi Problem:

Submitted by asiaadmin2 on Fri, 10/12/2018 - 13:22

Paper No. 6440

Dated 12-Oct-2018

By S.Chandrasekharan

On 19th August, in a major address in Janakpur, Prime Minister Oli declared that the Government is ready to amend the Constitution in accordance with the needs of the country and the people. He reiterated that the Constitution will be amended soon.

Earlier, in order to get the support of Madhesi group led by Upendra Yadav, he promised that the amendments will follow soon. Upendra Yadav in his anxiety to become the Deputy Prime Minister accepted such oral assurances and readily joined the Government with his group- the SSF (N). The other party, the RJP (N) in having supported the Oli Government is finding itself in an embarrassing situation and may soon leave the Government.

It is not clear why PM Oli has been unable to go through the amendments which he can when he has an overwhelming majority in the Parliament with the support of both the Madhesi Groups and the main opposition- the Nepali Congress is not averse to such a move.

The result is that the Terai is seething with anger and this was palpable when Province No. 2 consisting mostly of Madhesis, boycotted the functions relating to the Constitution Day on September 19. It was not only the people, but even the Chief minister and other ministers in the cabinet kept away from the functions. The CDOs (Chief District Officers) and other Executive officers in districts celebrated the function without the Ministers. The Ministers instead took out rallies at many places against their own federal government.

The occasion was commemorated as a “Black Day” by the RJP(N) the major partner in the Government.

The RJP Coordinator, a mild and reasonable politician, Mahant Thakur declared on that day that nation building is not possible by depriving the Madhesis of their rights. Thakur warned that the consequence of not addressing the concerns of the Madhesis in time will only sow the

seeds of disintegration.

There is already a separatist campaign known as “Free Madhes Campaign” and the leader C.K. Raut has been in and out of jail for quite some time now. There is no support for the group from the people or the political parties for now but may soon grow into a major organisation if the Centre does not pay heed to the moderate leaders like Mahant Thakur.

The neglect of Madhesis is also seen in the way the Province number two is being treated. In an interview the Chief Minister Lal Babu Raut, aired his problems and grievances against the Centre openly.

He said

- * His problems range from Staff crunch to lack of power to implement policies that are legitimately in his jurisdiction.
- * There are many controversies and ambiguities in the Constitution that have baffled those in implementing the Constitution. There are ambiguities in the jurisdiction and powers between the local bodies and provincial Government as also with the Government at the Centre.
- * His demand for revision of boundaries has not been taken note by the Federal Government and the Constitution appears to be too rigid in dealing with such problems.
- * He did not get the required number of employees from the Federal Government to run the provincial government. Those allotted to the province do not have the expertise in administration to run the Government.
- * The CDOs are still under the control of the Federal Government. They do not think that they are the employees of the Province and not the one at Kathmandu.
- * The Police Force is not under the Provincial government though the maintenance of law and order is in their jurisdiction
- * Some of the Offices that are supposed to be under the Provincial Government are still either with the local bodies or with the Federal Government.
- * The Provinces have the power to collect Vehicle Tax, but the transport office that collects the taxes are with the Federal Government and not under State jurisdiction.

* The Provincial Government cannot get foreign assistance and cannot meet foreign representatives without the approval of the federal Government.

One can understand the caution and reluctance to empower Province number two that is entirely in the Terai and not led by the Ruling party, but the malady appears to be present in other Provinces too like Province No. 5 governed by the Ruling Party that has also major grievances. The Chief Minister Shankar Pokhrel in a public meeting expressed his dissatisfaction over the Federal Government's reluctance to decentralise power to the Provinces. He accused the federal Government and other Central Authorities of their reluctance to decentralize power in the true spirit of the Constitution. He said that the Federal Government is yet to formulate laws for smooth running of the federal and State Governments.

In fact, the Chief Ministers of all Provinces who met earlier in September on the eve of Inter State Council Meeting postponed by Oli in a huff said the same thing and accused the Federal Government for failing to delegate rights to Provinces. Other complaints included

* Failure to help the Provinces in the provincial structure and staff adjustments

* need for co existence and cooperation among the local bodies, Provinces and the Federal Government.

* Need for decentralization of legislative, financial and administrative powers.

The Chief Ministers made two important suggestions- one the formation of a high level body chaired by the Prime Minister to implement federalism and two- forming a permanent Secretariat for the Inter State Coordination Council as a policy formulation body. There has been no response from the Prime Minister.

Oli does not appear to have changed his style of functioning. He continues to belittle in his own sarcastic style any suggestion or criticism of his policies. Those who have observed him closely feel that he is limiting his leadership to a small fraction in his party and displays authoritarian tendencies, a charge that is being made repeatedly against him.

Oli's own colleagues like Madhav Nepal have been critical about Oli's style of functioning. Another senior leader Subash Nembang, former Speaker admitted that the party's performance has been lacklustre.

It is said that decisions are being increasingly taken by the duo Oli and Dahal without consulting others. Though the nine member Central Secretariat is being associated in some of the decisions being taken, the 45 member strong Central Committee is being completely ignored!

It looks that the problem is with the senior leaders at the Federal level. Though they had accepted 'federalism' in principle, had not

understood the implications and the genuine need for decentralization. Too long they have been used to wield power at the national level and they are therefore not willing to delegate powers to the provinces which is what federalism is meant to be.

On the Madhesi issue, as said before, Oli cannot continue to ignore the feelings of one third of the population for too long. The time has come for constitutional amendments which he had agreed to earlier and there is an urgent need to go ahead with it.

Tags:

[Nepal](#) ^[1]

[PM Oli](#) ^[2]

[Madhesi](#) ^[3]

Category:

[Papers](#) ^[4]

Countries:

[Nepal](#) ^[5]

Topics:

[Minorities](#) ^[6]

[Political](#) ^[7]

Copyright ©2012. All Rights are Reserved.

```
(adsbygoogle = window.adsbygoogle || []).push({ google_ad_client: "ca-pub-2275491169696384", enable_page_level_ads: true });
```

Source URL: <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/node/2363>

Links

[1] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/58>

[2] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/1243>

[3] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/562>

[4] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers>

[5] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/nepal>

[6] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/minorities>

[7] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/political>