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Submitted by asiaadmin2 on Thu, 06/06/2019 - 10:15

Paper No. 6548

Dated 6-June-2019

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On 16th May 2018, K.P.Oli head of the UML and P.K.Dahal head of the Maoists entered into an agreement to merge the two parties into one- to be called the Nepal Communist Party.

Of the five points in the agreement, the fourth point was that the chairs of the two groups will lead the Government on the basis of equality for an equal period.

Oli became the Prime Minister on 15th February 2018 and therefore according to the agreement which has no legal basis he has to hand over charge of the post of PM to Dahal after two years and six months- that would be roughly some time in August 2020 and there is quite a long time to go.

That the two leaders had privately agreed to share the post of PM was known to the public and there was nothing secret about it. Yet during the period between 30th May and 3rd June Dahal is said to have raised the issue of taking over the post of PM three times particularly when Oli was away in India to attend the swearing in ceremony of the Indian Prime Minister. It is not clear why Dahal is in such a great hurry? Is the move coming on his own or is he being prompted by some of the erstwhile colleagues of the old UML? That is the question.

On one of the occasions, Dahal raised the issue himself and said that Oli could continue for the entire five-year period if the government steers clear of controversies thus giving the impression that it is upto Dahal to decide whether Oli should continue beyond the two- and half-year period or not. Who is to decide on the controversies? Dahal? Madhav Nepal? Bam Dev Gautam or Jhalanath Khanal?

On 1st June this year, Dahal told the media persons that he would become the Prime Minister in one year. When Oli was confronted with this remark by the Press, he in his usual humorous style dismissed the statement that he has just 4 to 5 days left as Prime Minister!

It may be recalled that in 2016 Oli reneged on an understanding he had with Dahal to quit which he did not. Dahal then joined hands with the Nepali Congress to get Oli out of the post of the Prime Minister. Oli has not forgiven Dahal. He had also suspected then that India was behind the move.

Oli's Government does not appear to be functioning in unison. As Ghanshyam Bhushal had remarked the Ruling Party-the NCP is practically functioning like a federation of factions! His own colleagues in the old UML- Madhav Nepal and Bam Dev Gautam are up against him and are seen to be getting closer to Dahal and his factions. The cadres down the line are functioning like separate entities though on paper they are supposed to be one. The National Convention to be convened sometime next year is supposed to solve these problems altogether but I doubt whether it would. It is also said that ideological differences between the two groups still persist- whether to continue with "People's multi-party democracy" as UML wants or "Maoist 21st Century People's Democracy" of the erstwhile Maoists. This will be decided in the next unity national convention- though I doubt whether the leaders are any more serious on these ideological questions.

Meantime, a radical breakaway faction of the Maoists- the Chand group led by Netra Bikram Chand and known as Biplab in the insurgency days is said to be attracting the old disenchanted comrades of erstwhile Maoists. Kathmandu and its environs were rocked with explosions just last month and victims were mainly cadres belonging to Chand Group when explosions took place while transporting or while making the bombs! Just yesterday there was an alarm that the Chand group were upto some mischief in the eastern region. There was concern in the security establishment. These incidents cannot be taken lightly and Oli much to the chagrin of Dahal is taking tough measures to contain them.

But there is something to be wanting in Oli's style of functioning. His intentions may be good, but he remains very acerbic and sarcastic in dealing with the opposition leaders and even with his own colleagues. He is also too blunt. For example, he is yet to get out of the mindset that Nepal is just beginning with the experiment of a federal State and much needs to be done with care and be sensitive to the provinces that have been looking forward to take care of their provinces themselves!

The Federal Government is yet to enact several federal laws and bye laws and the provincial governments are up in arms. Interestingly, six of the seven provincial governments are run by Oli's own party-the NCP.

On 7th of May, Oli said – “The provincial and Local Governments are under the federal Government and federal laws. They are not independent governments. This statement though correct was seen as “detrimental to the spirit of the constitutional provisions and against the spirit of Article 56 (1) and 232 of the Federal Constitution.

On 22nd May while inaugurating the laying of optical fibre cable in Dhading, Oli repeated that provincial and local governments are not separate entities but units under the federal government. This is rubbing salt into the wounds of the provincial governments who already feel cheated.

The local and Provincial governments have strongly criticized the federal budget of the government and alleged that the fiscal estimates are against the principle of federalism.

Khadga Bahadur Khatri, Minister for Physical Infrastructure development in Karnali said that of the total budget- the government has retained 70 percent of the budget while the remaining 30 percent has been divided among 753 local governments and 7 provincial governments! Even significant chunks of budget meant for them have been allocated as “conditional grants.”

Surely Oli could do something on the complaints of the local and provincial governments.

He need not worry about Madhesi group now as Upendra Yadav besides making noise about constitutional amendments is more keen to keep his Deputy Prime Minister’s chair than go for any serious move to get the amendments! He has the majority and the opposition is yet to recover from the drubbing they got in the last elections. The only problem – observers say is his health.

People’s expectations are high and it is time Oli realises this.

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