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Submitted by asiaadmin2 on Wed, 11/20/2019 - 22:55

Paper No. 6512

Dated 20-Nov-2019

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Some two month ago, it looked as if Prime Minister Oli had become all powerful as seen by his disdain for not only the opposition leaders but also towards the seniors within his own merged party- the Nepal communist Party. Most critical were some of his own erstwhile senior colleagues of UML like Madhav Nepal who complained about Oli's style of working when vital decisions having long term impact were being taken without consulting other senior colleagues.

Oli had not given in on Constitutional amendments either that he promised for the Madhesi groups leaving the once powerful Uppendra Yadav getting more and more isolated. Despite being requested by most of the leaders of his party including Baburam Bhattarai, Uppendra Yadav is said to be unwilling to give up his post hoping that Oli will abide by his earlier commitment. He may have to wait indefinitely!

Oli has also continued to keep Dahal- his co chairman of the Party guessing without ruling out the possibility of sharing the PM's post.

All this appears to be changing. Oli now is seen to be consulting his senior colleagues and in fact had delayed the long pending cabinet reshuffle in trying to get a consensus on the new cabinet.

Is it possible that Oli is changing his style of functioning in view of his deteriorating health?

In the last week of October, Oli developed kidney problems and was in the hospital for three days before he was discharged on 31st October. A month earlier he had been to Singapore for a health checkup and underwent plasmapheresis- a course that cleans up the blood system of antibodies that is necessary for any person having a transplanted organ.

It may be recalled that Oli had a transplant of one kidney after both his kidneys failed way back in 2007 in India.

Oli is said to have had dialysis three times or even more and details of his health condition are still kept as a closely guarded secret.

Media photographs of Oli, getting out of the hospital showed him to be too tired and ill. Oli's personal physician Dr. Dibya Singh Shah said that Oli would need additional tests to determine the course of action. Doctors have advised him to rest more and refrain from attending public functions and meetings lasting long hours.

Oli has only two options- either have dialysis twice a week or more on a regular basis or to have another transplant. It looks that he will be going for another transplant and it is said that there are already two donors lined up for the transplant.

Either way Oli's functioning both as Prime Minister and Co Chairman of the Party will get affected unless he gives up part of his work.

As a first step, Oli appears to be planning to give up chairmanship and thus control of the Party to Dahal the Co-Chairman of the Party fully and he is said to have had many meetings with Dahal on this issue. This would placate Dahal to some extent who has been complaining openly of late, of Oli not following the Gentleman's agreement between them to share the PM's term! In fact, in one of the meetings, Dahal openly lamented whether they had made a mistake by merging his party with that of the UML led by Oli!

To keep a check on party administration, Oli is also planning to appoint his trusted associate Bam dev Gautam who is yet to find a slot for election to the Parliament as Deputy Chairman of the Party. Together with his other close aide Ishwor Pokhrel, Oli hopes to maintain a close control on party administration too without offending Dahal also in the process.

Oli took over in February last year and the relationship between him and the former chief of Maoists- Dahal has not been smooth. By appointing Dahal as the full chairman of the party with some checks and balances through his other trustworthy colleagues, Oli hopes perhaps to silence Dahal! It is too early to say whether it would work!

It is by now well known that the Ruling Party- the Nepal Communist Party has three factions, a majority led by Oli and two others though smaller but substantial enough to cause problems led by Madhav Nepal and Dahal respectively.

While Dahal has been taken care of, efforts are now being made to win over Madhav Nepal. Madhav Nepal a senior leader in his own right

of the erstwhile UML before merger has been openly critical of Oli for taking unilateral decisions without consulting other senior leaders. Oli has had many meetings with Nepal recently and there appears to be a temporary truce between them.

The first thing that Oli did after discharge from the hospital was to sack the Governors of all the Seven provinces whose sins if any were that they were appointed by the previous Nepali Congress Government led by Sher Bahadur Deuba. Oli had probably consulted his senior colleagues in the cabinet before taking such an important decision- a move that has been rightly been condemned by all as “arbitrary, capricious and unreasonable”. For a country that has just begun to implement the Federal System, Oli’s action is described “politically authoritative and a bad precedent” by one of the leading commentators.

One major problem- Oli has been adamant so far is the Constitutional amendment he promised to Madhesi groups It is on this promise that the two Madhesi Groups joined the Government. There is no move and Oli also appears to be in no hurry to take the Madhesi groups seriously!

The second issue one should watch is the sudden eruption of the Kalapani border issue and street protests have already begun. This is not a new issue, but this is one area where anti Indian sentiments can be easily whipped up by Oli to distract public attention from other major problems. Oli’s statement recently that he will not cede even an inch of Nepali territory is more for internal consumption while at the same time he has assured that he is committed to resolve the border issue through bilateral discussions.

It remains to be seen how Oli is going to resolve these pressing issues besides the economy that needs to be attended to.

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