

Nepal gets new Prime Minister but deeper problems remain

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Rajesh Thapa reports that the latest shuffle hasn't resolved the real crisis at the heart of Nepali government

The constitution assembly in Nepal has once again failed to agree on a new constitution. Its tenure has been extended for a fourth time. Although the major parties expressed commitments to intensify constitution drafting process several times, the main issues of contention have never been discussed seriously and finalised and the meetings of the CA delayed, unattended, postponed, procrastinated and stalled on several grounds.

Although the first draft of the constitution was intended to be prepared within three months, not even a single meeting was held in this time period. The lust for power and the controversial issue of PLA integration has been the key obstacles towards completing the political process. The main opposition parties the NC and the UML have openly announced that they don't want to move ahead with constitution drafting process before settling the PLA integration issue. The new Prime Minister Dr. Baburam Bhattarai along with his government has put forward a self imposed forty five days timeline to complete the major tasks of combatant integration and rehabilitation. However, he has not been able to give a final touch to his cabinet because of the growing internal rift in his party, the UCPN (Maoist). Now, the top two prioritised issues of constitution drafting and combatant integration are likely to lead Nepal into deeper political and economic crisis.

The growing rift in the Maoist party

The tripartite internal rift in the Maoist party which had been temporarily resolved by elevating vice chairman Bhattarai to the post of PM, now threatens to re-intensify many times over. The senior vice chairman Mohan Baidya has increasing disagreements with the faction close to the alliance of chairman Prachanda and the other vice Chairman Dr. Baburam Bhattarai. The faction led by Baidya which claims to have the support of more than 40 percent of lawmakers if they were to split the party, has strongly opposed the recent handover some of the party's weapons to the state. Baidya and leaders close to him were in favour of finalising the modality, norms and number of PLA integration and rehabilitation. Now, they have taken to the streets to oppose the party's decision and have not joined the government formed by their own party. They argue that all they want is a mere apology from Prachanda and Dr. Bhattarai and commitment to not to repeat such mistakes again.

As the political crisis continues to loom, the economy has failed to grow. The government has not been able to guarantee smooth electricity and fuel supply which is vital for functioning of any economy. Now the new government is struggling hard to control growing corruption, food adulteration, lower the power-cut hours and assure security. In such a crucial political and economic situation the old and the new

parliamentary parties like the UCPN-Maoist have not been able to direct the revolutionary mass of the people towards the achievement of their interest. On the one hand, they have failed to meet people's mandate on peace and constitution and on the other, failed to uplift the socio-economic status. We need a party which can direct us towards the revolutionary direction of smashing the bourgeois state mechanism and establishing a society based on socialist ideals.

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