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The possibility of holding the elections in May 2013 is fast receding with the three main political parties continuing to remain inflexible and by now they have become immune to frequent deadlines being given by President Yadav.

Having painted himself to the corner, the hapless President continued to give frequent ultimatums to the political parties to come up with a consensus government, not realising that the word "consensus" has become a much abused one in Nepal politics. By sending frequent deadlines only to be ignored, the President is becoming a laughing stock. It is better for him to watch and allow the parties to settle the issues or take action as he is still the custodian of the Interim Constitution under Article 36 A. It is not clear why he had to find an excuse to visit India only to be told that he should try to get a consensus unity government which appeared then and continues to be, out of reach with the political parties remaining adamant as to who should lead and who should not.

It was clear that despite frequent change of goal posts and declaration of "readiness to give up the government", the UCPN wanted to stay on till the elections and conduct the elections under their leadership. It is not clear what the 'package deal' they were talking about but what was clear from their stand from the beginning was that the Nepali Congress should not lead the government to conduct the elections. This was certainly understood by some of the leaders in NC, but surprisingly chose to remain adamant and demanded that PM Bhattarai should first resign and hand over the government to the Nepali Congress. This, Bhattarai would never have done and it was clear to outsiders like us but not to the NC leaders themselves.

Strangely, the party took its own time to decide on the prime ministership as all the three top leaders Koirala, Paudel and Deuba were

fighting and rallying support for themselves to lead the government! Deuba with his followers continued to nurse hopes of leading the government once again, when he has had three innings as Prime minister and the mess he created not only for the party but to Nepal itself was well known..

Stranger still, the Nepali Congress was seen hobnobbing with the breakaway "Baidya" group of the Maoists whose avowed aim was to go back to people's war or atleast to a "revolution".

The Madhesi combine in the present coalition- the UDMF led by the Deputy Prime minister Vijay Gachhadar could have acted decisively and forced Bhattarai to resign to form a unity government led by anyone else. Instead, Gachhadar declared his "readiness" to lead the government if and when Bhattarai resigns. No body took him seriously, but he had put to ridiclue his whole Madhesi group by making such tall claims. The other Madhesi group led by Upendra Yadav is getting mor and more irrelevant.

On 3rd January, Bhattarai for the first time indicated that he would be willing to quit, if a neutral government takes over in their place. The names of two civic leaders- Daman Nath Dungana and Devendra Raj Pandy have been suggested by Bhattarai and both have good credentials to lead the government until the elections. That they would remain neutral is beyond dispute.

Unfortunately, the Nepali Congress and subsequently the UML have rejected the proposal. Earlier the proposal of the Maoists to let one of the fringe parties to lead was also rejected.

It looks that both the NC and the UML will continue to be in the "rejection" mode, until the Nepali Congress is allowed to lead the government. Meantime, the Supreme Court, not to be left out has asked the President to explain the delay in the issue of ordinances. Surely the Supreme Court has acted beyond its brief and the President has wisely decided not to respond.

It is time for President to act. Since a neutral government led by some eminent individuals like Dungana is acceptable to the Bhattarai government, the President should act immediately, take up the offer of Bhattarai and make necessary arrangements for a neutral government. This appears to be the only out.

Looking from a broader angle and in a larger matrix, there appears to be a serious churning of political landscape in Nepal. The fear of some that the Maoists are just waiting for an opportune time to seize power to impose the dictatorship of the proletariat does not appear to be a possibility. What is happening is a consolidation of leftist forces led by UCPN and the centrist forces led by the Nepali Congress - the UML. Baidya's group of extreme left will continue to be a nuisance but is unlikely to succeed in a major way. The Madhesi groups will in due course have to align themselves with either of the two main groups to survive!

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