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## NEPAL: Deuba's ministry finally takes shape: Update 50

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**Paper 229**

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**by Dr. S. Chandrasekharan.**

It is to the credit of Prime Minister Deuba that he managed to convince the King on one side and a few of the political parties on the other to join him to patch up a reasonably representative government with the UML (United Marxist League), RPP (Rashtriya Praja Tantra Party) and NSP (Nepal Sadbhavana Party)- Mandal factions..

The 31 member ministry consists of 18 ministers of cabinet rank, 8 ministers of state and 4 assistant ministers. Party wise breakup would be 12 for NC (D)- Deuba's faction of Nepali Congress, 11 from UML, 5 from RPP, one from NSP and two are King's nominees.

Of the four important portfolios- Defence & Foreign affairs are retained by Deuba while another colleague of his party Purna Bahadur Khadka has been given Home. Perhaps the most important and crucial responsibility of Information and communication has been given to the Palace nominee, Dr. Mohammed Mohsin, which should make the King happy. Veteran communist and standing committee member of UML, Bharat Mohan Adhikari has been designated as Deputy Prime minister and given the job of managing finance.

**Some Comments on the ministry:**

\* Deuba had to negotiate over a long period of time to persuade the political parties to join him. As in India, the parties not only

wanted more representation, but also specific ministries ( DMK style in India)! Some insisted that the number of ministers in each party should be in proportion to the number of members each party had in the dissolved parliament. In that Deuba's group had only 49 members, the UML 69, the RPP 11 and NSP 2 which translates into 34%, 56%, 9% and 1% respectively.

\* Generally speaking, all parties in the government appear to be satisfied. There have been internal problems within the party. In Deuba's party NC(D), there were internal differences. Many members felt that only members of the dissolved parliament should be made ministers. Deuba was more keen to have "clean" ministers. Unlike in India, he succeeded. In this process, even those against whom there were only accusations were left out. One such example is that of Bijay Kumar Gachchadar, a Tharu and a popular figure in Terai. Gachchadar is the General Secretary of the party.

\* In UML, the crafty Madhav Nepal managed to keep both the seniors K.P.Oli and Bamdev Gautam out of the cabinet. Bamdev Gautam is a straight talking, tough individual and the only sin he had committed was in leaving the party for a while. Madhav Nepal perhaps felt that his position will be threatened, if Oli is given an important position. Of late, in the movement against regression, Oli has not been seeing eye to eye with Madhav Nepal.

\* Surprisingly, the RPP of Pasupathi Samsheer Rana did not put any serious condition in joining the government and they did not press too hard on the 17 point common agenda they had put up. Perhaps, their representative Jog Mehr Shrestha could have been given a better portfolio instead of land reforms and management. Jog Mehr has vast experience in tackling internal law and order.

\* Perhaps the most serious omission is the failure of Deuba to get experts outside the political parties in tackling the serious crisis the country is facing. People having a very clean image with good administrative and technical experience are available in plenty and their services should have been utilised.

### **UML's ANTICS:**

It was surprising that the leader of UML- Madhav Nepal behaved like a coy bride putting condition after condition before accepting the proposal. Firstly for joining, he placed the pre condition that Deuba should prove that " the regressive steps taken by the King since his (Deuba's) ouster in October 2002 have been repealed and the executive power is exercised by the council of ministers in accordance with the constitution." When the King had agreed to annul the controversial order on the functioning of the cabinet council, he ( Madhav Nepal) made a "51 point proposal for reconciliation" to be considered for discussion. Some of the points were general, some not that easy and some needed deep study and cannot be done by a transition ministry like Deuba's.

See for samples-

- nullification of government work performance ordinance. ( agreed to )
- revival of defunct local bodies. ( Not so easy when the Maoists are now ruling the country side).
- reactivation of National assembly ( life of national assembly has elapsed and it will be unconstitutional to do so.)
- government's commitment to ensure sovereign and state powers of the people and the royal power is exercised through the cabinet. ( too general)
- action on 1991 constitution by preserving the achievements of People's movement of 1990. ( too vague again)
- Nepal as a secular state. ( this cannot be done by a government whose sole aim should be to maintain order, start dialogue with Maoists if possible and conduct elections. Substantive issue will have to wait and Madhav Nepal knows what his suggestion implies.)
- Restructuring of State on the basis of social, cultural, geographic and economic diversities. (This should wait and it looks that the suggestion was made more to score a point against the Maoists who are insisting on restructuring on the same grounds and have clandestinely implemented these aspects in areas of their influence.)
- Renew all unequal treaties including 1950 treaty with India. (This is a priority item that could be taken by Nepal government after the elections and not before).
- Government and Maoists to declare unconditional cease fire to prepare an atmosphere for negotiation. (This needs to be done but only after the UML joins the government and tries its hand. It may be recalled that Madhav Nepal on his own tried twice to get the Maoists round, the latest being in November 2002 in Lucknow and failed!)

### **The Common Minimum Programme ( CMP)**

After hectic negotiations by the task teams of both NC (D) and UML, a common minimum programme consisting of 43 points agreed to by the four parties in government was unveiled on 30 June, 2004.

Some of the highlights of the CMP as revealed in the media were

- \* a seven-point agenda to consolidate national interests and democracy.
- \* maximum flexibility in resolving Maoists insurgency through national consensus.
- \* maintain law and order to guarantee peace and security
- \* six point measures to provide immediate relief to victims of emergency.
- \* six point measures to improve political institutions.
- \* six point economic agenda to uplift country's economy
- \* fifteen point social agenda to uplift poor and down trodden communities.

These points look good on paper. What is important not only for the government but for all those outside the government is to bring about manageable peace for conducting elections. The seriousness of the law and order situation created by Maoists insurgency is perhaps not yet understood by the parties now in power.

### **G.P.Koirala and his Nepali Congress:**

G.P.Koirala for some reason continues to be adamant and he is intending to continue with his movement against regression. Deuba met him twice personally, once soon after taking over and again on 18 June but of no avail. A relay fast is being organised and more processions in the valley are being planned (if he gets enough people!). On 14 June, Deuba sent a delegation led by Gopal Man Shrestha to meet Sushil Koirala of G.P. Koirala's group but the latter refused to support Deuba's government.

G.P.Koirala visited New Delhi for a week from 27 June, ostensibly for a medical check up along with his daughter Sujatha and Shekhar Koirala, his nephew. At Delhi he met Prime minister, chair person Sonia Gandhi and former Prime minister A.B.Vajpayee besides Chandrasekhar and George Fernandes. G.P. is said to have explained the political developments particularly the Maoist insurgency and his own standpoint in keeping out of the government. It is doubtful whether anyone in the government in India would have supported his actions.

G.P.Koirala's followers made a disturbing announcement that he would be meeting Maoists leaders, particularly Baburam Bhattarai at Delhi,

thus giving the impression that it has the acquiescence of the Indian government. There were as usual very critical articles in Nepalese media about the dubious role of India in dealing with the Maoists insurgency and too late in the day, Koirala's party issued a denial. Surprisingly there was no denial from government of India.

### **Constituent Assembly:**

Almost all the parties are making noises about a constituent assembly for replacing the 1991 constitution though it is not yet clear whether they are really serious about it or are making it more to pressurise the King.

G.P.Koirala, on 14<sup>th</sup> June stated categorically that his party is against a new constitution and that tampering with it would open a "Pandora's box." But within a few days, he made an about turn and on 22<sup>nd</sup> June he said that "the Nepali Congress will be in favour of a constituent assembly and referendum if the Maoists agree to hold a dialogue." His deputy Chakra Prasad Bastola referring to this point said that "in order to resolve the Maoists conflict-our party has kept the door of constituent assembly open."

CPN (ML) spokesman Jhal nath Khanal declared on 26<sup>th</sup> June that "Constituent Assembly is the most powerful measure and a weapon to resolve peace in the country." It looks that the party wants to use it as a weapon against the King! .

Even Deuba's party representative Narayan Khadka said "our party is ready to go for constituent assembly if a national consensus is reached."

The Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai warned on 23<sup>rd</sup> June that his party would not settle for anything less than elections to a constituent assembly. The bottom line according to him is constituent assembly with no conditions attached.

Therefore, the issue of coming elections whether to a constituent assembly or to a new parliament under the old 1991 constitution would continue to be debated. This subject needs to be studied in depth.

### **The Maoists:**

The Maoists have continued to be active and violent incidents have of late increased. One major incident was that of 19 June, at Dhankhola, Dang district when 14 police men were killed in an ambush. A list of incidents relating to Maoists since Update 47 is given in the appendix.

Not surprisingly, Prachanda, chairman of CPN(Maoists) came down heavily both on Deuba and Madhav Nepal for agreeing to form a government. He termed it as betrayal of the people's democratic aspirations by taking decisions that amount to 'conspiracy' and backing 'regression'.

## **Appendix:**

### **Incidents**

#### **May 2004**

##### **Date**

**29.** One Maoist was killed in a security action in Jante of Morang.  
Unidentified assailants shot at an ex-military man at Gandakchowk, Birgunj.

**30.** The Maoists exploded a bomb at a private school in Pokhara.

Maoists torched a school bus belonging to Sunshine Higher Secondary School at Madhulia, Rupandehi district.

Maoists detonated a bomb at the District Administration Office of Dhankuta.

Maoists set off a bomb in government-owned passenger (Sajha) bus in front of the RNAC building in Kathmandu leaving six people including the bus driver severely injured.

**31.** Maoists made an attempt to blow up a public vehicle in the capital

#### **June 2004**

Maoists abducted about 500 teachers from 30 different villages of Udaypur district (during the week ending 4<sup>th</sup> June 2004). They abducted the teachers to give them a brief training on Maoist literature and to pressurise the teachers into following the Maoist educational calendar

**4.** In Baigundhara of Jhapa, the Maoists gunned down one person. The victim was charged of extorting money posing as a Maoist

**5.** Maoists killed a civilian, a resident of Diktel, district headquarters of Khotang

The Maoist shot and killed one Babura Thapa after his abduction at Laxmimarg chowk, Dagihat of Morang district.

**8.** Maoists abducted about 500 teachers and students from 76 schools in different villages of the Jajarkot district. Maoists reportedly

abducted the teachers and students to brief them on Maoist literature and principles. They are likely to be forced to participate in the 'people's march.

Maoists exploded a bomb in a tourist bus parked in a garage at Koteswor, Kathmandu.

The Maoists abducted 200 teachers from 17 schools in different villages of eastern Sindhuli,. The teachers were abducted for a brief orientation on Maoist literature and principles.

Maoists abducted four school headmasters from remote areas of Dhading district.

Maoists abducted more than 150 people including five representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross. The kidnappings happened from the headquarters of the Kalikot district in West Nepal

**9.** Seven school buses belonging to Modern Indian School were damaged when explosives laid by the Maoists went off at the school premises in Chobhar. There were no casualties in the explosions

Maoists ambushed a convoy of the Royal Nepalese Army on the highway near Manahari village of Makwanpur district injuring 15 people, including two civilians.

Maoists threw a petrol bomb at the residence of Pakistan ambassador. The bomb caused no damage

**10.** Maoists abducted 38 teachers from the Kholku area of Dhankuta district in Eastern Nepal. The teachers were taken for a brief training on Maoist Janabadi education.

**11.** The Maoists detonated a powerful bomb at a Nepal Telecom office at Jhumka, Sunsari. A group of armed Maoists held the guards at gunpoint and then detonated a pressure-cooker-bomb inside the telecommunication office

**12..** One person was killed and three others seriously injured when a bus ran over a landmine planted by Maoists on a highway at Beltar of Melamchi VDC in Sindhupalchowk.

**13.** Maoists shot and killed a person at Gongabu, Kathmandu

The Maoists shot to death a Royal Nepalese Army soldier in Damak, Jhapa.

A young girl was killed and two children were severely injured when a bomb left by the Maoists went off in Budhi village VDC of

## Kapilvastu

**14.** Maoist blew up the home of Deputy-Inspector General, Devendra Bahadur Malla, in Gauriganj of Chitwan district. Maoist set off a bomb after telling the caretaker to leave the house.

The Maoists abducted 50 businessmen from Dudhauri bazaar It is the first time the Maoists had abducted businessmen in the district

Eighteen Armed Police Force (APF) personnel, including an inspector, were killed when the Maoists ambushed their truck at Khairikhola of Banke. The explosion occurred when the security team was on its way to Agaura to dispose a bomb, the Maoists had planted on the Mahendra Highway

22 security officials were killed in the blast carried out by Maoists at Khairikhola, Banke.

Maoists abducted 38 students from Mayam Secondary School during working hours in Furunbu VDC of Taplejung district.

Maoists looted Rs 835,000 from Hariwon Sugar Mill in Sarlahi district

**17.** The Maoists shot and killed two policemen and injured two others in Sandhikharka of Arghakhachi district.

Maoists shot one person at Dhulabari, Morang district

**19.** Five members of a Maoist retaliation group were killed during a two-hour-long clash with Maoists in Pipara VDC of Kapilvastu

Eighteen people, 14 Armed Police Force (APF) officials and four civilians were killed in a Maoist attack on a security patrol at Gobadia VDC-1, Dhankhola in Dang district

A 12-year-old boy was killed when a bomb left carelessly by the Maoists went off at Chiuripani of Dorpa VDC in Khotang. The blast occurred when the boy was playing with the bomb.

Maoists abducted over 250 people, including teachers and students, from different areas of Kailali district

**20.** Maoists abducted over 1000 youths from Achham district, forcing them to join military activities. The rebels have taken away the youths, aged between 15-25 years, from all 65 VDCs in the district

**21.** Maoists crushed the legs of eight dalits in Thalsa VDC in Achham. The dalits were incapacitated as a punishment for continuing to

work for landlords

**22.** The Maoists hacked a Dalit youth to death in Selang VDC in Sindhupalchowk district

The Maoists exploded a bomb at the Regional Accounts Office in Pokhara

The Maoists abducted at least 140 employees of Udaypur Cement Factory in Udaypur district.

Maoists abducted 10 wage earners from Rauta

**23.** Two children were badly injured when a bomb left carelessly by the Maoists went off at Kulekhani, Makwanpur district.

**24.** The Maoist shot and killed two Armed Police Force (APF) personnel and a civilian in Sanfebagar of Achham district

**25.** Maoists shot and killed a policeman and injured another at the Neplagunj Bus Park

**29.** Maoists detonated a powerful bomb at the office of the Backward Society Education (BASE), an NGO, in Dhangadi, Kailali. Four Maoists barged into the NGO's office, took three security guards as hostages at gunpoint and detonated a pressure cooker bomb at the top floor.

**30.** Maoist detonated a bomb at Kamere in Dhading in an attempt to blow up a security force convoy en-route to Malekhu. While the security forces managed to escape the attack, a minor was hurt in the explosion

At least four Maoists and a security official were killed in an encounter at Jakena area of Arghakhachi district

The Maoists set fire to the Internal Revenue Department's branch office at Banke's Kohalpur

Maoists kidnapped a former headmaster of Hekuli Secondary School in Pawan Nagar VDC of Dang district.

#### **July 2004.**

**2.** The Maoists shot and killed the mayor of Pokhara

Two armed Maoists were killed in Ilam district of east Nepal in an encounter with the security forces

Maoists attacked and injured a policeman in Marchwar of Rupendehi district

In Bhojpur district, the Maoists killed one-security personnel in a grenade attack and injured another

The Maoists killed a CPN-UML activist, while they freed Ram Krishna Thapa in Nuwakot district

4. Security forces shot and killed two suspected Maoists during a search operation in Rupandehi district

5. Maoists abducted 150 teachers from different schools of Udayapur district

Maoists shot and killed the Chairman of Kathmandu Metropolis ward number 12 in his office.

Maoists shot and severely injured two policemen at Ganeshsthan of Gongubu in the capital

Nine security personnel were killed in a Maoist attack at Kalchi area in Salyan district

6. Deputy superintendent of police was severely injured in the Maoists attack

Six Maoists were killed in an encounter with security forces at Tola area in Dailekh district

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