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Maldives and the Future of the MDP:

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A day after the election results to the Majlis were announced, former Nasheed declared that the MDP would need restructuring and a new leadership. The Chairman of the party Reeko Manik resigned from his post over the election debacle and Nasheed has been made 'acting President' for the time being.

From going to a high point of getting around 49 percent of the votes in the Presidential elections, the performance of Nasheed and his MDP progressively declined, first in the local council elections and now in the elections to the Majlis with only 26 out of 85 seats. One of the newly elected MP from the MDP has defected to the PPM, thus giving the ruling coalition a two-third majority.

Nasheed said that the defeat was a result of multiple factors- undue influence, fear, money, choice of candidates, policies, campaign budget and lack of confidence. Expelling employees owing allegiance from companies with government shares and government positions had also a negative impact on the results. In many areas the voter turnout was low and removal of Election Commission members at a critical time had resulted in a lack of confidence of the people in the elections.

More interesting and perhaps more telling were the comments made by some of the readers in the press. One reader gave a piece of advice- " Do not badmouth religious conservatives". Another pointed out that radical moves like changing the age-old Katheebis to Councils did not go well with the people at the grass roots.

Another said that liberal positions on foreign policy, business liberalisation, foreign investment and environment did not play well with the people.

This could be true and perhaps the country was not yet ready for any radical deviation from the existing norms. No doubt Nasheed's opponents played the Islamic card to make it appear that Nasheed is anti Islam which he never was. Not that his opponents were "ardent Islamists," but they used the religion to make it appear that with Nasheed in charge Islam was in danger. One should recall the thirty and odd page scurrilous pamphlet authored by two of the present day high level politicians and circulated just before the February 2012 coup to show that Islam will be destroyed with Nasheed in charge!

Is there, therefore a danger of "creeping religious fundamentalism" in the country? One cannot say.

One can notice some despondency in the statements made by Nasheed. All is not lost for the MDP. No doubt, there are tough times ahead. It will be tough for them to deal with a ruling coalition with a two-third majority and a hostile judiciary. As he himself had mentioned, the MDP will continue to say whatever has to be said politically at every time.

Nasheed's call to President Yameen to work with the MDP in reforming the judiciary and in sustaining the democratic system may fall on deaf ears! But he will have to fight on and not lose hope. His efforts to bring in democracy after thirty years of autocratic rule will be in vain if he loses hope.

The Party Congress of the MDP is scheduled to take place on June 6 and 7 of this year when, as mentioned by him new, educated and respected people with a leading role to "inspire the nation" could take over.

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