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Maldives: President Yameen Still Running Riot.

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By Dr. S.Chandrasekharan

It was now the turn of the leading opposition party MDP to be duped into yielding to Yameen's government without getting anything in return though much was promised as a "quid pro quo."

Having realised that there was no immediate prospect of former President Nasheed being released, with thousands of their workers facing serious charges in the court, with some of their leaders in exile facing trumped up "terrorism" charges and above all, President Yameen in control of both the judiciary and the security forces, the MDP leadership decided to go for talks and reconciliation with the regime sometime in the first week of August.

In accordance with the understanding, the MDP supported all the initiatives taken by Yameen to consolidate his hold though some of them were controversial and against known policies of the party. These included:

- * supported the amendment to the constitution to set new age limits for President and the Vice President. (This was done specifically to induct Ahmed Adeb as Vice President)
- * To support the impeachment of former Vice President Jameel
- * To support the second constitutional amendment to allow foreigners to buy land in Maldives for development of Maldivian economy.

*The protests that was a daily affair were to be suspended and the party to go for a dialogue.

In return, the understanding was that Nasheed will be released (he was under house arrest at that time), charges against thousands of MDP supporters to be dropped and steps will be taken to introduce reforms in the judiciary and independent institutions. (the only known step taken was to fix a curriculum for the unqualified judges and to start an academy)

While the MDP went along with all that was promised, the Government not only did not follow it but went back on its word and pulled out Nasheed from his house late in the night on 23rd August and put him back in the High Security prison at Maafushi.

Instead of releasing Nasheed, the Prosecutor General has moved for an appeal against the conviction of Nasheed. The High Court is still studying the case whether to take up the appeal at all. Media reports indicate that one of Nasheed's lawyers was brutally attacked in broad day light on the 6th September. There is enough evidence with CCTV coverage of the assailants and it remains to be seen what the Police is going to do. The Police came in for severe criticism from the criminal Judge (surprising) who found that while the charges against the accused MDP were that they used sharp weapons against the Police in the protests, the CCTV coverage showed that they fought with "bare hands." Now it is Abdulla's time for getting sacked!

Nasheed's return to High Security prison had some 'drama' too. Nasheed's lawyers produced a document issued by the Maldivian Correctional Services that had an official stamp, the State seal and the signature of a prison official, converting the 13-year sentence to house arrest. The officials did not take note of the document.

This was followed by Police investigations the same night about the supposed forged document. Nasheed's house was raided again and the inmates including his 13year old daughter were awakened and questioned till 4.30 in the morning. The humiliation of Nasheed and his entire family was complete. Nasheed's visitation rights were also curbed for a while.

It is no wonder that the MDP has renewed its protests. A large number of party cadres assembled in front of Nasheed's house and the Police had to use pepper spray to make a clearance for the Prison party to move out with Nasheed. The next day there was a huge rally in Male and this is going to be followed by nation wide protests on September 11. Dialogue with the government was also called off and so it is back to square one for the MDP after giving in to all the demands of President Yameen.

Nasheed's re imprisonment has been criticised universally. David Cameron said that he was deeply concerned and urged the government to release all political prisoners.

The reaction of US State Department was fairly strong. It said " We renew our call on the Government of Maldives to release former President Nasheed, end politically motivated trials, and take steps to restore confidence in its commitment to democracy and the rule of law

including judicial independence and to ensure fundamental rights are respected, including freedom of speech, press and peaceful assembly.”

The condemnation of UNHC for Human right was equally forthcoming. It said “ The return of Nasheed in our view constitutes a serious setback to the Human rights situation in Maldives. The High Commission has therefore urged te Government to consider President Nasheed’s early release.”

With the law and order situation likely to deteriorate, the economy is also not doing well. The MDP pointed out that

- * Tourist arrivals did not reach the target expected. There is a decline in the arrival of Chinese tourists after the “Shanghai shock.”
- * In the first five months, the Government has spent far in excess of it revenue.
- * There is a 12 percent decline in export of fish.
- * Foreign Investments have not been forthcoming.
- * Only 1000 jobs have been added in the last one and a half years when the target for the term is 94000 jobs.

The question that strikes me is - who will be the next to be duped by President Yameen. Judging from the flurry of visits of the two foreign Secretaries of India and Maldives and a personal letter from President Yameen to PM Modi calling for Indian investments and promising to keep the Indian Ocean region free etc, it looks that it will be India’s turn!

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