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On June 1st, Upendra Yadav of SSFN- (Sanghiya Samajwadi Forum Nepal) joined Oli's government as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Health and Population. Another member of his party Mohammed Istiyaq Raya has also been inducted as Minister for Urban Development.

Entry of Yadav has further consolidated Oli's government with more than two thirds majority now and should enable him to amend the Constitution if need be to satisfy the demands of the Madhesi groups. But will he ? Oli in his earlier tenure as Prime Minister strongly opposed any amendment to the Constitution and in fact had termed the Madhesi demands as "anti-national".

For quite some time, Upendra Yadav has been desperately trying to join the government and was only waiting for some sort of assurances from the Oli Government to take the plunge. This he got on June 1st when the two top leaders of the now merged NCP- Oli and Dahal had assured him that they are committed to amending the Constitution.

A vague two-point agreement was signed between Yadav and the two leaders to save Yadav's face in entering the government. There was no mention of the primary demand of the Madhesi groups of redrawing the boundaries of the provinces nor was it clear that Oli had softened his stand on the other major demand of Madhesis- "representation according to population".

The entry of Yadav was not without a last-minute drama. Before signing the agreement, the status hungry Yadav insisted on being appointed as Deputy Prime Minister in the government in addition to being a cabinet Minister which the two leaders obliged. In the process, Oli was able to elevate his disgruntled colleague and veteran leader Ishwor Pokhrel also as Deputy Prime Minister, giving the latter a second

position in the government hierarchy with Yadav in the third position.

From Oli's point of view, it was a master stroke in getting a major chunk of Madhesi groups into his government without conceding anything specifically on the demands. Giving the post of a Deputy Prime Minister involves no power but only status, and in the past, we have seen many Deputy Prime Ministers being appointed purely for tactical and political reasons only to be discarded when their utility was over.

Upendra Yadav has always had leftist leanings and was once said to be a member of UML and had even contested the elections before on the party's ticket. Already there are strong rumours in Kathmandu that he would eventually join the NCP the ruling party along with his followers.

What catapulted Yadav to fame was the Madhesi movement of 2006-2007 and to his credit he was able to rally the Madhesis on the issue of discrimination of the Madhesis and made them a strong political force- a process that began from the time of late Gajendra Narayan Singh.

On the positive side, the entry of Yadav would make the ruling party very powerful and now they could focus on their agenda of making Nepal – “a prosperous Nepal and Happy Nepalis”- a term that is often being spoken of in the government circles. This term has also found an endorsement in the joint communique issued by the China and Nepal after the visit of Oli very recently.

The expectation from the Yadav's side is that the Government would soon seriously consider the genuine demands of the Madhesis and bring in the amendments. As said by a leading columnist in 'Rising Nepal', if Yadav fails to get to amend the statute despite his joining the government his image as the leading Madhesi leader would be dented. Yadav would also become one of the many leaders like late Vedanand Jha who took up the Terain cause in a big way only to ditch the Terain cause for personal benefits and eventually to be side lined both by the Government and the people of Terai.

Until now both the major Madhesi Groups the SSFN of Upendra Yadav and the RJP N have been united and fought the elections together. They are also unitedly running province no. 2 where they are in a majority. Both the groups have been in touch with the ruling party and have been giving support from outside. It was expected that both the groups will continue to take a joint stand on issues relating to Madhesis including amendments to the Constitution.

It is therefore sad to see Upendra Yadav breaking the ranks and unilaterally joining the government on a vague assurance just to get a few positions and ignoring the major issue of amendments to the constitution both on the configuration of the provinces and in representation in accordance with the population in the national legislature.

The other conglomeration of the Madhsi Groups – the RJP of Nepal led by other leaders including Mahant Thakur and Rajinder Mahatao are said to be not too happy with the developments. It is certain that they would wait for more concrete commitment from the Ruling Party

before they consider joining the Government.

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