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## Nepal: PM Oli Continues to Disappoint:

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In his disappointment over Oli's style and content of governance, one Analyst has pointed out perhaps rightly that- with six months out of power, former PM Deuba's misrule and bad Governance are fading in public memory with the performance of K.P.Oli's Government. Though many of the accusations against Oli are not justified, it looks that the Nepalese Media has been persistently denigrating Oli's performance. Perhaps it is the arrogant style of Oli that puts off the Press.

Oli is being accused of -

- \*Inability to manage Federalism
- \* Curbing freedom of NGOs, of curtailing civil liberties and press freedom
- \* Hesitancy in expediting a National Integrity Policy to regulate NGOs.
- \* Of tolerating Non-Performing Ministers and Ministries
- \* Weak governance in spite of a two third majority.
- \* Of centralising all powers and seen to be coming up as "Rising Despot" in the region.

- \* Not filling up the potholes in Trivandrum! ( frivolous one and blaming the poor PM appears to be ridiculous)
- \* Slow progress in institutionalising “federalism” with serious shortage of staff at the Provincial and Local levels.
- \* Performance of Local bodies despite being given full powers and funds is to say the least is dismal.
- \* Delay and avoidable controversy in choosing the Chief Justice
- \* Failure to fulfill his commitments for constitutional amendments.
- \* Producing a citizenship law which is stricter than the previous citizenship charter thus making no progress in this long pending issue that affects a large number of the population in the south.
- \* Heavy taxation at both the central and provincial levels sometimes going to 300 percent from previous years with no corresponding benefit to show for the Public.
- \* Commitment of over 95 percent of aid for the last fiscal year from Chinese sources, thus leading the country into a possible “Debt Trap” with the Chinese.
- \* Failure to take quick remedial action in disputes that are surfacing between the Centre and the provinces and this may lead to serious confrontation if not checked in time.
- \* Hurried introduction on Aug 17 the laws relating to Civil and Criminal Codes.
- \* Above all, lack of progress in bringing the peace process to an end with the victims of the civil war still not getting justice.

The list could go on. But what baffles everyone is why Oli in spite of being assured of a five-year term and a two third majority is not being decisive and is seen to be dilly dallying on a simple issue like the appointment of Chief Justice?

Some point out that Oli is facing two challenges internally - the one being his own health and two the attitude of his coalition partner- the Maoists who are pushing for irregular orders for all the atrocities committed during the civil war. Dahal being a wily character, Oli has to constantly see behind his back as to what Dahal is doing.

On Constitutional amendments, Oli continues to parrot his earlier statement that he is ready to amend the constitution “in accordance with

the needs of the country and the people.” He said this as recently as 19th August in a rally at Janakpur and added that he is committed to a constitutional amendment. Yet no move towards any amendment is being seen and poor Upendra Yadav who joined the government on this commitment continues to face embarrassment in Terai.

On the introduction of new civil and criminal codes, the country was using the outdated Muliki Ain codes first enacted by the Rana regime in 1854. Certainly there will be flaws in the new laws, but that can be corrected. But the people appear to be in a great hurry. They were up in arms on some issues like the one on Doctors who threatened a state wide strike! But the issue was not in implementing the new codes but in taking time to respond to some of the shortcomings in the codes that agitated the affected parties. The Government did deem it necessary to explain to the public on the new laws that have an impact on their day to day life!

Again, Federalism is a new concept that would take some time for the three tiers of government to coordinate and perform. One third of all the posts in the local and provincial levels are yet to be fulfilled and the process will take sometime to recruit, train and make them understand their roles and perform. Simple things like national holidays should be coordinated. For example, the holiday declared by the Provincial government in Province 2 was not obeyed by the Federal Rashtriya Bank and the Interior Minister of the Province had to go personally to the bank to lock it up. Such ugly incidents should have been avoided. In the matter of taxation, the people are being burdened by overlapping taxes at all the three levels and taxes have doubled and tripled. The people are justifiably angry and there is need to immediately regulate the taxation procedure and clear demarcation of the powers at all the three levels of the Government. Some have begun to think that Federalism is a “Poisoned Chalice.”

Some of the criticisms against the PM are not fair like the one of Trivandrum roads being full of potholes. The one instance of stopping of a former Maoist child soldier going to a Conference in Bangkok is being used to declare that the Government is authoritarian! But the Government should have clarified why the individual Lenin Bista was not allowed to board the flight.

In a conference of legal experts, one of the participants said “We are in a state of crisis. The current government of Oli is increasingly showing tendencies of an authoritarian and totalitarian State!” This statement is harsh and one should look around and see what is authoritarianism. One does not have to look far beyond the Maldives where a tyrant President is using all the tools of government to stay in power and to get elected again by sending every possible candidate to jail or to exile!

But Oli should do some things immediately that should indicate that he means business. This is not a complete list.

First, is that justice should be done to the victims of the decade long civil war immediately. He has a problem in that some of the perpetrators are part of the Government or part of the newly formed party. He would still have a working majority even if the Maoists withdraw. He should show some bold steps.

Next, go for the Constitutional amendments and do justice to Terai. One is sick of hearing that the Constitution was approved by ninety percent of the people's representatives and so is sacrosanct. This means nothing to one third of the population in Terai who continue to remain in an adversarial situation.

Third, the new federal dispensation should review and see why all the three levels of administration taxing the people without any coordination? This has to be immediately remedied. People are justifiably angry over the heavy burden of the taxes.

Fourth- he should quickly get rid of all inefficient ministers, no matter how high they were in the respective party hierarchies and get competent people with hands-on experience.

There is still time for Oli to regain his Supreme position as the most popular leader of Nepal and take some steps that may be unpleasant but yet would do good to Nepal in the long run.

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