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Nepal: Moves Ahead at Great Speed to get the Constitution Amendment Bill Passed:

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With the main opposition Party- the Nepali Congress having agreed to endorse the amendment to the Constitution on Saturday the 30th, the Government registered the bill with the Parliament, the following day on the 31st of May.

Normally the Government can take a month's time to publish the Bill in the Gazette but here it did it on the same day in the evening.

After a week's maturing period that is laid down in the rules,, the Government is supposed to present the bill in the Parliament for discussion and passing of the bill. Normally it takes three weeks for all procedures to be followed in making the amendment.

But these rules are being suspended to get the bills passed as soon as possible. On the request of the Law Minister, the Speaker of House called a Business Advisory Committee that includes the chief whips of the Parties to take quick decisions in the matter.

It is said that the intention of the Government to short circuit the amendment process is to convey a message to its neighbour about the seriousness of the issue and that all parties are unanimous in passing the amendment and claim the disputed area as theirs. To me, it looks that Oli is in a hurry to get the bill passed as many of those who have endorsed the bill may in course of time change their minds. This mindless hurry will not be appreciated in New Delhi either and it may end up in hardening its stand against Nepal on this issue.

Oli does not seem to understand that India is in no hurry to start the bilateral talks on these issues when it is faced with more serious issues like the impact of the Wuhan Virus on the national health, its economy and added to these the border standoff, the most serious one since the "Doklam" with China. There is also a suspicion that may not be true that China is instigating Nepal on this issue!

It is said that Oli sent a personal emissary- former Foreign Minister Gokul Baskota to the Indian Ambassador to explain Nepal's stand. The details of the discussion are not known, but it appears that the Indian Ambassador stressed that it is essential to create a positive environment for the talks.

A day after the Constitution Bill was registered in the Parliament that is 1st June the merged Madhesi Party, JSP (Janata Samjwadi Party) registered a private Constitution Amendment Bill of its own that sought to redress the grievances of not only the Madhesis, but also the Janajathis and other marginalised groups. The private Bill seeks amendment to 23 issues that relate to major ones like language, citizenship, proportional representation etc but also other not so pressing issues like the formation of Cantonment Regions, Special Regions, Change of Government set up with an Executive Government etc.

With the Ruling Party having an overwhelming majority in both house,s the leaders of the JSP are aware that the bill will be rejected, but they wanted to make a point that the Government should be equally keen to settle other outstanding pressing issues instead of dealing with the issue of the map alone. The two parties have not objected to the Government's amendment bill relating to the map either. The country is already polarised with the dominant Hilly regions in the north and the southern plains people. Outright rejection of the Bill of the JSP by the Government will only further exacerbate the divide between the two.

Not to be out done and not to be seen as not sympathetic to the Madhesi Cause, the Nepali Congress decided to re register a three year old amendment bill that favoured proportional representation to the Madhesis and other issues relating to Terai. This bill was moved when the Nepali Congress was in alliance with the Maoists led by Dahal. But Dahal who is an opportunist is unlikely to support the bill as he now heads the Ruling Party the NCP.

What is surprising is of Oli's tearing hurry to pass the amendment to the Constitution just for substituting the map. This is not going to strengthen Nepal's claim of the Kalapani-Lympiyadhara- Lipu Lekh area either in the bilateral talks. He has already proved his nationalist credentials by abusing India by claiming that the Indian virus is more lethal than that of China and Itlay. He is yet to see more lethal ones coming from the Middle East when Migrant Workers start returning in thousands from West Asia and with the Government not yet ready with the infra structural facilities for testing or treating the Virus patients.

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