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Nepal Drama: Oli Gets a walkover in the Duel with Dahal.

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By Dr. S. Chandrasekharan

In the last three weeks, high drama was being played out between between Prime Minister Oli on one hand and the other senior leaders of the Nepal Communist Party that almost resulted in the imminent exit of PM Oli. The issue was of Oli's incompetence and failure to address the more immediate problems that Nepal was facing.

It is now learnt that Oli has finally outwitted Dahal. It is said that Dahal has meekly accepted Oli's offer to refer all the issues relating to the Party leadership and that of the post of the Prime Minister to the Party Convention that may be held towards the end of the year.

This happened in a lunch meeting between the two on Saturday the 18th of this month

The much awaited standing Committee meeting on 21st of July ended up within a few minutes in discussing other issues and the agenda of Dahal was ignored. The meeting is to be convened again on 28th July but the danger of a split in the party has been averted with Oli continuing in both the posts.

In the last three weeks the Standing Committee that was to decide on Oli's exit was postponed seven times as Oli avoided the meeting one one ground or other. In the few meetings that took place, Oli is said to have made some preposterous suggestions that were not accepted by Dahal. When the delaying tactics failed, Oli took the unusual route of persuading the President to intervene and succeeded this time!

In the many one to one meetings, Oli continued to be firm in not giving up either of the two posts - the Chairman of the Party or that of the Prime Minister. At one point, on July 16 the two had involved another former leader Madhav Nepal to join the discussions and this too did not help.

Strangely and suddenly in a lunch meeting on Saturday the 18th, Oli proposed that they could have an early General Convention of the Party and a promise that he would back Dahal for the post of Party Chairman. It is said that Dahal accepted the offer with alacrity and the two then met the President soon after the meeting. It is still not known what made Dahal climb down and what made him to ditch his party colleagues like Madhav Nepal and others for the supposed General Convention Meeting that may or may not take place at all.

For the present the crisis has been averted and Oli could continue as PM and Chairman of the Part until the Party Convention that may not be convened in the near future.

A major sticking point already raised by Oli was that of the Party ideology that has to be adopted in the next convention. Oli has insisted that Dahal could be the Chairman only if the convention adopts the ideology of “Multi Party People’s Democracy” that was originally that of the UML before the merger. Dahal had insisted that it should be “People’s Democracy”- the ideology for which the Maoists fought a civil war for over ten years.

It is possible that the convention may not be held at all until the ideological basis of the newly merged party of NCP is decided once and for all. That would enable Oli to continue till the end of the term along with the post of the Chairmanship of the Party.

A few points need to be noted here.

1. Oli has proved that he is cleverer than all the rest of the leaders including his erstwhile colleagues of the UML. He completely out maneuvered and outwitted them. He bought time by feigning illness or by appearing to be busy with his engagements and finally getting Dahal to buy his idea of a convention that may not take place in the near future. In one of the early meetings, Oli got the assurance that the matter should be decided only by a “consensus” thus ruling out any decision by voting as Oli had no majority in any of the levels of the Party or in the Parliament.
2. Dahal as before has proved that he is not trust worthy. He sought the help of the former leaders of the UML. Madhav Nepal, Jhalanath Khanal and Bam Dev Gautan to get a majority in the Party Secretariat only to dump them by agreeing to an unworkable proposal of Oli behind their back!

3. In the whole drama, the President Bidya Devi Bhandari intervened at every point and ensured that the two leaders did not split the party. It is to her credit that she persuaded Dahal to climb down.
4. The active role of the Chinese Ambassador who met the individual leaders more than once to ensure that the party does not split at any cost due to differences within the top leadership was decisive. Her approach of unity through continuous dialogue won the day and perhaps that a final outcome should be through a consensus was also her idea.
5. The opposition Nepali Congress was seen to be inept again in dealing with the crisis. The Party seems to be having the problem of “Old vs. New” as we see in other places too.
The Party almost destroyed the voluntary non party and popular movement of “Enough is Enough” of young activists that was gathering momentum by joining them with demonstrations!
6. The Terai continues to be a disjointed lot and lack of unity among themselves may soon make them irrelevant.
7. Oli has almost destroyed the good relations that existed between Nepal and India and it has reached the bottom line. India's silence is frustrating him and one could expect more jibes against India to distract attention of his people from his poor governance. His attempt to spoil the good people to people relationship between the two countries has not succeeded so far. There is a joke going round in Kathmandu that after his discovery of Ram's birthplace in Birgunj, Oli is actively looking for the birth place of Mao in Taplejung or near about!
8. The “Enough is Enough” movement has already registered a complaint against the Minister of Health, Secretary for Health and Director General of Health for abuse of authority for embezzling of funds in the procurement of medical kits for Covid crisis. Three activists have started their hunger strike again for the Government's failure to implement the twelve point agreement entered into between the Movement and the Government. If it is not handled with sympathy, soon it will develop into an unstoppable dynamic of its own.
9. India's response has so far been measured. There was another border incident with the trigger-happy Nepal Police shooting Indian citizens. Luckily no one was killed but if it is allowed to continue, in the not so distant future there could be a clash between the Nepal Police and the SSB that is guarding the Indian border.
10. Oli's antics and his tantrums are best ignored. There appears to be no contact at any level between India and Nepal and yet the Indian projects and the cooperation between the two countries are said to be continuing. Nepal cannot afford to continue with this unnatural stand off but India can wait.

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