



## View Point

### Nepal after ‘Nepal’

*Dr Saurabh\**

Nepal's Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal resigned after months of pressure from opposition Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist to end the ongoing political deadlock. The Prime Minister took over the charge in May 2009 after the Pushpa Kumar Dahal ‘Prachand’ led government resigned following differences with the President of Nepal over the issue of sacking of the army chief. President Ram Baran Yadav has asked all political parties to form a consensus government by July 7, 2010. The Prime Minister had the support of 22 political parties in the parliament. However, the Maoists, who have the largest number of seats in the constituent assembly, refused to support Madhav Nepal's government and instead staged protests demanding the ‘disbanding’ of the government.

#### **Reactions from Different Political Parties**

UCPN-Maoist have welcomed the resignation of the Prime Minister and said that he should have resigned a lot earlier. The Standing Committee of the party formed a three-member talks committee led by its Chairman, Pushpa Kumar Dahal. The two other members are vice-chairmen Mohan Baidya and Baburam Bhattarai. The committee will hold talks with other political parties toward the formation of a Maoist-led consensus, or a majority government. Dr Baburam Bhattarai reiterated that the best successor to the outgoing government is a national consensus government led by the UCPN-Maoist. However, UCPN-Maoist noted that the party is yet to decide about the leadership and there is no debate on this issue within the party. UCPN-Maoist have however put forward

their claim for the Prime Ministership and argued that the President is from the Nepali Congress, Chairman of the constituent assembly is from the CPN-UML, Vice President from Madhesi Forum, and thus it is only natural for all political parties to support a Prime Minister from their party. The UCPN-Maoist have also for long been hoping to return to power at the head of a unity government to oversee the preparation of Nepal's first constitution. These were essentially to pressurise the government. In May, 2010 the UCPN-Maoist called a nation-wide general strike that paralyzed Nepal for more than a week. Street demonstrations turned violent with clashes between communist supporters, members of civil society and police. The protests also delayed the writing of a new constitution, which was supposed to be completed by May 2010. The deadline was extended last month by a year.

Nepali Congress is of the view that it was a wrong move on the part of the Prime Minister to succumb to Maoist's pressure tactics. Logically, Prime Minister should have resigned after finalizing the framework of the next government. On their part, the Nepali Congress hoped that the next government would be formed under its command. The contention that the party forwarded the idea for the formation of Nepali-Congress led government was that the UCPN-Maoist and CPN-UML have already led governments after the election of the constituent assembly, thus, it was the turn of the Nepali Congress to lead the country now. CPN-UML said that their party would go for a consensus government. The Madhesi parties, who can play a crucial role in forging a new equation, are divided. Madhesi Janadhikar Forum Nepal (Lokantrik) is against a Maoist-headed government and is pitching for a majority government. Tarai Madhesh Loktantrik Party is of the view that consensus is a priority issue but they would not reject a majority government as an alternative. Madhesi Janadhikar Forum, on the other hand, is supporting of a unity government and does not rule out the possibility of the Maoist leadership.

### **Need of the Hour**

All political parties can use the resignation by the Prime Minister as an opportunity to work together to end the current stalemate and create an environment of trust and cooperation so that the conclusion of the peace process and writing of the constitution

becomes possible by May 28, 2011, when the extended life of the CA comes to an end. UCPN-Maoist now claims that one of their demands has been fulfilled. So, the Maoist combatants would be brought under the special committee for supervision, integration and rehabilitation and an action plan for integration and rehabilitation would be developed. However, this can happen only after the new government is formed. But, the need of the hour is that Maoists must come out clearly with a commitment to implement all past agreements, including the dismantling of the paramilitary structure of the Young Communist League, the return of all seized property and an explicit commitment to the right to private property and to a democratic constitution. Above all, they must set forth an unambiguous roadmap for sorting out the issue of their combatants.

If the Maoists do not come forth with explicit commitments on these issues, it should be taken as their lack of readiness to subscribe to peaceful and democratic politics. In such a scenario, if the Maoists are seen to be gravitating toward the politics of violence, a government under their leadership cannot be acceptable. Nepal's democratic struggle cannot surrender to any autocratic system. The only logical end to this democratic struggle is a situation where each and every political player in Nepal unconditionally accepts the consolidation of democracy as the only goal for the country.

### **Future Scenario**

The sudden resignation of the Prime Minister of Nepal is likely to trigger another horse race for Prime Ministership among the Nepali Congress, CPN-UML, UCPN-Maoist and Madheshi parties. The Nepali Congress and CPN-UML have claimed that they would not let the UCPN-Maoist lead the government as long as they possess weapons. If this time again Maoists fail to get the Prime Ministership they may attempt to create obstacles in constitution making process which will create further chaos. It will lead Nepal into continuous instability and anarchy. If the political parties of Nepal fail to form a consensus government, the parties will have to form a majority government.

*Dr. Saurabh is Research Fellow at Indian Council of World Affairs.*

*2 July 2010*