



Stress on Voting

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After the Constitutional-Political Dialogue and Consensus Committee of the Constituent Assembly sent back the disputed issues to the Constituent Assembly, Congress and UML stressed on finalising those issues by following the procedures. The meeting of Congress and UML decided to finalise those issues through voting. UML chairperson Oli stated that the constitution-drafting process cannot be stopped as UCPN (M) does not want to come to an agreement. However, they kept the door to agreement open to UCPN (M) and other parties. The two parties agreed to continue the attempts to seek consensus as well.

Meanwhile, in the parliamentary party meeting of Congress, there was discussion of concluding the disputed issues through voting if there was no agreement on the disputed issues. Party president and Prime Minister Sushil Koirala stated that procedures would be followed as UCPN (M) and Madhes-centred parties kept talking of protests despite many entreaties for consensus. In the meeting, senior leader Sher Bahadur Deuba stated that the Interim Constitution 2007 should be promulgated by removing the word 'interim'. Deuba argued that his proposal would be appropriate if there was no consensus. However, vice-president Ram Chandra Paudel, general secretary Krishna Prasad Sitaula and others pointed out that the circumstances do not allow for promulgating the constitution as per Deuba's proposal.

In the meeting, Constituent Assembly members suggested amending the common proposal by Congress, UML, and other parties and sending it directly to the Constituent Assembly for decision. The meeting decided to suggest that the proposals presented through the Constitutional Committee should be decided by the next meeting of the Constituent Assembly and sent to Constitution-drafting Committee.¹ The UML standing committee meeting at its party office in Balkhu also stressed on promulgating the constitution on January 22. For that, UML concluded that certain provisions of the Constituent Assembly Regulations should be suspended and the common proposal by Congress, UML, and other parties submitted to the Dialogue Committee should be submitted for a decision.²

At the same time, chairperson of Madhesi Janadhikar Forum-Nepal Upendra Yadav informed that the 30-party alliance and 33-party front had decided to resist if Congress and UML move forward by following procedures. Constituent Assembly chairperson Subash Chandra Nemwang met President Ram Baran Yadav, Prime Minister Sushil Koirala, UML chairperson KP Sharma Oli, UCPN (M) chairperson Pushpa Kamal Dahal regarding constitution-drafting. Nemwang said that the president wishes that consensus should be followed while moving ahead.

New Dates for Bandas

UCPN (M)-led 30-party alliance had declared a countrywide banda on January 19 to put pressure on promulgation of the constitution and federalism with identity. In addition, Mohan Vaidya-led 33-

¹ Press release by the Nepali Congress parliamentary party on January 14, 2015.

² *UML concludes for fast track process*. Retrieved January 15, 2015 from <http://www.chakrapath.com/content/cpn-uml-13.html>

party front had called a Nepal band on January 17. A meeting of Dahal-led 30-party alliance and Vaidya-led 33-party front as well as Padma Ratna Tuladhar-led Samyukta Janajati Andolan (Indigenous Nationalities National Movement) decided to postpone the two days of banda and organise a joint banda on January 20. A meeting of Congress parliamentary party called on UCPN (M) and other parties to withdraw the protest movements and focus on drafting federal democratic republican constitution.³

Demand for Referendum

In a press conference, RPP-Nepal stating that the constitution cannot be promulgated on January 22, the disputed issues of the constitution such as secularism, republic, and federalism should be put to a referendum in February or March. RPP argued for the referendum would respect the provisions of rule of the people and people's sovereignty as enshrined in the Interim Constitution and Regulations.⁴ RPP-Nepal also announced countrywide people's struggle programme from January 18 to pressurise to end the transition and for constitution-drafting as per the outcome of the referendum.

Conclusion

Congress and UML created additional pressure on opposition parties including UCPN (M) and other parties to shorten the constitution-drafting process and follow the voting process to promulgate the constitution on January 22. Concluding that separate bandas might not be effective, the opposition parties agreed to organise a joint banda. Though Congress and UML stated that they would hold talks along with the procedures in the Constituent Assembly, their relations with the opposition worsened still. This led to further escalation of politics of conflict.

³ Press release by the Nepali Congress parliamentary party on January 14, 2015.

⁴ Press release by RPP-Nepal on January 14, 2015.

Major Political Developments

- Joint meeting of Congress and UML agree to take the disputed issues forward through voting.
- A meeting of Congress parliamentary party suggests sending the reports submitted by the Constitutional-Political Dialogue and Consensus Committee to the Constituent Assembly to Constitution-drafting Committee.
- UCPN (M) chairperson Pushpa Kamal Dahal-led 30-party alliance and CPN (M) chairperson Mohan Vaidya-led 33-party front postpone their banda calls for January 17 and 19 respectively and announce a joint general strike on January 20.
- Organising a press conference, RPP-Nepal demands a referendum on the disputed issues of the constitution.
- Constituent Assembly chairperson Subash Chandra Nemwang meets and consults the president, prime minister, UML chairperson, and chief whips of Congress, UML, UCPN (M), Madhesi Janadhikar Forum-Loktantrik, and Forum-Nepal.
- UCPN (M) and other opposition parties call for postponement of the meeting called for January 15, which falls on the festival of Maghi; meeting postponed through a notice.
- Meeting of UML standing committee stresses on fast-track process to promulgate the constitution on January 22.