



Signature by Two-thirds

Bhuwan KC/Tilak Pathak
Published date: January 17, 2015

As the ruling coalition and the opposition parties were growing apart, ruling coalition Constituent Assembly members started a signature campaign to pressure for promulgating the constitution on January 22. The campaign stressed on following the procedures if there was no consensus; it garnered signatures from 414 Constituent Assembly members. These Constituent Assembly members focused on the campaign to draft the constitution submitted their signatures to the Constituent Assembly chairperson Subash Chandra Nemwang. Expressing their concern that attempts to forge a consensus might lengthen the process indefinitely, they urged the Constituent Assembly chairperson to move the process forward.¹

The letter submitted to the Constituent Assembly chairperson demanding promulgation of the constitution was signed by Constituent Assembly members from Congress, UML, RPP, CPN (ML), Rastriya Janamorchha, CPN (United), Nepal Pariwar Dal, Bahujan Shakti Party, Nepal Janata Dal, Akhanda Nepal Party, Janajagaran Party Nepal among other parties. But the senior leaders of both Congress and UML had not signed the letter. The Constituent Assembly members stated that they were not made to sign it as they are in the process of seeking a consensus. Constituent Assembly chairperson appeared to be encouraged after the urging of the Constituent Assembly members. He stated that this campaign might help to move forward.

Claims of Consensus

A meeting of Congress, UML, UCPN (M), and Madhes-centred parties was called to seek consensus. Despite discussions on the disputed issues of the constitution, there was no consensus. Leaders participating in the discussion claimed that the meeting focused on moving ahead through consensus and of finding and nearing consensus on some issues.² Then the parties discussed on ways to move forward, but there was no agreement. UML chairperson KP Sharma Oli accused UCPN (M) of using the strategy of not seeking a consensus and not following the procedures as well.³

Differences in the Constituent Assembly

Discussion began in the Constituent Assembly on the report of the Constitutional-Political Dialogue and Consensus Committee. Congress and UML Constituent Assembly members stressed on following the procedures if there was no consensus. Congress vice-president Ram Chandra Paudel stressed on going to the Drafting Committee immediately as the procedures cannot be stopped. He said that draft will be prepared at the same time attempts at consensus can be continued. Similarly, senior UML leader Jhala Nath Khanal, stating that there was no consensus despite sending the disputed issues to the Dialogue Committee, said that the disputed issues should be concluded through a democratic process.⁴ UCPN (M) Constituent Assembly member Agni Sapkota warned of

¹ Basnet, Bal Krishna and Phuyal, Rajendra. January 17, 2015. *414...procedures*. The Kantipur, p1.

² Pandey, Balram. January 17, 2015. *Only common message on January 22*. The Nagarik, p1.

³ Kantipur TV. January 16, 2015.

⁴ Pandey, Balram. January 17, 2015. *Only common message on January 22*. The Nagarik, p1.

countering if two-thirds majority was forcibly used. While only one member of the ruling coalition spoke during the Constituent Assembly meeting, many members from the opposition parties registered their names as speakers. Constituent Assembly members from UCPN (M) and other opposition parties registered their names in an attempt to lengthen the discussions on the report of the Dialogue Committee and to block the voting process in the Constituent Assembly.⁵

Decision to Block Following of the Procedures

While Congress, UML, and other parties were intent on following of the procedures based on two-thirds majority, UCPN (M) decided not to let the process go ahead at any cost. UCPN (M) kept insisting on constitution through consensus. Its parliamentary party had decided to put pressure on consensus as it was needed to promulgate the constitution even on January 22.

Conclusion

As the ruling coalition was in high spirits following the submission of signatures by Constituent Assembly members of the ruling coalition demanding following of the procedures to promulgate the constitution on January 22 if there was no constitution, the opposition became further suspicious. Though the signature campaign of the Constituent Assembly members helped the Constituent Assembly chairperson to some extent to move to following of the procedures in case there was no consensus, the situation was not that easy to move forward. The Constituent Assembly chairperson was caught between after the ruling coalition decided to follow the procedures and the opposition decided to counter such a move. There was risk of additional contention in the Constituent Assembly by allowing to move forward by following the procedures even if there had been no consensus among the parties. There was no progress without consensus and moving forward without consensus would only obstruct the Constituent Assembly, which created a situation where even forming the questionnaire committee as desired by the chairperson became difficult.

⁵ Dhungana, Chiranjivi and Saud, Narendra. January 17, 2015. *Opposition in disarray*. The Annapurna Post, p1.

Major Political Developments

- Constituent Assembly members from the ruling coalition submit their signatures to the Constituent Assembly chairperson urging to move forward by following the majority process.
- Discussion on the report of the Dialogue Committee in the Constituent Assembly; the ruling coalition stresses on following the procedures. The opposition warns of not giving up.
- Discussion begins on the disputed issues of the constitution among the major parties; parties stick to their own stances.
- Meeting between Prime Minister Sushil Koirala and UCPN (M) chairperson Pushpa Kamal Dahal; UCPN (M) chairperson Dahal suggests seeking a consensus.
- Meeting of UCPN (M) parliamentary party decides to not allow the following of the procedures.
- UML chairperson KP Sharma Oli accuses UCPN (M) of following the strategy of not going for the following of the procedures and not coming to a consensus as well.
- BibekSheel Nepali stages a sit-in in New Baneshwor demanding promulgation of the constitution on the fixed date.