

# South Asia Analysis Group

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## Nepal: Dahal Steps Down: update No. 349

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**Note No. 784**

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By Dr. S. Chandrasekharan

Prime Minister Dahal tendered his resignation to the President on 24th May. Dahal said that he is doing it in pursuance of a commitment he made to the Nepali Congress ten months ago.

It is now for the Nepali Congress to elect a leader to oversee the second phase of local body elections and also the elections at the provincial and national levels. Most probably Sher Bahadur Deuba who had been prime minister thrice before will take over. Deuba had proved in the past to be a colourless, indecisive and inefficient chief and it is not going to be different now. Nepal is soon to be condemned to be led by another inadequate leader as Prime minister.

It is not that the Nepali Congress is devoid of able administrators. There are many among the younger lot too. But the problem is, that it has too many factions and in satisfying different factions merit is the casualty. For Deuba, the first and foremost problem will therefore be internal.

PM Dahal in his televised address to the nation said that he wanted to “break the culture of breaking political promises.” While the media has listed many of his achievements as Prime Minister, one cannot but concede that his biggest achievement was in going through the first phase of local body elections despite heavy odds. He displayed extreme patience and understanding of both the Madhesi groups and the main opposition- the arrogant UML in pushing through the elections and also set the ball rolling on the constitutional amendments.

Dahal has come a long way from his insurgency days and later in his first stint as prime minister. He made the foolish mistake of resigning from the post on the issue of sacking his then army chief.

Dahal 2.0 appears to be a different person and today stands tall over all other political leaders. I had said once before when G.P. Koirala was alive that he was only second to GP in his charisma and statesman like qualities to lead Nepal. He did not then rise above his local party politics and failed to emerge as a national leader. He has done it this time.

## **2n Phase of Local body elections:**

The Election Commission is all set to conduct the second phase of elections on June 14th as planned. Unfortunately the delayed decision of the government to create 22 additional units in the southern plains has created a problem for the commission.

The Election Commission (EC) has so far refused to accommodate the new local units for the coming elections, chiefly for want of time. They have a genuine problem. The ballot papers and voter ID cards have already been printed. Polling personnel have already been deployed on the ground. The Commission is also yet to receive the names of the new units to be added. Maps delineating the units are also not available either.

Dahal before resigning had requested the commission to think of other options like deferring the polls by a few days. But it is not going to be easy.

Meanwhile the newly formed Madhesi alliance RJP N., is still undecided about participating in the elections. There appears to be many hardliners who still want to continue on the path of agitation. It is hoped that better sense will prevail and the Terain (Madhesi) groups decide to go for the elections no matter whether the constitutional amendments are gone through or not.

## **Election Results So far:**

The consolidated list of winners is yet to be released. But the results announced so far indicate the following trends.

First: While both the Nepali Congress and the UML are leading almost with equal numbers, the Maoist Centre led by Dahal has come out as a distant third.

Second: The UML has gained considerably thanks to its anti Indian - ultra nationalist platform, though it did not sweep the polls as predicted by some.

Third: The combinations- the Maoist centre going with the Nepali Congress and the RPP of Kamal Thapa with the UML have not succeeded. Both the Maoist Centre and the RPP fared poorly.

Fourth: The new found hill/plains combination of Dr. Bhattarai and Upendra Yadav did not also succeed well at the polls. One good result has been that the political clout and the influence of the Madhesi leader Upendra Yadav is diminishing. It is good for Nepali politics.

Finally, **what is significant is that Nepal is getting ready to be a truly federal democratic republic.**

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