

Trouble in Nepal: On Nepal Communist Party factional fight

India will have to deal with K.P. Oli in Nepal whether he is ousted or stays on as PM

The storm raging in Nepal's ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) is again rocking the Khadga Prasad Oli government, and putting Kathmandu's polity in suspense over what might follow. A crucial meet meant to announce an end to the differences between the party's two leaders, Mr. Oli, and his rival, Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda), was postponed on Tuesday. Last week too, the two rival factions decided to put off a meeting of the Standing Committee after Prime Minister Oli failed to attend. While the bone of contention, which has roiled party members, is that Mr. Oli continues to hold two posts — that of NCP Chairperson and Prime Minister — it is clear that there is a more complex power game going on. Party members leading the move against Mr. Oli point to growing discomfort over his autocratic style. The Dahal faction, which had merged with the Oli-led United Marxist Leninist (UML) in 2018 when their combine won a massive mandate in the general election, is also impatient for a chance to rule. Mr. Dahal is already unhappy over past power sharing agreements that he believes Mr. Oli reneged on, and Mr. Oli still has residual bitterness over Mr. Dahal's decision to pull out of his previous government in 2016. There is also concern over Mr. Oli's head-on collision with India over the past few weeks, beginning with the constitutional amendment to adopt a disputed map as well as his rather rash language against India, including a recent controversy over the birthplace of the Hindu god, Lord Ram. Mr. Oli has said that he believes there is a conspiracy against him, and alluded to alleged machinations by the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu. Finally, there is considerable disquiet in the party and in the press over the public role played by the Chinese Ambassador to Nepal in bringing together the warring factions, especially after Mr. Oli's threat to split the NCP and revive the UML earlier this month.

Many in South Block will take heart, and may even rejoice over Mr. Oli's troubles, given his recent petulant behaviour with the Modi government. India-Nepal ties have hit new lows, with neither side willing to schedule the much promised meeting of Foreign Secretaries to begin to sort out their problems. Yet, it is important for the Modi government and the Indian mission to take a mature stand and play a more constructive role in the current political crisis. The larger struggle for the continuance of Nepal as a parliamentary democracy rather than as a politburo-style polity dominated by the party elite also depends on the outcome of this tussle. While Mr. Oli is outnumbered in the ruling party structure, he has won a mandate, and there is little doubt that he remains popular in Nepal. In power or out of it, New Delhi will still need to contend with Mr. Oli, whose polarising politics could impact the country's fragile ethnic mosaic, if not channelled deftly, and with some delicacy.

Meanings of Difficult Words:

- ❖ **factional** (adjective) – partisan, sectarian.
- ❖ **oust** (verb) – remove, dislodge, drive out, overthrow.
- ❖ **stay on** (phrasal verb) – continue to work.
- ❖ **storm** (noun) – trouble, disturbance, controversy.
- ❖ **rage** (verb) – be at its height, be uncontrollable; reach a high degree of intensity.
- ❖ **rock** (verb) – shake up, shock, taken aback, disconcert, unnerve.
- ❖ **polity** (noun) – a politically organized society.
- ❖ **difference** (noun) – disagreement, difference of opinion, misunderstanding, dispute.
- ❖ **faction** (noun) – group, side, camp.
- ❖ **put off** (phrasal verb) – postpone, delay, defer, hold off.
- ❖ **standing committee** (noun) – a permanent committee appointed to deal with a particular subject.
- ❖ **bone of contention** (phrase) – concern, point at issue, matter in question.
- ❖ **roil** (verb) – disturb, make angry, disquiet, agitate, stir up, displease.

- ❖ **hold** (verb) – occupy, have (a position).
- ❖ **go on** (phrasal verb) – continue, carry on, proceed.
- ❖ **point to** (verb) – indicate, suggest, denote.
- ❖ **growing** (adjective) – increasing, intensifying, amplifying.
- ❖ **discomfort** (noun) – trouble/problem, vexation, agitation.
- ❖ **autocratic** (adjective) – undemocratic, totalitarian/authoritarian, tyrannical, oppressive.
- ❖ **renege** (verb) – fail to honour, go back on, default on, break one's word/promise (a commitment/contract).
- ❖ **residual** (adjective) – remaining, leftover, lingering, lasting.
- ❖ **bitterness** (noun) – resentment, dissatisfaction, discontent.
- ❖ **pull out** (phrasal verb) – withdraw, leave, get/move out.
- ❖ **head-on** (adjective) – direct, face to face.
- ❖ **collision** (noun) – conflict, clash, opposition, disagreement.
- ❖ **head-on collision** (noun) – (figuratively) two persons come into conflict with each other directly. (Literally) a traffic collision/crash where the front ends of two vehicles hit each other when travelling in opposite directions.
- ❖ **rather** (adverb) – somewhat, a bit, slightly.
- ❖ **rash** (adjective) – reckless, hasty, premature, careless.
- ❖ **conspiracy** (noun) – unlawful plan, intrigue, collaboration/deception.
- ❖ **allude to** (verb) – refer to, mention, speak briefly of, imply.
- ❖ **alleged** (adjective) – supposed, reported, purported, unproven.
- ❖ **machinations** (noun) – schemes/plots, tricks, tactics, intrigues, conspiracies.
- ❖ **embassy** (noun) – the diplomatic office building in a foreign country where the ambassador & team live and work; consulate, mission.
- ❖ **considerable** (adjective) – sizeable, significant, substantial.
- ❖ **disquiet** (noun) – uneasiness, agitation, restlessness, distress/concern.
- ❖ **play a part/role** (phrase) – contribute to, be instrumental in, be a factor in.
- ❖ **ambassador** (noun) – envoy, diplomat, consul.
- ❖ **revive** (verb) – reintroduce, re-establish, relaunch, bring back.
- ❖ **South & North Block** (noun) – South Block is a **metonym** of the Prime Minister's Office. North Block is a **metonym** of the Ministry of Finance, India. (The Secretariat Building (consists North & South Block) or Central Secretariat is where the Cabinet Secretariat is housed, which administers the Government of India. The South Block houses the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of External Affairs). The North Block primarily houses the Ministry of Finance and the Home Ministry). (Metonym is used as an alternative for something else with which it is closely related/associated).
- ❖ **take heart** (phrase) – to feel motivated.
- ❖ **rejoice** (verb) – be happy, be pleased, be glad, be delighted.
- ❖ **petulant** (adjective) – complaining, disagreeable, miserable, irritable.
- ❖ **ties** (noun) – bond, association, relationship.
- ❖ **sort out** (phrasal verb) – resolve, find a solution to, rectify.
- ❖ **mature** (adjective) – sensible, responsible, practical, wise.
- ❖ **take a stand** (phrase) – to have a firm position/opinion about an issue.
- ❖ **constructive** (adjective) – positive, useful, helpful.
- ❖ **continuance** (noun) – continuation, prolongation, protraction, carrying on.
- ❖ **parliamentary democracy** (noun) – a system of government in which citizens elect representatives to a legislative parliament to make the necessary laws and decisions for the country.
- ❖ **politburo** (noun) – the main policy making committee (standing committee) of a communist party.
- ❖ **elite** (noun) – high society people; the group of most powerful people in a society.
- ❖ **tussle** (noun) – scuffle, fight, clash; quarrel, disagreement.
- ❖ **contend with** (phrasal verb) – cope with, face, grapple with, deal with.

- ❖ **polarising** (adjective) – dividing, separating, parting.
- ❖ **fragile** (adjective) – weak, shaky/risky, unreliable, insubstantial, feeble/unsound.
- ❖ **ethnic** (adjective) – relating to a population subgroup (cultural, national, traditional/folk) with a common national or cultural tradition.
- ❖ **mosaic** (noun) – mixed bag, mixture/patchwork, collection of diverse elements.
- ❖ **channel** (verb) – conduct, direct, guide.
- ❖ **deftly** (adverb) – cleverly, proficiently, skillfully.
- ❖ **delicacy** (noun) – diplomacy, tact, subtlety, sensibility, consideration.

Fall from grace: On Malaysian ex-PM Najib Razak

Malaysian PM Muhyiddin must not undermine the rule of law to cling to power

For over four decades, Najib Razak was one of the most powerful voices of Malaysian politics. The son of a former Prime Minister, a legislator for decades and an all-powerful Prime Minister for nine years, he suffered the biggest setback in his eventful career on Tuesday when a trial court found him guilty on seven corruption charges in connection with the 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) financial fraud. He was sentenced to 12 years in prison and fined \$50 million. Billions of dollars were allegedly stolen from the 1MDB — an investment fund he launched in 2009 when Prime Minister — by employees of the fund or of the government. The money was traced by prosecutors to a mega-yacht, a Picasso painting and the Hollywood film, ‘The Wolf of Wall Street’. His bank accounts received about \$1 billion. The allegations cost him dearly, leading to the first election defeat of Mr. Najib’s party, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), in 2018. But infighting within the ruling coalition led by nonagenarian Mahathir Mohamad led to the fall of the new government, returning Mr. Najib’s party to power earlier this year. The country’s prosecution and judiciary went ahead with the trial despite the change in government and held one of the most powerful men accountable for his actions. The trial court has stayed the sentences until a higher court gives a final verdict on his planned appeal.

The verdict comes at a time when the Southeast Asian country continues to grapple with political instability. The new government of Muhyiddin Yassin has a razor-thin majority in Parliament. The Opposition, led by the charismatic Anwar Ibrahim, accused the government of trying to help Mr. Najib. In May, prosecutors had cut a deal with Mr. Najib’s stepson Riza Aziz and dropped 1MDB-related charges against him, which triggered a political backlash. With Mr. Najib’s conviction, the Opposition is likely to revive its calls for a vote of confidence, which Prime Minister Muhyiddin has resisted so far. He would also face pressure from the UMNO, whose 39 MPs are supporting his government. UMNO leaders have already come out in support for Mr. Najib, calling the case politically motivated. If Mr. Muhyiddin disowns Mr. Najib, who, besides the appeals, also faces a host of other corruption charges, the Prime Minister could face a revolt from the UMNO, leading to his government’s collapse. If he interferes in the investigation and trial, it could politically strengthen the Opposition narrative and prove risky for him, especially when Malaysia is going through a volatile phase. Ideally, Mr. Muhyiddin should uphold the law, respect the independence of the prosecution and distance his government from Mr. Najib. But that would also mean putting his government at risk.

Meanings of Difficult Words:

- ❖ **fall from grace** (phrase) – to lose status, respect, favour, honour.
- ❖ **undermine** (verb) – reduce, diminish, spoil, damage, weaken.
- ❖ **rule of law** (phrase) – it is described as “a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to

laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards.

- ❖ **cling to** (verb) – be excessively dependent on (someone); stick to, stand by, remain attached to.
- ❖ **decade** (noun) – a period of ten years.
- ❖ **voice** (noun) – representative, spokesperson (to express a point of view).
- ❖ **legislator** (noun) – a member of a legislature; lawmaker, representative.
- ❖ **suffer** (verb) – undergo, experience, endure, live/go through, sustain.
- ❖ **setback** (noun) – problem, difficulty, issue.
- ❖ **sentence** (verb) – punish, convict.
- ❖ **allegedly** (adverb) – supposedly, purportedly, reportedly.
- ❖ **prosecutor** (noun) – a lawyer who presents the government’s case against someone accused of a crime.
- ❖ **yacht** (noun) – boat, ship.
- ❖ **allegation** (noun) – charge, accusation, complaint.
- ❖ **cost someone dearly** (phrase) – to make someone suffer heavily or to lose something very important.
- ❖ **infighting** (noun) – conflict, disagreement, argument.
- ❖ **nonagenarian** (noun) – a person who is between 90 and 99 years old.
- ❖ **prosecution** (noun) – legal action/trial, legal proceeding, litigation, legal dispute.
- ❖ **judiciary** (noun) – judges/judicial authorities collectively.
- ❖ **go ahead** (phrasal verb) – to proceed, to continue to do something, to start/begin to do something.
- ❖ **trial** (noun) – court case, lawsuit, hearing/inquiry.
- ❖ **hold someone responsible/accountable for** (phrase) – blame someone for something.
- ❖ **sentence** (noun) – judgement, decision, verdict.
- ❖ **grapple with** (phrasal verb) – tackle with, deal with, confront, face.

- ❖ **instability** (noun) – uncertainty, unpredictability, lack of stability.
- ❖ **razor-thin** (adjective) – very/extremely thin.
- ❖ **charismatic** (adjective) – strong in character, captivating, fascinating.
- ❖ **cut a deal** (phrase) – make a contract/agreement.
- ❖ **trigger** (verb) – give rise to, cause, invoke, bring about.
- ❖ **backlash** (noun) – a strong negative reaction; adverse response, counteraction.
- ❖ **conviction** (noun) – sentence, judgement, declaration/pronouncement of guilt.
- ❖ **likely** (adverb) – probably, presumably, no doubt.
- ❖ **revive** (verb) – reintroduce, re-establish, relaunch, bring back.
- ❖ **call** (noun) – an appeal or demand.
- ❖ **vote of confidence/trust vote** (noun) – a confidence motion, or a vote of confidence, or a trust vote, is sought by the government in power on the floor of the House in order to prove the majority.
- ❖ **so far** (phrase) – until now, up to the present, up to this point.
- ❖ **come out in support for** (phrase) – to say publicly that one supports someone.
- ❖ **disown** (verb) – reject, deny, abandon, renounce.
- ❖ **besides** (preposition) – apart from, in addition to.
- ❖ **a host of** (noun) – lot, large number, great quantity.
- ❖ **interfere** (verb) – handle, meddle, intervene (unwantedly).
- ❖ **narrative** (noun) – a representation of a particular situation; portrayal/account.
- ❖ **go through** (phrasal verb) – undergo, experience, face/suffer/endure, be subjected to (a difficulty).
- ❖ **volatile** (adjective) – unpredictable, turbulent, uncertain, inconstant.
- ❖ **ideally** (adverb) – preferably, if possible.
- ❖ **uphold** (verb) – endorse, approve, vindicate, validate.
- ❖ **distance from** (verb) – detach, separate, dissociate, isolate.