

## Govt in backdoor talks with left on gov choices

The government has expedited backdoor negotiations with the left alliance for appointing governors for the seven provinces in consensus with the alliance, postponing a scheduled cabinet meeting to Wednesday. The cabinet meeting was to have been held Tuesday afternoon.

According to highly placed sources, the government has asked the left alliance to recommend three of the governors--two from CPN-UML and one from CPN (Maoist Center)--for appointment by the cabinet meeting now scheduled for 9 a.m. Wednesday. The sources further claimed that the ruling Nepali Congress (NC) for its part would recommend three governors also. The Madhes-based parties would recommend the governor for Province-2.

Commerce Minister Min Bahadur Biswakarma, who is among those in Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's inner circle, admitted that the cabinet meeting was postponed with a view to taking the left alliance into confidence before the decision on governors. "The prime minister has been making a last-ditch effort to bring the UML, the Maoists and also the Madhes-based parties on board before appointing the governors," Biswakarma told Republica. However, he didn't go into details.

According to sources, Prime Minister Deuba has deployed party leaders Bimalendra Nidhi and Krishna Sitaula for negotiations with the left alliance. UML leader Bishnu Paudel and some others have also been involved in the negotiations for gubernatorial appointments. UML has staked a claim to at least three governors, said the sources.

Rastriya Janata Party Nepal has already recommended Umakanta Jha for governor of Province-2. However, the decision has drawn flak within the party. Some leaders said publicly that the decision was taken unilaterally by Presidium Member Mahantha Thakur.

The government has been delaying a decision on governors and provincial capitals as the left alliance had declined to accept ownership of it. Meanwhile, protests have already erupted in various districts demanding the locating of provincial capitals in their own areas.

"Fixing temporary provincial capitals is part of the implementation of federalism. All parties involved in promulgating the new constitution should join hands for this task," Physical Infrastructure Minister Bir Bahadur Balayar said. "But the left alliance has been avoiding involvement in order to corner the ruling party."

The minister further claimed that the government has been delaying the decision on governors and capitals in a bid to minimize the tensions and protests that it will probably trigger in various parts of the country. "If such decisions are taken through all-party consensus, any party-affiliated protests will be settled by party leadership at the local levels," he added.

Last week the Election Commission (EC) gave a Friday deadline to the government to appoint the governors. The EC has said that if the governors are not appointed in time it cannot conduct the National Assembly poll on the scheduled date. The government has decided to hold that poll on February 7.

Source: My Republica, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018