

Left reaches power-sharing deal for 6 provinces

The CPN-UML and CPN (Maoist Center) have reached a power-sharing deal to form a government in four and two federal provinces respectively.

Seven weeks after the conclusion of the federal and parliamentary polls, a meeting of the UML and Maoist leaders at Singha Durbar on Sunday successfully ironed out the differences over portfolio distribution and power-sharing at the provincial government with 70:30 split in power.

The agreement has paved the way for the formation of left government in six provinces where the two parties had registered resounding victories. As per the deal, UML will form government in Province 1, 3, 4 and 5, while Maoist Center will form government in Province 6 and 7. The meeting also finalized other key portfolios including speakers and deputy speakers for the six provinces.

The speaker in Province 1, 3, 6 and 7 will be from the UML, while Maoist Center will have speaker in Province 4 and 5. Meanwhile, Maoist Center will have deputy speaker in Province 1, 3, 6 and 7, while the deputy speakers in other two provinces will come from the UML.

Negotiators from the two parties have also agreed to form small cabinets in all six provinces.

"The cabinet in these provinces would comprise 7 to 11 members depending on the size of the provincial assembly," negotiators from the two parties said in a statement issued after the meeting. The agreement was signed by Subas Nembang, Shankar Pokharel and Surendra Pandey of UML and Ram Bahadur Thapa, Matrika Yadav and Barshaman Pun of the Maoist Center. Negotiators have also agreed to finalize other portfolios based on consensus.

The power-sharing deal, sealed in the backdrop of four-hour-long talks between UML Chairman KP Sharma Oli and Maoist Chairman Puhspa Kamal Dahal, has ended the doubts over the formation of the left government. Leaders from the two left parties said that the '70:30 split in power' at the provincial level would serve as a basis for power-sharing deal at the federal government as well.

"There would be similar distribution of power at the central government wherein the key portfolios would be divided as per the seats won by the two parties," said Maoist spokesperson Pampha Bhusal.

Sunday's agreement has also revived hopes of early breakthrough in talks over the planned unification between the two parties. Leaders said that Oli and Dahal have agreed to sort out the leadership and organizational issues together with a power-sharing deal for the federal government.

Leaders said that chief ministers for the five provinces will be picked by next week. UML has already named Shankar Pokharel as chief ministerial candidate for Province 5. More than a dozen leaders are in the race to become chief ministers. Former ministers Sher Dhan Rai and Bhim Acharya are seen as favorites to be chief minister of Province 1, while Asta Laxmi Shakya and Rajendra Pandey are in race to become chief minister of Province 3.

UML Secretary Prithvi Subba Gurung and influential leader Kiran Gurung have been seen as possible CM picks for Province 4. Maoist leader and former energy minister Mahendra Bahadur Shahi and Naresh Bhandari have been lobbying to become chief minister of Province 6.

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Maoist leaders Birman Chaudhary and Jhapat Bohara are the two contenders for chief minister in Province 7.

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