

PM consults NCP leaders to prepare govt response

Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli today consulted Nepal Communist Party Co-chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Attorney General Agni Kharel, former speaker Subas Chandra Nembang and NCP leader Dev Gurung on issues related to waiver of former lawmaker Bal Krishna Dhungel's jail sentence.

The PM's consultation came after the Supreme Court issued a show cause notice to the government in response to a writ petition filed by senior advocate Dinesh Tripathi challenging the government's plan to waive Dhungel's jail sentence.

The PM also consulted party leaders with a view to preparing the government's response to the resentment expressed against its plan to waive Dhungel's jail sentence.

Senior advocate Dinesh Tripathi had filed a writ petition at the Supreme Court challenging the government's plan to waive Dhugnel's remaining jail sentence. The apex court is scheduled to hear the arguments of both sides tomorrow. The SC also issued a show cause notice to the government yesterday.

In today's meeting, PM Oli asked NCP leaders with legal background how the government should handle the issue. According to a leader, who attended the meeting, both the PM and Dahal wanted to know about legal provisions that guide the waiver process and how the government should proceed with the issue.

"We were told that Dhungel qualified for waiver as he had already served 40 per cent of the jail sentence, but the leaders were of the view that they should wait for the SC to deliver its verdict on the matter," the leaders said.

The leaders added Oli and Dahal also wanted to know what the government's response should be with regard to pressure groups opposed to the government's plan to waive Dhungel's jail sentence.

Dhungel, who was convicted of murdering Ujjan Kumar Shrestha, a resident of Okhaldhunga, is serving jail sentence in Dillibazar Prison and has already spent more than eight years in jail.

A single bench of Justice Deepak Kumar Karki had issued the show cause to the defendants in response to a writ petition filed by senior advocate Dinesh Tripathi. The apex court also called both parties to hear their arguments on whether or not the court should issue an interim order as demanded by the petitioner.

Tripathi had filed a petition at the apex court on Thursday arguing that Dhungel did not qualify for waiver of jail sentence.

If the SC does not issue interim order tomorrow and if Dhungel's remaining jail sentence is waived by the government and endorsed by the president, the former lawmaker of the erstwhile CPN-MC can walk out of jail on Republic Day.

Oli and Dahal also consulted party leaders about the legal issues faced by the party for registering at the Election Commission.

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Political Parties Registration Act stipulates that there should be 33 per cent women in the central committee of a party to be considered for registration at the EC. NCP has only 16 per cent women in the CC.

CPN-UML and CPN-Maoist Centre had merged to create a unified NCP on May 17 and the new party had applied for registration at the EC.

“We discussed some constitutional, legal and technical issues” Gurung told *THT*.

Source: The Himalayan Times, 27th May 2018