

Rift widens in UCPN (Maoist)

KATHMANDU, July 26 [2010]: Intra-party rift has further widened in the UCPN (Maoist) with Vice Chairman Dr Baburam Bhattarai pushing for an end to the ongoing process of electing a new prime minister with a simple majority in the legislature-parliament.

Bhattarai has stated that the country would be better off reverting to the consensus system as forming a majority-based government would not lead to the conclusion of the peace process and constitution-drafting.

“If the parliament fails to elect a new prime minister even for the third time on August 2, this process should be ended; the country cannot be held hostage to the parties’ indecision forever. On top of that, any majority-based government, no matter who leads it, cannot conclude the peace process and constitution-drafting,” said Maoist leader Top Bahadur Rayamajhi, who is regarded close to Bhattarai.

But leaders close to Dahal have accused that the statement of Bhattarai is against the party decision and dubbed it “a personal view” of Bhattarai.

Dahal camp argues that the chairman is sure to garner a majority in the third round of election. “We will hold a meeting and decide the future course in case the chairman doesn’t get a majority,” said Maoist politburo member Shakti Basnet who is close to Dahal.

Bhattarai is on a visit to resort village of Kakani in Nuwakot. According to sources, he did not want to be involved in horsetrading for the formation of a majority government.

However, Bhattarai’s aide Bishwadeep Pandey said that he is spending some days there for study. He left for Kakani on Sunday morning and scheduled to return Tuesday evening.

It is still unclear how many days it would take to elect a new prime minister. The parliamentary regulations state that the parliament would go on holding series of votes until a new prime minister is elected.

Currently Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Nepali Congress (NC) parliamentary party leader Ram Chandra Poudel are in the fray. None of them has garnered a majority even after two rounds of voting.

According to Speaker Subas Nembang, the voices for amending parliamentary regulations are being raised by only from those who have been out of the prime ministerial race, which obviously means Bhattarai and UML Chairman Jhalanath Khanal.

“The chances of amending the regulations are slim as the major parties have to come up with an official decision,” he said.

The NC and Maoists are unlikely to officially bat for the amendment until both Dahal and Poudel lose hope of becoming prime minister under the current provisions.

The parliament is unlikely to elect a new prime minister even in the third round slated for August 2 due to the rigid stance of the Madhes-based parties whose support is essential for the Maoists to form a government. As the UML is likely to stay neutral during the voting, the NC falls short of a majority even if the Madhes-based parties support it.

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