

Nepal: Reconvened parliament will hold elections

Monday 8 May 2006, by [CHENG Eva](#) (Date first published: 10 May 2006).

Four days after King Gyanendra buckled under the pressure of mass protests and offered to reconvene the parliament that he forcibly suspended four years ago, Nepal's 205-seat parliament met on April 28. On April 30, it decided unanimously to hold elections for a constituent assembly that will draft a new constitution.

This decision met a central demand of the recent wave of popular mass protests and general strikes. But to what extent the Nepalese monarchy will be stripped of its power - especially military power - is yet to be spelled out.

On May 3, the cabinet further decided to dissolve the municipal bodies constituted after the February local government elections. A boycott of the polls, under the joint leadership of seven parliamentary parties and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), led to less than 20% voter participation.

The cabinet also rescinded all legislation, decrees, appointments and other major decisions made by the "royal" government during the last four years.

To facilitate the expected constituent assembly election, on April 27 the CPN(M) - which has been waging anti-monarchy guerrilla warfare in Nepal for the last 10 years and is estimated to be in control of 80% of Nepal - declared a ceasefire for three months. On May 3, the new government reciprocated with an indefinite truce and a commitment to stop categorising CPN(M) members as "terrorists" and to withdraw Interpol arrest warrants against them.

Meanwhile, Pradip Nepal, a central leader of the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist Leninist), resigned from the party's standing committee on May 2 in protest at the CPN(UML)'s acceptance of the make-up of the seven-member cabinet. In an interview in the May 3 edition of the Nepalese newspaper Kantipur, Nepal said the CPN(UML) had decided on May 1 that the two security-related ministries - defence and home - should not be held by one party in the multi-party government. Yet both positions are now held by the Nepali Congress, the largest parliamentary party, which has headed most governments since the early 1990s.

Nepal expressed disappointment over the Nepali Congress's failure to bring to justice those responsible for the suppression of the 1990 people's movement as recommended by the Mallik Commission. "The Mallik report was made public only after [the CPN(UML) briefly] formed government in 1995 but five long years had passed and action could not be taken against them; some were members of parliament, some had retired.

"Those proven guilty by the Mallik Commission came out of their holes and again became active against multi-party democracy; we paid a huge price for this impunity. Because of all this, I personally feel that the Nepali Congress will repeat the same thing this time too. That's why it's my stand that our party should get the Home Ministry."

The Nepali Congress and CPN(UML) hold 113 and 68 seats respectively in the current parliament.

P.S.

* From Green Left Weekly, May 10, 2006.