

Paperless Cabinet Meeting And Agreement With Dr KC Siddhi B Ranjitkar



1) Paperless Cabinet Meeting

On July 26, 2018, Prime Minister KP Oli presided over a cabinet meeting that was said to be a paperless. If anybody were to take a look at the picture published in "gorkhapatra" on July 27, 2018, s/he would see Prime Minister Oli holding a sheet of white paper probably for making notes. Then, the question was why the prime minister needed to pull a paper when he had a lavish laptop probably freshly purchased from the market.

The first question was why the cabinet ministers needed to have such lavish laptops, which might cost NPR 200,000 each when they could use any simple white paper worth two Nepalese Rupees (NPR) a sheet. How many ministers, Nepal has today, probably 20. So the money spent on the paperless cabinet meeting is $\text{NPR } 200,000 \times 20 = \text{NPR } 4,000,000$. The ministers could have done the meeting with the papers and pencil or pens worth NPR 400. Thus, Prime Minister Oli presided over the cabinet meeting that has spent 10,000 times more money than required.

Somebody might come to the rescue of the prime minister and say, "Wait, the cost is justified because the efficiency of the cabinet meeting has increased fantastically because none of the ministers needed to use their hands to scribble something on papers when the meeting was going on." However, the question still stands whether the ministers' efficiency pays off the 10,000 times the cost increase.

Ministers don't need to use their hands but they have to use their fingers to type.

The second important question is whether all the ministers are laptop literate or not, whether they could type or not. If anybody were to take a look at the picture reproduced here then s/he could see some ministers including a woman minister are busy working on the laptop while another minister is holding a microphone and probably speaking.

Is the attention of ministers drawn to the laptop or to the statement of the minister who is speaking? Certainly, playing with the laptop might be more interesting than listening to the minister for the novice laptop users assuming most of the ministers have no time to work on laptop and probably, they don't have any private laptop so far. Surely, ministers are very smart guys. So, they could listen to the minister and at the same time keep busy with the laptop. Probably, here is the efficiency of ministers. However, such efficiency would hardly pay for 10,000 times the cost increase.

Let us hope that ministers would not carry the laptop home, and the State information would not leak to any foreign or national reporters or ministers would not allow their toddlers or young children to play with the State laptop at home.

The ministers might not go down to such low level of the political ethics or don't follow the ministerial code of conduct doing such a trivial thing. Again, nobody could be sure enough that the Nepalese ministers would not do such kinds of very low level acts, as everybody having an access to facebook must have seen the videos showing how contractors have been asphaltting the mud not only in Kathmandu but also elsewhere across the country. The ministers are the same who are supposed to control such misuse of State resources doing work at the wrong place at the entirely wrong time.

Communist ministers could enjoy the luxury of using laptops instead of sickles and hammers, which have been symbolically placed only on their flags. However, they should not forget that millions of men and women who have no other tools than the sickles and hammers whether they work in country or abroad. They are the people paying the taxes for buying the laptops for the communist ministers, and sending home the foreign currencies for making possible to buy the laptops.

2) Agreement With Dr KC

Dr Govinda KC ended the 27-day long fast-unto-death strike. He had been demanding to correct the irregular medical education bill the Oli government has submitted to the House. Thanks to the enduring physical stamina of Dr KC, and his mental strength to fight against the irregular medical education bill, he came out victorious over the strong Oli government.

The government reached a nine-point agreement with Dr KC on meeting his demands, and would make 22 amendments to the medical education bill the Oli administration had registered, and the opposition NC had been opposing it and blocking it in the House. Consequently, the government would not allow to open up any medical colleges, nursing colleges, schools, and dissolve all the nursing schools at below the certificate level means after secondary school.

Everybody needed to thank Dr KC for not tearing down the two-thirds majority government. Probably, Dr KC had been instrumental to drive away the former Supreme Court Chief Justice Gopal Parajuli from his position not so long ago. Let us assume Gopal Parajuli would not be so exposed in the media if Parajuli were to have made a soft approach to Dr KC rather than what had been very hard causing the tremendous public outcry over the arrest of Dr KC. Probably, Prime Minister Oli must have learned a lesson from this case.

Prime Minister Oli had been very rigid about the demands Dr KC had put forward. He had been not for meeting those demands in any case. Consequently, Dr KC had to undergo intense physical sufferings even risking death, and needed to face the force evacuation from the Karnali Medical Institute to the Maharajgunj Teaching Institute in Kathmandu. Medical service providers have to close doors of their service cabins to voice solidarity with Dr KC.

What would be the consequences of the agreement, Dr KC reached with the Oli government?

Some of the main points of the agreement and its impact are as follow.

1 Medical, dental and nursing institutes would not be allowed to open up in the Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur districts for the bachelor studies for 10 years from the date this law takes effect. The medical institutions that have already received the affiliation could turn over the property to the State or could be relocated in the priority area the State has identified.

Impact: The Kathmandu Valley would not have any more teaching hospitals for at least 10 years. However, it would not bar anybody from opening up hospitals; otherwise the Kathmandu Valley would have the short supply of medical services. Even today, if anybody goes to any hospitals private or the State run, teaching or regular hospitals s/he would find the crowd of patients seeking medical consultation at the main lobby. Clearly, the Valley has the shortage of hospitals for even meeting the needs of the current population, which is increasing at the high rate because of the natural growth and the immigrants coming from other districts.

Probably, one positive impact would be on the land, as the demand for new land for new teaching hospitals would not be for at least 10 years if the new government after five years would not amend the law, and Dr KC would remain alive for that period. Commercial, institutional, and apartment buildings, and new houses have been encroaching on the agricultural land even adversely affecting the environment in the Kathmandu Valley.

The visible negative impact would be on the job creation, and the economic growth. A single medical institution could create a market center. A number of eateries, fruit stores, medical stores, and even small lodges come up at any newly opened up hospitals to cater the needs of the folks accompanying patients, and patients, too. Taxi service and public transport service providers would have additional jobs. There would be a chain of job creation wherever a medical institution is opened up. That opportunity would be denied for 10 years thanks to the agreement, Dr KC and the government reached on July 26, 2018.

2 Any one of universities could issue the affiliation to not more than five medical institutions; however, this provision would not be applicable to the affiliation already given. Concerning the affiliation to medical institutions out of the Kathmandu Valley, the commission would craft a policy on the affiliation and then make decisions accordingly.

Impact: Limiting five medical institutions for any university to issue the affiliation, Dr KC must have in the mind to maintain the quality of the medical institutions. Qualities of medical education might go down if the universities having more affiliations could not maintain the monitoring and evaluation of the medical institutions; with the limited number of the affiliated medical institutions, universities would have the opportunity of maintaining the better quality of medical institutions. That is the logic some experts have put forward.

However, common folks might ask, "What happens if the country has not sufficient universities to issue the required number of affiliations to the medical institutions?" In this case, either the country would need to have more universities or no more affiliations to the new medical institutions. Dr KC must have thought about it while he was fasting or even before he took the fasting-unto-death.

Kathmandu University and Tribhuvan University each have already issued almost 10 affiliations so far, the local media reported. They have already doubled the quota Dr KC has set. However, they did not need to worry about it because they have been exempted from the affiliations already granted to so many medical institutions. Probably, they needed not worry about issuing affiliations to the medical institutions out of the Kathmandu Valley. That is what the proposed amendment says.

3 None of the technical programs on health below the certificate level should be run from now on. The ongoing such programs should be phased out within the five years from the date this law takes effect.

Impact: What Dr KC has in mind while forcing the government to agree on such matters. Such programs are mainly for producing the grassroots level health workers. Nepal needs a large number of such health workers. Any development workers or even experts would say so. Dr KC could not reach every door of the millions of rural people scattered across the country. Many of rural patients ended up going to the local dhimi and jhakri (shaman). Sometimes, they lose their precious life not having even the primary healthcare. What Dr KC has to say about it stopping the technical program on health below the certificate level?

Probably, Dr KC must be aware of the barefoot doctors China had once mobilized en masse for going to the rural areas and providing the rural people with the basic health care services. Why Dr KC wanted to deny the same sort of services to the rural folks in Nepal?

4 Public educational institutions should provide 75 percent of their seats in their undergraduate programs for the scholarships means run the classes for free for 75 percent students. They have to gradually increase the number of such scholarships in consultation with the commission.

Impact: Most of the students would have a chance to study the medical course for free. In return what the State receives would be the medical graduates would serve one year in the remote area and another year elsewhere means two years of service to the State. Probably, after two years, any graduates could quit the State job and go on their private business or go to foreign countries for better jobs and higher pays making a tremendous financial and manpower loss to the country that has so liberally provided them with free medical education.

Has Dr KC computed how much resources are required for producing a single medical graduate? Probably not otherwise he would not force such things on the State, as it would be the heavy financial burden on the State means burden on the taxpayers.

Only 25 percent students would pay for the tuition and other things. Probably, medical institutions would need to mobilize additional resources charging higher fees to the patients for medical services only to have the funding for providing 75 percent of students free medical education.

5 All the medical graduate courses (MD courses) at the State-run medical institutions for the Nepalese students would be free after this law takes effect.

Impact: What a generous man Dr KC has been. However, he has been so generous to force the government to use the State resources means the taxpayers' money to provide the free graduate medical course not his private money. What the common folks would receive in return for the tax money the government would use for such courses? Would the medical services be cheaper and better? It remains to be seen. Currently, common folks have to pay

high prices for any medical services even at the State-run medical institutions in comparison to their earnings.

Probably, it is madness on the one hand to cancel all the grassroots level health education programs and on the other hand to make the graduate medical course free. Mostly, the grassroots level health education programs are for the rural poor who could not afford to go beyond the local school level education, and producing the human power for providing the rural people with the primary healthcare services. Such programs would be ceased within five years while graduate medical students would have free education. Would it be the social justice, Dr KC?

3) Balance Sheet Of Nepal Rastra Bank

The Central Bank of Nepal called Nepal Rastra Bank published its monthly balance sheet for June-July (Asar 32, 2075) in "artha bazaar" supplement to "gorkhapatra" on July 27, 2018. The balance sheet showed that the deposit of the government of Nepal is slightly more than NPR 144 billion.

The previous balance sheet published in the same supplement showed the deposit of the government of Nepal more than NPR 250 billion. Probably, the State had spent more than NPR one hundred billion in one month consequently the balance of the State deposit ended at NPR 144 billion. That is the smartest expenditure the Oli administration must have made.

Probably, the office of prime minister must have purchased so many brand new laptops for the ministers, and probably for other advisors, and the secretary to the cabinet and so on making the extraordinary expenditure of the budget on the last days of the fiscal year. With such arbitrary expenditure of the State money or the taxpayers' money would benefit the traders and commission mongers rather than the common folks and taxpayers.

More than one hundred billion expenditure of the development budget made in the last month of the fiscal year means most of the money must have been wasted on asphaltting the mud, and doing things that did not make any sense to the sensible folks, and that had primarily benefited the decision makers, accountants, contractors, and surely the ministers otherwise they would not be mute spectators of the wasted development work done on the last days of the fiscal year.

All the development activities had continued until the last day of the fiscal year even though the monsoon rains had been pouring continuously. Workers got paid, contractors got paid, and probably, the decision makers got the commissions. However, the monsoon rains did not stop, and continued and probably washed away all the work done so hastily and haphazardly, and also have washed away more than NPR one hundred billion of the taxpayers' money in the FY 2017.

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