

Review Report: Role of the Opposition in a Parliamentary Democracy

**Review of the parliamentary activities during the months of
December 2019 to February 2020**

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As a part of the study on the Role of the opposition in the House of Representation and National Assembly, the following activities in the House has also formed a basis to complement for the study. It is published with the intention of further continuation of debate and interactions from the conscious public domain.

The Fifth Session of the House was summoned on Friday, 20th December 2019.

The Rt. Hon. President of Nepal on recommendation of the government summoned the House of Representatives' winter session on Friday, 20th December 2019. This winter session elected a new Speaker at the vacated position after the resignation of the then Krishna Bahadur Mahara, who accused of sexual harassment by an employee of the Parliament secretariat. Whereas the National Assembly was chaired by its Chairman Ganesh Prasad Timilsina, House of Representatives was chaired by Deputy Speaker Shiva Maya Tumbahamphe.

Political maneuvering and hiccups on nominating candidate for the position of Speaker:

The post of the Speaker was vacant since the former Speaker Krishna Bahadur Mahara was arrested on charges of rape in September 2019. The nomination of a candidate for the House Speaker became a tricky issues because of the Nepal Communist Party's internal bickering and power struggle. Because of constitutional provision that either of the position of Speaker or Deputy Speaker should come from different gender and party, the Deputy Speaker, a women and also a member of NCP, claiming to the Position of Speaker made the election a complex matrix within NCP to give up the post of Deputy Speaker to other political party to hold the post of Speaker. On insistence of the party, the Deputy Speaker clear the way by submitting her resignation to nominate a male candidate for the post of Speaker. Hon. Agni Prasad Sapkota, a tainted figure accused on a murder charge, has been elected to the post of Speaker. However the position of Deputy Speaker is still vacant, since it requires a support from the ruling party to elect Deputy Speaker from opposition parties.

Because of the NCP's internal squabbling to pick up right candidate the post of Speaker, the House was adjourned several days hampering the regular proceedings of the House. However the Deputy Speaker can conduct the parliament session in absence of the Speaker, it was postponed repeatedly due to uncited reasons caught in a deadlock on the whims of the ruling party.

The opposition parties demand parliamentary probe into graft allegation against Minister Baskota:

Two parties in the opposition in the House, the Nepali Congress and Rastriya Janata Party Nepal, have demanded the formation of a parliamentary enquiry committee to investigate the alleged corruption charges against outgoing Minister for Communication and Information Technology Mr. Gokul Prasad Baskota and clarification from Prime Minister on corruption. The former Minister was heard on a recorded audio tape negotiating Rs. 700 million in commission with the local agent for a Swiss company to procure a security printing press.

Opposition obstruct the House: The Nepali Congress, main opposition, obstructed the House proceedings demanding actions against former Minister for Communication and Information Technology Gokul Prasad Baskota. In a similar case of corruption with Lalita Niwas land scam, Nepali Congress also tried to obstruct House proceedings and later retracted because it was afraid of the move may boomerang on it, as its leaders, like Gachhadar, are also accused of corruption.

The opposition also raises cases of Yeti Holdings and Airbus deal: The case of Yeti Holdings is related with the extension of lease period of the land under Nepal Trust and Airbus deal is a dealing of commission while purchasing wide-body and narrow-body aircraft for Nepal Airlines. The members of the main

opposition Nepali Congress has blamed the anti-graft body for its reluctance to investigate the corruption cases as working under the influence of the government.

The opposition parties fail to form alliances: With the intention of forming a strong alliance of the opposition parties in the parliament, Nepali Congress, the major opposition, consulted with the Rastriya Janata Party Nepal and Samajbadi Party Nepal to fight for common agenda together in the parliament but went in vain without a success in hand.

One third members of the National Assembly complete their tenure and filled vacuum by elections:

On 2nd March one third of the members of the National Assembly completed their tenure. In order to fill the vacant seats, the election commission of Nepal held elections on ..., and new members are sworn in. With the incoming of new elected members, the composition of the assembly has been changed with 48 seats of the total 59 occupying by the Nepal Communist Party, six from the Nepali Congress and one each from Rastriya Janata Party and Sanghiye Samajwadi Party.

House Committee restricted media's access: However the parliament may put restriction on the access of journalists to cover the house proceedings on matters of serious discussion, it is common custom that reporters are allowed to cover the parliament proceedings uninterrupted. Hon. Purna Kumari Subedi, Chairperson, refused to allow reporters to cover meetings of the Agriculture, Cooperatives and Natural Resources saying the committee wished to discuss internal matters. In fact the meeting, which was to discuss suggestion of the task force to look into the complaints regarding former Army Chief. In December 2019 too, the State Affairs and Good Governance Committee had not allowed journalists to cover its meeting, saying it was confidential.

Declining significance of discussion at proposals on, resolution, and immediate public importance:

The government is disinclined to give importance to the proposals registered by the members of the House on public importance for discussion. It is the role of the speaker to put in the roster of the daily work schedule of the session. Nominal proposals were found being discussed at the House reveals its mentality towards such proposals.

In the second session of the parliament, two resolution proposals, eight proposals on immediate public importance, and six attention proposals were registered, among them one resolution proposal and two proposals on immediate public importance got precedence and discussed. In the third session of the House, five resolution proposals, and ten proposal on immediate public importance and three attention proposals were registered, among them only three were discussed. The resolution proposals and attention proposals were not discussed. In the fourth session only one resolution proposals was registered, which was not discussed. In this session, thirteen proposals on immediate public importance were registered in which only one got chance to be discussed. One registered attention proposal did not get chance to be discussed.

The current session of the House is the fifth session and it has registered three resolution proposals, six proposals on immediate public importance and one attention proposal. Hon. Gagan Thapa, a member of the opposition party, registered a proposal of immediate public importance on Risk minimization from spreading Corona Virus epidemic and has been discussed. Lawmakers unanimously have asked the government to come up with an integrated plan of actions for creating awareness against the spread of corona virus and preparedness with preventive measures to check, control and prevent it from spreading.

(Note: proposal registered at the running session, if not discussed, will not be valid to carry on for the next Session.)

Second Session:

Proposal	Number	Discussed	Time Lapsed
Resolution	2	1	
Immediate Public Importance	8	2	
Attention	6		

Third Session:

Proposal	Number	Discussed	Time Lapsed
Resolution	5		5
Immediate Public Importance	10	3	7
Attention	3		3

Fourth Session:

Proposal	Number	Discussed	Time Lapsed
Resolution	1		1
Immediate Public Importance	13	1	12
Attention	1		1

Current Fifth Session:

Proposal	Number	Discussed	
Resolution	3		
Immediate Public Importance	6		
Attention	1	1	