

Govt to finally expand Cabinet today

Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and CPN-Maoist Centre Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal have more or less finalised the names of their parties' lawmakers to be inducted in the Cabinet tomorrow.

Oli and Dahal had a one-on-one meeting at Baluwatar today and reached understanding on expanding the Cabinet tomorrow.

As per allocation of portfolios, UML will have 11 ministries, including the PM, and CPN-MC seven ministries. However, the number of aspirants is much higher than the ministerial berths.

Those who will be inducted in the Cabinet will take the oath of office and secrecy tomorrow afternoon.

Oli and Dahal have decided to give the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration and the post of deputy speaker of the House of Representatives to the Federal Socialist Forum-Nepal.

According to sources, UML General Secretary Ishwor Pokharel, Secretary Pradeep Gyawali, lawmaker Parbat Gurung and Prem Ale and Rabindra Adhikari are likely to get ministerial berths.

Ishwor Pokharel is likely to be at the helm of the Ministry of Finance and Planning, Gyawali the Ministry of Physical Infrastructures and Transport and Gurung the Ministry of Tourism.

CPN-MC lawmakers Ram Bahadur Thapa, Barshaman Pun, Matrika Yadav, Shakti Bahadur Basnet, Devendra Poudel, Bina Magar and Sudan Kirati are also likely to be ministers, while CPN-MC lawmaker Amanlal Modi is likely to be a minister for state.

There are dozens of lawmakers in both the CPN-UML and the CPN-Maoist Centre who desire to become ministers.

According to CPN-MC sources, Prabhu Sah, who represents the party in the Parliament, said in a party meeting that he did well in the previous Cabinet and wanted to assume the same ministry.

CPN-Maoist Centre lawmaker Devendra Poudel and Chandra Dev Khanal, who have never been ministers, want to be inducted in the Cabinet this time.

Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Dev Gurung and Giriraj Mani Pokharel, meanwhile, have been eyeing the post of speaker.

According to CPN-MC leaders, Ram Bahadur Thapa and Barshaman Pun have been lobbying for the home ministry.

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UML lawmakers Bishnu Poudel, Surendra Pandey, Yogesh Bhattarai and Padma Aryal also harbour aspirations to become ministers.

Source said either Poudel or Pandey could be given the defence portfolio. Bhattarai is likely to be the Minister of Information and Communications.

Lal Babu Pandit and Tham Maya Thapa Magar are already in the Cabinet from the UML.

It is not clear whether the FSF-Nepal will join the government tomorrow, but whenever they do, FSF-Nepal Chairman Upendra Yadav is likely to be the minister of foreign affairs.

Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and CPN-MC Chairman Dahal have assured the FSF-N that they will address the issues raised by the party, including that of constitution amendment.

Source: The Himalayan Times, 25th February 2018