

Govt white paper in a month

Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli is to announce a white paper within a month to inform about the financial crunch resulting from the Sher Bahadur Deuba-led government's decisions.

A source said the PM will also state his government's plan to achieve the goals of development and prosperity. Prime Minister Oli has directed his staff to prepare a report on the status of finance and governance for the white paper, according to sources.

"The white paper should be announced within a month showing the current financial condition and status of governance after formation of the new government," said sources at the Prime Minister's Private Secretariat. According to them, the PM will inform the public about the government's plan to achieve the goals of economic prosperity, political stability and good governance. The government will formulate policies on the basis of CPN-UML and CPN-MC's joint election manifesto.

Prime Minister Oli's Chief Adviser Bishnu Rimal told *The Himalayan Times*, "The PM will address the nation after expanding the Cabinet. He will also issue a white paper." CPN-MC Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal said today in Chitwan that the PM would expand the Cabinet on Monday.

Prime Minister Oli and CPN-Maoist Centre Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal have already discussed issues related to the white paper. They have received a report from a task force formed to prepare the government's common minimum programme. According to sources, the white paper will be prepared by the Office of the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers in collaboration with other ministries.

Prime Minister Oli had criticised the Sher Bahadur Deuba-led caretaker government's decisions for imposing financial liabilities on the new government. The Deuba government had increased the grant for earthquake victims by Rs 100,00 and also lowered the eligibility age of senior citizens' for allowance from 70 to 65.

The Deuba government's decision will increase spending by at least Rs 110 billion — equivalent to 3.8 percent of the GDP — according to the Ministry of Finance. The government spent almost Rs 24 billion last fiscal on old-age allowance.

Budget preparation and its execution in all tiers of the government is one of the most challenging tasks of the federal government.

As per the left alliance task force led by UML Vice-chair Bamdev Gautam, the government will establish one integrated service centre for three wards of municipalities and each and every ward of rural municipalities within three months. According to the report, Rs 1 billion will be needed for physical infrastructure to set up integrated services mechanisms. Integrated service centres will issue citizenship certificates, national identity cards, collect land revenue, passport applications and provide primary treatment and maternity services. Post office staff will be authorised to collect revenue. Staff deployed in the field and ward offices as well as agriculture and livestock office staffers will also be utilised for integrated services.

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Provincial and local governments will monitor the stalls the government opens to cater to the needs of the public. As per the plan, government agencies related to cooperatives, industries and commerce will operate stalls at the local levels. National Supply Corporation, which will be created, will bear the expenses of the cost of transporting goods to such stalls.

Source: The Himalayan Times, 25th Feb 2018