

Source: Karobar; 23 Sep 2015

Minister-secretary dispute affects Energy Ministry

Internal conflict between Energy Minister Radha Kumari Gyawali and Secretary Rajendra Kishor Chhetri has reached to extreme level due to conflict of their interests on the issue of contract for projects, license distribution and others.

Works at the ministry have been affected due to their conflict, with even issue of electricity license and administrative works being affected in recent times. The conflict that started on the issue of license renewal of five hydropower projects whose license the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) had directed to revoke has reached to climax on the issue of transmission line in Solu corridor. The two are not even in speaking terms now and communicate only through letters. Minister Gyawali wants to renew license of the five projects while secretary Chhetri is against stating that it is not possible legally.

Minister Gyawali has withdrawn the rights given to secretary Chhetri on Tuesday due to escalation of the conflict. Chhetri wrote in response immediately after receiving the letter to that regard, and made it clear that he will not comply stating that minister Gyawali cannot unilaterally take back his rights without consent of Prime Minister (PM) Sushil Koirala.

“Minister madam has taken the decision to rescind the rights without consent of PM. I have asked for approval letter from PM before cutting my rights,” secretary Chhetri said. He claimed that minister Gyawali has repeatedly taken proposal to the cabinet to remove him after escalation in dispute but to no avail. He clarified that he wants to leave the ministry as it is uneasy to work due to the worsening dispute. “I have stayed for some time to show to them. I have exercised the rights given to me as secretary by the law,” he added. The Electricity Act has vested the rights of issuing and revoking license on energy secretary.

He revealed that he has expressed objection to the majority decision taken by the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) board on the issue of tender for Solu corridor, and argued that he expressed note of dissent as per the legal right to do so if one does feel that a decision is not right. He argued that reevaluation of bid papers for tender of Solu corridor is necessary as per the instruction of CIAA.

Livid minister Gyawali, on the other hand, said she does not want to keep secretary Chhetri even for a minute more. “Ministry works have been affected in lack of cooperation from secretary. Why should I keep the secretary who lodged complaint with the CIAA a day after expressing note of dissent against the decision taken by the NEA board?” she questioned. She lamented lack of cooperation from the cabinet in removing secretary despite her repeated requests. “I had brought him to the ministry thinking he is a good officer after I became minister. He cooperated with me at first but later started to oppose my decisions,” she added.

The duo had agreed on the issue of issuing license for feasibility study for 180 MW Andhikhola Reservoir Project to China Gezhouba Group even as their conflict was escalating. But their conflict came out after secretary Chhetri expressed note of dissent on the issue of tender of Solu corridor. The dispute has also created uncertainty about future of two projects started in Solu corridor.

This is not the first conflict between minister and secretary at the ministry. The then Water Resources minister Dr Prakash Sharan Mahat and secretary Shankar Prasad Koirala had also bickered about appointment of chief for the Upper Tamakoshi Project. The then Water Resources minister Bal Dev Sharma Majgaiya had resigned citing appointment of Lok Man Singh Karki as secretary without his consent.

Source: My Republica; 24 Sep, 2015

Energy ministry flays CIAA directive

Minister for Energy Radha Gyawali has expressed objection on the direction of the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) to take departmental action against her in connection to a procurement decision, saying that the decision oversteps the authority of the executive.

Responding to the direction of the anti-grant body, Gyawali said that CIAA has tried to supersede the provision of Public Procurement Act which states that dissatisfied bidders can apply for a review to the head of the public body, a press statement issued by the Ministry of Energy said. "If the bidder is not satisfied with the decision of head of the public body, the bidder can appeal to the review panel," the statement added.

CIAA said Minister Gyawali, as the chairperson of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) Board, and three members of the board, were involved in policy corruption by deciding to award Solu Corridor Transmission Line Project to the second lowest bidder -- Mohan Energy Corporation (P) Ltd -- on August 21. The decision inflicts loss of Rs 270 million on NEA, according to CIAA.

CIAA had said that the lowest bidder, JV of Jaguar Overseas Ltd and BS Ltd, was not given due place in technical evaluation of the bid and was not even asked to furnish clarification on technical matters.

- See more at: <http://www.myrepublica.com/economy/story/28674/energy-ministry-flays-ciaa-directive.html#sthash.7JPGxaai.dpuf>