

## **Muslims in Nepal demand a Hindu state**

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**Kathmandu:** In an unusual move, Muslims in Nepal have backed the ongoing campaign for reinstating the country's erstwhile Hindu identity, saying they are more "secure" under a Hindu state than under a secular Constitution.

"It is to protect Islam. I have opened my mouth demanding that Nepal be declared a Hindu state in order to protect my own religion," said Amjad Ali, chairman of the Rapti Muslim Society, who is also involved in the protest programmes demanding a Hindu state in Nepal.

CPN-UML CA member Anarkali Miya said she has personally experienced missionaries trying to influence people from other faiths to follow Christianity.

"I believe Nepal should not adopt secularism. It will only create more problems in future," Miya said.

Udbudhin Fru, chairman of Muslim Mukti Morcha affiliated to the UCPN (Maoist), also admitted the growing influence of Christianity in Nepal.

"Turning the country secular is nothing but a design to break the longstanding unity among Muslims and Hindus. So there is no alternative to reinstating the country's old Hindu State identity in order to allow fellow citizens to live with religious tolerance," Babu Khan Pathan, chairperson of the Rastrabadi Muslim Manch Nepalgunj, was quoted as saying by The Himalayan Times.

"We don't need a secular identity, but want to see the country called Hindu State as this ensures safety and security for all," Pathan added and claimed that around 80 per cent of Muslims in Banke are in favour of Hindu State identity.

Rastriya Prajatantra Party Nepal, a pro-monarchy party and some other pro-Hindu organisations have also been campaigning for reconverting Nepal to a Hindu state as the country plans to adopt a new constitution.

The constitution writing process had proved to be a cumbersome work for Nepal's ruling and opposition parties.

For the last eight years, they have been vigorously arguing their differences over crucial issues including secularism and federalism.

- PTI