

## **Pro-statehood protesters attack police in west Nepal; 9 dead**

24/08/2015 21:14 by admin

**Kathmandu:** Ethnic protesters demanding statehood in western Nepal attacked police with spears and knives Monday, leaving at least six officers and three protesters dead and many others injured.

Government Administrator Raj Kumar Shrestha said the injured were taken to regional hospitals and the death toll was expected to rise. Local news reports said it could be as high as 20.

Home Minister Bam Dev Gautam told the Constituent Assembly, the national parliament, that the protesters surrounded police who were enforcing a curfew in Tikapur, about 400 kilometers (250 miles) west of Kathmandu. They attacked the officers with stones, knives and spears, and one was set on fire and died, he said.

Police from neighboring districts were rushed to the town as reinforcements. The government also decided to send soldiers to bring the situation under control, Gautam said.

The protesters from the Tharu ethnic group are demanding a separate state in the new constitution, which is being finalized in the Constituent Assembly. They have organized general strikes and street demonstrations in recent days, but the protests turned violent Monday.

Nepal has been governed by an interim constitution for years now. A Constituent Assembly elected in 2008 failed to draft a new charter in four years, and a second assembly was elected in 2013. Disagreements among political parties have been blamed for the delay.

Since an earthquake in April that killed thousands of people, there has been pressure on politicians to speed up the drafting process.

The main political parties now agree that there should be seven federal states, but smaller political parties and ethnic groups oppose either the number or makeup of the states.

- AP