

## **Indian envoy hopes for end to Nepal political crisis**

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**Kathmandu:** Indian ambassador to Nepal Ranjit Rae today expressed hope that the political deadlock in the country would soon end as talks progress between the agitating Madhesi groups and the government.

Speaking at a programme on Nepal-India relations, Rae said India is ready to assist Nepal in its development process amid the ongoing political crisis.

He stressed on the need to end the impasse in Nepal by addressing the demands of the Madhesi community and help strengthen Nepal-India relations, at a time when ties have been fraught.

"The relations between Nepal and India are based on people-to-people ties and nothing can spoil that," he said at the event organised by the Nepal-India Friendship Society.

The Madhesis, Indian-origin inhabitants of Nepal's Terai region, are protesting against division of their ancestral homeland into seven provinces under the new Constitution.

Violence has returned to the landlocked Himalayan nation reeling under acute shortage of essential goods like fuel and LPG due to a two month-long blockade of key border trade points with India called by the Madhesis.

On the occasion, senior journalist and editor of Punarjagaran Weekly, Mathawar Singh Basnet said India should mediate between the government and the agitating parties to resolve the issue.

He said India should also take the initiative to end the deadlock rising from promulgation of the new Constitution, which is a major component of the peace process of Nepal.

Former vice-chancellor of Kathmandu University Suresh Raj Sharma said civil society members and intellectuals should exert pressure on both the government and the agitating Madhesi parties to resolve the crisis at the earliest.

Former Nepal diplomat Balbahadur Kunwar said the demarcation of federal provinces should not be done only on the basis of geography as allocation of resources also plays a crucial role.

If the southern plains are completely separated from the hilly regions of the country, people residing in the less resourceful hilly region cannot make progress, he said.

Advocate Dinesh Tripathi said the present crisis emerged due to the absence of far-sighted leaders in the country.

He underlined the need to follow track-two diplomacy to improve relations between Nepal and India which have been affected due to the transport blockade.

Civil society leader Sundar Mani Dixit said that efforts should be made to improve relations between Nepal and India as they cannot afford to further worsen ties.

- PTI