

Madhesis reject Nepal constitutional amendment as 'incomplete'

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Kathmandu: Nepal's agitating Madhesis today rejected a constitutional amendment passed by the Parliament to resolve the ongoing political crisis and blockade of key trade border points with India, calling it "incomplete" as it did not address their concerns over redrawing federal boundaries.

The amendment, endorsed with a two-thirds majority yesterday, addresses two key demands of the Madhesis - proportionate representation to the minority community largely of Indian-origin and seat allocation in the Parliament on the basis of population.

The lawmakers of the agitating parties had boycotted the voting, saying the amendment was "incomplete", as it fell short of addressing their concerns, including redrawing of federal boundaries.

Rajendra Shrestha, co-chair of the Sanghiya Samajbadi Forum Nepal - one of the constituents of the Samyukta Loktantrik Madhesi Morcha (SLMM), said that the proposal by Nepali Congress leaders Minendra Rijal and Farmullah Mansoor was progressive than the original bill that was filed in Parliament on December 15.

As many as 24 proposals were filed by more than 100 lawmakers of different parties, seeking to amend the bill, which was endorsed in the House after incorporating the proposal registered by Rijal and Mansoor.

The agitating Madhes-based parties said the revision proposal, in line with which the Constitution Amendment Bill was endorsed, was "incomplete" despite being progressive, The Kathmandu Post reported.

Morcha leaders said that they would make further comments after thoroughly "studying the text".

"But it will be too early to make any comment, as we are yet to go through the amendment proposal," Shrestha said, adding that Morcha's protests would continue unless "there is an agreement on redrawing federal boundaries".

Madhesis, who are inhabitants of the Terai region, are opposed to the new Constitution that divides their ancestral homeland under the seven-province structure and have led an ongoing blockade of key border trade points with India.

The agitating community that shares strong cultural and family bonds with India is demanding demarcation of provinces, fixing of electoral constituencies on the basis of population and proportional representation, and have launched a protest for months that has claimed at least 55 lives.

- PTI