

India vows to work closely with Nepal to strengthen ties

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Kathmandu: Amid a strain in bilateral ties, India on Monday said it will work closely with Nepal for further strengthening its cooperation in all the areas of mutual interest, including in water resources.

"India has been providing assistance in construction of embankment in major rivers of Nepal and also extending assistance in river training to Nepal," a statement issued by Indian embassy said as the 'Nepal-India 10th Joint Technical Committee meet on Inundation' ended on December 10.

The Indian delegation was led by Gorakh Thakur, Member, Ganga Flood Control Commission (GFCC), Government of India and the Nepalese delegation was led by Niranjana Dev Pandey, Director General of the Department of Water Induced Disaster Prevention (DWIDP), Government of Nepal.

"India remains committed to continue working closely with Nepal for further strengthening its cooperation in all the areas of mutual interest, including in the area of water resources, and would extend assistance for river training and embankment construction on other major rivers," the statement said.

"Cooperation in water resources and river training are the most important areas of India-Nepal bilateral relations," it said.

The five-day meeting took place at a time when bilateral ties are strained amid an ongoing agitation by Indian-origin Madhesis in Terai region bordering India. The protesters have blocked all border trade points between the two countries, triggering shortage of supplies including fuel and medicines.

But India has been insisting that the problem in Nepal was political in nature which has to be resolved by the Nepalese leadership through dialogue.

"India has been providing assistance to Nepal for the strengthening and extension of embankments along Lalbakeya, Bagmati, Kamla and Khando rivers," the Indian Embassy statement said.

"The works are at various stages of progress and till date, Nepalese Rupees 3,670.66 million (over Rs 2 billion) has been disbursed by India to Nepal," it added.

"The planned visit to Bagmati, Lalbakeya and Kamala rivers could not be undertaken due to some reason and the Indian team visited the West Rapti River on December 7 and 8, as requested by the Nepalese side," the statement said.

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