

## **India visit aimed at normalising ties, says Nepal PM KP Sharma Oli**

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**Kathmandu:** Nepal Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli today said his maiden visit to India this week is aimed at bringing bilateral ties back on track by clearing "misunderstandings" even as he defended the new Constitution, opposed by Madhesis, as "inclusive and democratic". "There were some misunderstanding in the relations with our neighbour (India) and we have to correct the misunderstanding and bring back the relations on track. For that I am visiting India soon," Oli said ahead of his eight-day visit to India starting on February 19.

Oli's much-anticipated visit to India at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi comes days after agitating Madhesis, largely of Indian-origin, ended their crippling protests and blockade that had soured the bilateral ties. "My visit to India is aimed at normalising the past uneasy situation and also to further promote our age-old ties," Oli said in his address at the International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP) special workshop on "Democratic Transition in Nepal".

"The year 2015 remained a landmark in our history as we were able to promulgate the new Constitution despite the hardship facing the people due to the five-month-long blockade in the country's southern border, even after suffering from the devastating earthquake that hit the country ten months ago," Oli said. "The new Constitution promulgated on September 20, 2015 was inclusive and democratic as it has all the features of a democratic Constitution including guarantee of human rights, independent judiciary, social justice and equality," he asserted.

The Constitution was endorsed by overwhelming 85 per cent members of the Constituent Assembly, he added. "Madhesis say the new Constitution leaves them politically marginalised by dividing the country into seven provinces." Oli said that his government is pursuing the policy of dialogue, unity and consensus among all political parties in case of certain demands and grievances by some groups.

"Now the government will concentrate on pushing ahead rapid social and economic transformation in the country in consonance with the rising aspirations of the people." Nepalese people are still undergoing hardships in their daily life and it might take some time to withstand the after-effects of recent disruption of supplies along the southern border, said Oli.

As the supply system has already been resumed, normal situation will prevail soon so that the government can focus more on development and reconstruction works, he pointed out. "In the near future, Oli said he will visit China to further deepen bilateral relations and enhance fruitful economic cooperation with our friends so that we can utilise our natural and human resources for our benefit." "Nepal pursues the policy of seeking best of friendship and cooperation with all friendly countries with particular focus on her immediate neighbours," he said.

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