

400 civil servants quit in Terai after peers' killings

Nepal's second-largest festival Tihar began on a dismal note in the Terai plains Wednesday with over 400 civil servants resigning en masse, saying they were forced to do so after the continued killing of their peers and the government's failure to provide security to its own employees.

Led by Dhak Bahadur Adhikari, chief of the Civil Servants' Association in Saptari district in southern Nepal, 415 civil servants handed over their resignations to the chief district officer.

The mass resignations came after the chief of the district development committee, Prabhu Narayan Yadav, was abducted and murdered by an armed group of former Maoists last month.

All government offices in Raj Biraj town, the district headquarters, have remained closed for the past nine days as civil servants called the shutdown to protest against the government's continued failure to ensure the safety of its own employees.

At least six civil servants have been killed in the Terai this year as the plains became Nepal's latest hot spot.

The killings triggered an exodus of government employees from the plains. However, they were persuaded to return two months ago when the government promised to boost security measures.

With the mass resignations creating an unprecedented vacuum, Home Secretary Umesh Mainali was asked to go to Raj Biraj and hold talks with the association.

The resignations came even as a commission formed by the government to investigate the growing violence in the Terai submitted its report to Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala.

Headed by Supreme Court judge Khilaraj Regmi, the commission visited 14 turbulent districts in the Terai to compile its 800-page report.

The report said 21 people had died while 1,100 people had been disabled and property worth Nepali Rs.160 million destroyed in the Terai violence.

On Tuesday, the National Human Rights Commission, the apex human rights body in the country, also made public its findings on the human rights situation in the country since the signing of the peace pact between the government and the Maoists.

The report said that at least 115 were killed till July, with the most deaths occurring in the Terai.

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