

Nepali Chief Justice agrees to lead interim gov't

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KATHMANDU, Feb. 26 (Xinhua) -- Nepal's Chief Justice Khil Raj Regmi has expressed willingness to head an interim election government proposed by the major political parties as an alternative to the current political impasse.

In a decisive meeting with the ruling and opposition parties in his official residence at Baluwatar, Kathmandu on Monday, the Chief Justice accepted the proposal, albeit with some conditions.

"Chief Justice Regmi is quite positive. We are highly optimistic about the chances of holding the second Constituent Assembly election soon," said Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai.

"Chief Justice Regmi has main concerns about the legal and constitutional hurdles. He raised this issue in the meeting, too. We are seriously working on it," Bhattarai added.

Four major parties, later in the afternoon, held a separate meeting together to assess the outcomes of the meeting with Chief Justice Regmi and concluded that a favorable situation is building up for an election.

As an instant response to the issues raised by Chief Justice Regmi, the meeting instructed a task force to prepare a final draft that would propose a clear road map for addressing legal and constitutional obstacles as pointed out by the Chief Justice.

Nepal's constitution has no provision for an election government, nor does it allow the Chief Justice to head such a body. In this context, amending the constitution stands as the sole viable option.

It is further expected that the Supreme Court's special hearing on March 7 will decide whether a Chief Justice-led election government contradicts with the constitution.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court, issuing a press release, officially spoke for the first time about the position of the Chief Justice vis--vis the parties' proposal.

"The Chief Justice has no personal interest or ambition to become the executive head. Regmi is positive to give an outlet for the sake of public interest," read the statement.

Nepal has been in a political quagmire since the expiry of the first Constituent Assembly on May 27 last year without promulgating a new constitution.

As the parties, thereby, have failed to form an unity government, the proposal of Chief Justice-led interim government has surfaced as a middle path of reconciliation among the parties.