

Nepal Maoists to oppose 'special relations' with India

PTI

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Kathmandu: The Maoists, who have blamed India for the political crisis in Nepal, plan to oppose all "unequal treaties", including the landmark 1950 Peace and Friendship Treaty between the two neighbours, a top leader of the former rebels said today.

Narayankaji Shrestha 'Prakash, the Unified CPN-Maoists' vice chairman, said his party is against establishing "special relations" with India and all "unequal treaties" between its giant southern neighbour.

We are opposed to all unequal treaties signed between Nepal and India in the past, including the 1950 Peace and Friendship Treaty, he told *PTI*, adding we can't accept Nepal to remain under the India's security umbrella.

The Maoists leader said the party also opposed establishing special relations with India, and determined to fight the border encroachments at different points.

Maoists party chairman Prachanda, who had earlier this week blamed India's "naked interference" for the political crisis, had also demanded the scrapping of the 1950 Indo-Nepal Peace and Friendship Treaty along with all other "unequal" pacts with its neighbour.

The former rebel leader also called for the withdrawal of Indian troops from Kalapani, a disputed part of Nepal's territory on the borders of India, Nepal and China.

The Unified CPN-Maoist announced its fourth phase of its protest yesterday to oppose the "expansionist attitude" of India and to protect national sovereignty.

Shrestha said "Indian expansionism" has put obstacles in "civilian supremacy" in the country, the peace process and drafting of the new constitution. Nepal Maoist leader Shrestha underlined that as other political parties have shown their helplessness towards fighting "Indian expansionism", "we have decided to launch the movement to uphold national independence by bringing together all republican and nationalist forces".

Blaming New Delhi for interfering in the country's internal affairs, Shrestha said India's attitude towards Nepalis was not appropriate.

Though the Maoists have not yet come out with their detailed programmes of the month-long agitation under the fourth phase of the anti government protest, the former rebels threatened to paralyse the country with an indefinite general strike from January 24 if their demands were not met.

The anti-government protests by the Unified CPN-Maoist was aimed to step up pressure on the embattled 22-party coalition to rectify the "unconstitutional" decision of president Ram Baran Yadav, who reinstated the then army chief Gen Rukmangad Katawal, dismissed by Prachanda in May.

Political tensions have been high in Nepal since the Prachanda-led government resigned earlier this year amid the dispute with the president over the army chief's refusal to incorporate former Maoist rebels fighters into the military.

The deepening political crisis has put new stresses on Nepal's reconciliation efforts after the end of the insurgency in 2006, amid fears that the already stalled peace process may be derailed if the agitation is not ended soon.

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