

Maoist number one and two spar in Nepal

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Kathmandu: Bringing the differences in the Maoist leadership to the fore, party chief Prachanda has claimed that India favours his second-in-command Baburam Bhattarai for Nepal's prime ministership, prompting the latter to hit back at him.

Prachanda said in a programme in Kathmandu last week that India wants to make Bhattarai the Prime Minister of Nepal and has been "putting pressure" in this regard.

Bhattarai has slammed the party supremo's statement.

"It is an attempt to assassinate my character," Bhattarai told reporters after the party's central committee meeting yesterday. The Maoist number two leader also lodged a strong protest against Prachanda's remarks during the meeting, the Republica daily reported quoting party sources.

"Why don't you tell others when some Indian leaders have also proposed your (Prachanda's) name as the next prime minister candidate," Bhattarai is reported to have said.

Meanwhile, Maoist spokesman Dinanath Sharma has alleged that India was trying to create a division within the party by backing one against the other.

"It is a game plan of India to play one leader against the other," Sharma said.

"At one time, India had favoured Prachanda for the top post and at another time, it had favoured Bhattarai, which is an attempt to create division in the party," Sharma said.

Efforts have been made by various elements to cause mistrust within the Maoist party, he said.

Meanwhile, the CWC meeting of the party concluded that Prachanda would lead the government should the Maoists get chance to form another government.

The meeting has also decided to make "national independence" a focal point of their 'fourth phase' of movement. Earlier, the party had made restoring 'civilian supremacy' the main agenda of their ongoing movement.

As per the programme, the Maoist leaders will hold rallies in various parts of the country to lodge protest against encroachment of land and inundation of territories, which effectively means hardening of their anti-India stand.

Prachanda will visit Mahakali area on the border on January 11 to lead a protest rally against alleged Indian encroachment. Bhattarai will lead another rally at Susta.

Top hardliner leader Mohan Vaidya Kiran and senior leader Narayankaji Prakash will lead protest rallies to be held in Pashupatinagar and Laxmanpur, respectively against "Indian encroachments and inundation of land by unauthorised construction in the border areas," the CWC said.

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