Nepal welcomes '2+1' dialogue mechanism

Shakti Basnet, Nepal's Minister of Environment.Wikimedia commons

Nepali officials are mulling over China's proposal of a "two-plus-one" mechanism, where Beijing and New Delhi can jointly hold a dialogue with a third country in South Asia.

"We welcome the two-plus-one format as we are confident that such a dialogue will be conducted in a spirit of equality and mutual respect," Shakti Bahadur Basnet, Nepal's Minister of Forests and Environment, told *The Hindu* in Beijing.

The Chinese side has been emphatic that its relations with the Nepal will be conducted according to the five principles of peaceful coexistence — the basis for a foreign policy among equals.

'Five principles'

The joint statement issued at the end of last week's visit to China of Nepal's Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli stressed that China-Nepal ties "maintained the momentum of healthy development on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which sets a model of harmonious coexistence between countries of different sizes and social systems".

Separately, an official source had earlier told *The Hindu* that the Chinese side proposed to Mr. Oli, a "two-plus-one" format for dialogue. Mr. Basnet pointed out that in the era of globalisation, it was imperative for Nepal to maintain close ties with both its neighbours — China and India.

The Nepali Minister saw the rise of China and India as a "big opportunity" for the development of Nepal. "Nepal's two big neighbours are developing very fast. It is a big opportunity for us if we can manage our relations with both countries properly." "In this way Nepal wants to be a bridge between India and China," he observed.

Mr. Basnet said that Nepal "understands the spirit of Wuhan," alluding to the "informal summit" in April between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He said that Nepal was looking for a partnership with China and India to develop connectivity in the Himalayan nation.

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