

INDIA SLAMS NEPAL FOR ADOPTING A NEW MAP

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India on Saturday slammed Nepal for adopting a new map that shows three areas that are part of Indian territory, saying Kathmandu's action was not based on historical facts and was therefore untenable.

Indian foreign ministry spokesman Anurag Srivastava said that that the move was also "violative of our current understanding to hold talks on outstanding boundary issues."

The comments came just over an hour after Nepal's Lower House of Parliament passed a constitution amendment bill in a special session on Saturday to update the country's map, which includes stretches of land that India also claims as part of Uttarakhand state.

The move by Nepal has exacerbated strains between India and the Himalayan country.

"We have noted that the House of Representatives of Nepal has passed a constitution amendment bill for changing the map of Nepal to include parts of Indian territory. We have already made our position clear on this matter," Srivastava said.

"This artificial enlargement of claims is not based on historical fact or evidence and is not tenable. It is also violative of our current understanding to hold talks on outstanding boundary issues," he said.

Nepal's House of Representatives opened the discussion on the amendment bill, which was put for voting after the deliberations were over on Saturday. The bill was passed with the overwhelming vote of 258 members present in the house of 275, news reports said. There were no votes cast against the bill. Now that it has been passed, it will be sent to the Upper house, the National Assembly, where it is set to undergo a similar process.

Last month, Nepal's ruling party had cleared the map, drawing a strong reaction from India, which described the move as "unilateral" and not based on historical facts. The map shows three areas that India claims as part of its territory as lying within Nepal's borders. These are Lipulekh, Limpiyadhura and Kalapani.

In a bid to reach out to Kathmandu ahead of the vote, New Delhi had on Thursday underlined its close cultural, developmental and political ties with the country. But Nepal nevertheless went ahead with Saturday's special session of Parliament to endorse the new map.

Nepal's move comes at a time when India and China are engaged in a standoff over their border.

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