

Panel for revamp of Indo-Nepal treaty

Mahendra P. Lama

The final report of a bilateral committee — appointed to advise governments in Delhi and Kathmandu — is likely to suggest that the 1950 India-Nepal Peace and Friendship Treaty should be revised.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, a member of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) that was appointed in 2016 to suggest measures for improving bilateral ties, said the committee will finalise its report, which will shape ties over the next two decades, by this summer. The committee consists of eight members with four persons representing each side.

Newer aspects

“The India-Nepal friendship Treaty is now almost seven decades old and needs to reflect realities of our times. We are suggesting wide ranging changes in the Treaty covering newer aspects of transit facilities, energy trade, human movement etc.,” said Mahendra P. Lama, who has been a member of the EPG since the beginning.

The EPG was set up during the February 2016 visit of Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli, in the aftermath of the economic blockade of Nepal, to bring in measures to address concerns of both sides. It has met seven times in two years and will hold its last meeting next month in Delhi when the report is expected to be finalised. At the penultimate meeting in Kathmandu, the two sides had exchanged an early draft of the report.

“We have discussed all aspects of bilateral ties frankly and have not hesitated in addressing difficult issues,” said Mr. Lama.

Given the difference of opinion on important issues like border trade, tariffs, and the friendship treaty, there were concerns on whether the two sides could reach a consensus. However, the member said both sides had addressed the key issues and it will be up to the governments on both sides to implement the report.

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