

Nepal, India encroaching on each other's land, UK must step in: PM Balen Shah

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NEW DELHI: Nepal PM Balendra Shah backed dialogue and diplomacy to resolve the border dispute with India but, in remarks unlikely to go down well with New Delhi, he also urged the UK to take interest in addressing the issue, saying his govt had already discussed it with London and China. Responding to questions in Parliament on Sunday, Shah said both India and Nepal had encroached on each other's territory. The border dispute had seen a flare-up early May - just over a month after Shah was sworn in - after Kathmandu protested the decision by India to resume with support from China the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra through Uttarakhand state crossing at Lipulekh Pass that is claimed by Nepal. Kathmandu had raised the issue with both India and

China.

India had strongly rejected Nepal's claim, saying it is neither justified nor based on historical facts and evidence, and that such unilateral artificial enlargement of territorial claims is untenable.

UK should step in as border issue dates back to British India period: Balen Shah

The rapper-turned-politician and former Kathmandu mayor may now have opened a new can of worms by seeking UK's intervention. "We have spoken not only with India and China, but also with the UK govt. Our view is

that the UK should also take an interest, as the issue dates back to the period when British India left the region," Shah said, according to a report by Kathmandu Post.

The PM further said he came to know that not only had India encroached on Nepal's land, but "Nepal had also encroached on India's land in multiple places". "Both sides need to sit down and look into the matter," said the PM, adding that Nepal had already raised the issue with India.

"The response (by India) states that both govts will form teams comprising historians, surveyors and experts familiar with the territory and seek a resolution through table talks," Shah said.

For India, the Kalapani area, including Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh, remains a part of Uttarakhand. Nepal had earlier also objected to India and China's decision to expand trade through Lipulekh Pass.

Meanwhile, Nepal foreign ministry has said Shah's comments regarding Nepal's "encroaching" on Indian territory were related to no-man's land and cross-border occupation between the two countries.

The remarks come in the middle of efforts by both sides to schedule a visit by Indian foreign secretary Vikram Misri to Kathmandu. Nepal media had earlier reported he would visit in mid May, but Indian govt had later said that no date had been finalised yet. The border row has the potential to further delay any high-level contact between India and the new govt in Nepal.