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Delhi fumes as Nepal's new map claims India's territory

Oli also blames India for Covid-19 spread in his country

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NEW DELHI, DHNS

Nepal on Wednesday published a new map of its territory including areas claimed by India, triggering a strong protest from New Delhi, which called it a "unilateral act" by the government of the neighbouring country.

Nepal's Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli too took the rhetoric against India to a new level, stating that the Covid-19 virus spread by the Indians in his country were more lethal than the ones that came from China or Italy. The new map of Nepal published by the Ministry of Land Management of the Nepalese Government included Lipulekh Pass, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura - the areas New Delhi claims to be part of the territory of India. Oli's cabinet had on Tuesday decided to publish

the new political and administrative map of Nepal, in order to re-assert its claim on the disputed areas.

The move was in response to construction of a strategic road by India from Dharchula in its Uttarakhand State to Lipulekh Pass near its disputed boundary with China.

New Delhi strongly reacted to the move by Kathmandu, stating that such "artificial enlargement of territorial claims" by Nepal was "not based on historical facts and evidence" and would not be accepted by India. "It is contrary to the bilateral understanding to resolve the outstanding boundary issues through diplomatic dialogue," Anurag Srivastava, spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), said in New



KP Sharma
Oli

Delhi. "Nepal is well aware of India's consistent position on this matter and we urge the Government of Nepal to refrain from such unjustified cartographic assertion and respect sovereignty and territorial integrity of India."

India also urged the leadership of Nepal to "create a positive atmosphere for diplomatic dialogue to resolve the outstanding boundary issues".

"Those who are coming from India through illegal channels are spreading the virus in the country and some local representatives and party leaders are responsible for bringing in people from India without proper testing," said Nepalese Prime Minister, adding: "It has become very difficult to contain the Covid-19 due to the flow of people from outside. Indian virus looks more lethal than Chinese and Italian now. More are getting infected." Oli's statement raised eyebrows in New Delhi as the first person to be found Covid-19 positive in Nepal was a youth, who was a research scholar at an institute in Wuhan in central China - the "ground zero" of what now turned into a pandemic.