

India rejects allegations of blockading Nepal trade checkpoint

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New York: India has rejected as "totally false" allegations that it blockaded a key trade checkpoint on the border with Nepal amid protests over that country's new Constitution even as it emphasised that it is for the Nepalese people and parties to find a mutually acceptable solution. "Our stand is very very clear. We do not want to be prescriptive.

It is for the people of Nepal and the political parties in Nepal to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution something for which ownership can be taken by all sections," Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Vikas Swarup said here yesterday when asked about India's stand on Nepal's constitution-drafting process.

He was briefing reporters on the bilateral and multilateral engagements of External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session. Swaraj had a bilateral meeting with Nepal Foreign Minister Mahendra Pandey where she said that the allegation that India had imposed a blockade was "totally false".

"We can only take goods up to the border and beyond the border it is the responsibility of the Nepalese side to ensure that there is adequate safety and security for the trucks to enter that side," Swarup said.

He said that 4,310 trucks are waiting at the border but cannot proceed into Nepal due to the disturbed security situation.

He added that Indian transporters had voiced complaints about the difficulty they are facing in movement within Nepal and the security fears due to the prevailing unrest. Yesterday, trucks from India carrying essential goods and petroleum products started entering Nepal which is grappling with a fuel crisis due to the blockading of a key trade checkpoint by protesters opposing Nepal's new Constitution.

About 100 cargo trucks entered Nepal from the Sunauli border in UP. The trucks had been stranded on the Indian side for more than five days due to the ongoing blockade imposed by the Madhesi groups opposing the promulgation of the new Constitution.

Madhesis are Indian-origin inhabitants of the Terai region bordering India who are opposed to splitting Nepal into seven provinces according to the new Constitution. At least 40 people have died in over a month of clashes between police and protesters from the Madhesi and Tharu communities and ethnic minorities.

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