

China mulling 1,000 MT of fuel supply to Nepal

25/10/2015 13:31 by admin

Kathmandu: Amid a blockade of trade points between India and Nepal by agitating Madhesi parties, China is mulling providing 1,000 metric tonnes of fuel to help the landlocked country tide over an acute shortage of petroleum products during the festival season.

The first shipment is expected to arrive in the Nepalese capital Kathmandu in a few days, said sources at state-owned Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC).

Nepal's new government has mobilized various agencies to bring fuel and cooking gas from China in the wake of shortage of essential goods during festivals due to the Madhesi-led agitation in the southern plains.

"Government of China had in the recent past expressed commitment to provide 1,000 metric tonnes of fuel to Nepal on grant basis and the same is being materialized now as Nepal is facing shortage of fuel due to blockade on the Indian border," Pramod Dahal, Prime Minister's press advisor, said.

He said the government has decided to give a no-objection letter to private firms to import oil from China.

Until recently the NOC had a monopoly to import petroleum products from Indian Oil Corporation. The government ended that monopoly by authorizing private parties to import fuel.

The first shipment will be dispatched to Kathmandu via the reopened Rasuwagadhi-Kerung trading point between Nepal and Tibet. The route along the trading point on both sides of the border was badly damaged in the massive earthquake in April.

Nepal and China have reopened two border check points "Tatopani and Kerung" recently.

As supplies from India remained squeezed due the over-a- month-old Madhesi agitation even after the visit of Deputy Prime Minister Kamal Thapa to New Delhi this month, Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and UCPN-Maoist chief Prachanda have been taking initiatives to import oil from China.

Oli and Prachanda have separately met Chinese ambassador to Nepal Wu Chuntai and made requests in this regard.

UCPN-Maoist vice-chairman Narayan Kaji Shrestha during his recent visit to China discussed the issue with top Chinese officials.

A six-member team from the NOC led by its Deputy General Manager Sushil Kumar Bhattarai has reached Sigatse in Tibet to discuss fuel import with Chinese officials, the sources said.

Another high-level team from Nepal consisting officials from various ministries will soon leave for Beijing to sign a deal in this regard.

Nepal's traders too have urged the Prime Minister in a meeting to open alternate trading routes in the wake of the agitation as it could lead to closure of many industries in the country.

- PTI