

Medicines from India destroyed in Madhesi violence in Nepal

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Kathmandu: Indian-origin Madhesi protesters in Nepal today torched an ambulance and a truck carrying medicines worth over Rs two million imported from India near the border as sporadic violence returned to the Himalayan nation amid a political logjam over the new Constitution.

The truck with medicines was torched by the cadres of the agitating Joint Democratic Madhesi Front (JDMF) close to the Indian border town of Raxaul, despite an assurance by the protesters that they would allow vehicles to move into Nepal.

Nepal is facing a huge shortage of medicines and other essential goods due to a two-month-long agitation by the Madhesis in the Terai region, the police said. The agitators hurled a petrol bomb on the vehicle in the Birgunj Municipality area of Parsa district last night as the vehicle headed towards Janakpur, a southern Nepal town, the police said.

The fire that erupted in the truck destroyed the medicines imported from India worth more than Rs two million.

Yesterday, the JDMF had issued a statement that they would allow movement of medicine-laden vehicles and would let the schools in southern Nepal function normally.

Meanwhile, the cadres of the agitating Madhesi Front also set an ambulance on fire, in Morang in eastern Nepal. The vehicle was ferrying a sick child to a local hospital in district headquarters Biratnagar.

The child sustained injuries but is now safe, police said. Police have arrested eight members of the agitating Madhesi parties for their alleged involvement in the incident.

Nepal has been hit by a major political crisis over the new Constitution opposed by Indian-origin Madhesis who have led an agitation and blockaded at key border trade points of Nepal with India, leading to a shortage of essential goods including fuel and cooking gas.

Madhesis, Indian-origin inhabitants of Nepal's Terai region, are protesting against division of their ancestral homeland into seven provinces in the new Constitution. More than 40 people have died in the violent agitation that has also overwhelmed Indo-Nepal ties as transit of goods and fuel to the Himalayan nation from India has been badly affected.

The agitation by Madhesi groups has paralysed normal life across Nepal while the dearth of medicines has put lives of patients at stake.

- PTI