

Nepal turns to China for fuel after India restricts supply

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — Fuel-starved Nepal has signed an agreement with China to provide gasoline, diesel, and cooking gas after India restricted its supplies as a result of ongoing political protests in the Himalayan nation, according to officials.

A memorandum of understanding was signed with China National United Oil Corporation in Beijing, said Nepal Oil Corporation official Deepak Baral. Details on how much fuel would be sent to Nepal, prices, and other arrangements are still being worked out, he said.

It would be the first time Nepal would receive fuel from China, effectively ending India’s monopoly on the fuel supply.

India has restricted fuel supplies since Madhesi ethnic groups in southern Nepal, with whom it has close cultural ties, began protesting Nepal’s new constitution, seeking more



SEVERE SHORTAGES. Stranded trucks are seen lined up in Birganj, a town in Nepal along its border with India. Fuel-starved Nepal has signed an agreement with China to provide gasoline, diesel, and cooking gas after India restricted its supplies as a result of ongoing political protests in the Himalayan nation, according to officials. (AP Photo/Aftab Alam Siddiqui)

rights. Protesters have blocked a key Nepal-India border point for weeks. Other crossings are free of protesters, but India has refused to allow a normal supply of fuel to Nepal.

China also announced it would give Nepal 340,000 gallons of gasoline to help ease severe shortages.

The gasoline will be

brought to a town near the China-Nepal border. It will take about 100 tanker trucks to transport it to the capital, where it will likely arrive in November.

China and Nepal share a border that has the world’s highest mountains, but its two crossings were damaged by an April earthquake and only one reopened in October.

Koreans hold reunions across the DMZ, first in more than a year

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War ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty. The Koreans bar ordinary citizens from visiting relatives living on the other side of the border and even from exchanging letters, phone calls, and e-mails without permission.

North and South agreed in August to resume family reunions during talks to end a standoff that began when landmine blasts blamed on Pyongyang maimed two South Korean soldiers.

South Korea uses a computerized lottery system to pick participants while North Korea reportedly chooses based on loyalty to its authoritarian leadership. Nearly half of the 130,410 South Koreans who have applied to attend a reunion have died.

Seoul has long called for a big increase in the number of people taking part in reunions and holding them more regularly. But North Korea has only occasion-



LONG-AWAITED REUNIONS. North Koreans with gift bags wait to meet their South Korean family members during the Separated Family Reunion Meeting at Diamond Mountain resort in North Korea. Elderly Koreans from the divided North and South attended reunions in late October. (Choi Dong-joon/Newsis via AP)

ally agreed to the reunions, which analysts say Pyongyang uses as a bargaining chip in negotiations with

South Korea.

Associated Press writer Foster Klug in Seoul contributed to this report.

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The Asian Reporter is published on the first & third Monday each month.

News page advertising deadlines for our November 16 to December 6, 2015 edition are:

Space reservations due: Wednesday, November 11 at 1:00pm ♦ Artwork due: Thursday, November 12 at 1:00pm