

NEA to decide on best route in 3 weeks



A technical team of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) will soon choose the best viable and feasible route of cross-border transmission line to connect with Tibet's Kerung, according to a bilateral agreement signed between Nepal and China in Kathmandu on Thursday.

The decision on the route allows the governments to move ahead on building cross-border transmission line. Nepal has hoped to exchange 2,000 MW electricity through the line by 2020.

A preliminary study of the transmission line in Nepal's land, carried out by the NEA, had identified three alternatives.

The team will select the most viable route and recommend China to take the final decision, according to a bilateral talk between Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nepal and Chinese Delegation in Kathmandu on Thursday. NEA's officials said its four technicians will embark on site visit to decide on the route.

Talking to Republica, project chief of the Galchhi Kerung Transmission Line Project, Komal Nath Atreya said that the team will find out the best option within three weeks' time. The government of Nepal will send proposal to Chinese officials thereafter.

The NEA will conduct the study in the Nepali side while China's Tibet-based Electric Company has carried out the feasibility study in the Chinese side including its international transmission line from Lhasa to Kerung.

"Preparation of final reports from both the countries will pave the way for entering into secretarial-, ministerial- and prime ministerial-level talks to proceed on project development," said Atreya.

An agreement has already been signed between the two countries to build cross-border transmission lines as part of Belt and Road Initiative.

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The building of cross-border transmission lines was discussed during erstwhile Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's China visit in March 2016, when Nepal had just recovered from an unofficial blockade by India. Oli and China's President Xi Jinping had then signed bilateral agreement for building first cross-border transmission line.

This infrastructure opens Nepal to a third country for electricity transmission after India, with which there are at least three cross-border lines including Dhalkebar and Mujaffarpur are in operation currently. And one more cross-border transmission line Butwal-Gorakhpur is also in the pipeline.

"Nepal can export excess energy during rainy season to China, and while it can import during the dry season from China," said an NEA official who is an expert on transmission line. The Government of Nepal has allocated Rs 30 million for the study in current fiscal year.

There is also a proposal to build the transmission line along the Kathmandu-Kerung railway, which is feasible according to a recent pre-feasibility study.

Source: MyRepublica 25th February 2018