

## **40 held for enforcing strike against 'India's blockade' in Nepal**

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**Kathmandu:** At least 40 people were arrested in Nepal today for trying to enforce a strike called by a breakaway CPN-Maoist party faction against "India's blockade" of major border trading points with the landlocked country.

The strike called by the hardline CPN-Maoist (Biplav), a breakaway faction of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, had little affect in Nepal's capital Kathmandu, though normal life was partially hit in other parts of the country.Â

Some shops in Kathmandu remained shut but most vehicles plied on roads in the capital.

At least 40 people have been arrested for trying to enforce the strike and vandalising vehicles, police said.Â

Five Maoist cadres were arreested in Kanchanpur district of far-west Nepal for vandalizing a jeep with an Indian number plate.

A truck carrying bricks was set ablaze by Maoist cadres in Dhading district, some 60 kilometres west of Kathmandu.Â

"Our strike is against India's blockade and its interventtion in Nepal's internal affairs," the party said a in a statement.

But Nepalis criticised the strike, expressing their frsutration over the 'bandh' at a time when people are already strained by fuel shortage, medicines and other essential goods because of the ongoing agitation by Madhesi people, who share strong cultural and family bonds with North Indians.Â

The Madhesi agitation, over demands to safeguard their interests and more representation in the new Constituion, near the border trade points has been on for more than two months now.

Relations between India an Nepal have nosedived over the issue.

Madhesis, the main constituents of Nepal's plains, seek an amendment to the Constitution, redrawing the seven-provinces model in the new charter.

- PTI