

## **Cable TV operators in Nepal to blackout Indian channels**

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**Kathmandu:** Cable TV operators in Nepal on Monday announced that they would indefinitely blackout all the Indian channels from Tuesday to protest blockade of a key trade checkpoint with India by agitators opposing Nepal's new Constitution.

The cable operators decided that they would blackout all the Indian channels indefinitely from 10 am on Tuesday in a symbolic protest.

President of Federation of Nepal Cable Television Association Sushil Parajuli said they decided to shut down the broadcast of the Indian channels as "India has been intruding in the national sovereignty of Nepal."

"We were also getting pressure from a few parties and public to cut the Indian channels," Parajuli said.

According to the federation, the broadcast of Hindi channels have already stopped in Chitwan, Pokhara and Mahendranagar. Indian television channels are popular among viewers in Kathmandu and other cities in Nepal.

Unrest in Nepal's Terai plains over the new Constitution has led to the blockade of Birgunj trade checkpoint with India, cutting off vital supplies, including petroleum products.

Nepalese officials have alleged that fuel crisis has worsened in the country as Indian customs and security officials are stalling cargo movement to Nepal and there has been a stoppage of petroleum supply to Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) by the Indian Oil Corporation.

Indian envoy Ranjit Rae was called in by the Acting Nepalese Foreign Minister Khaga Raj last week and the issue of "obstruction" in the supply of essential goods coming in from the Indian side was raised with him.

Rae had clarified that there was no obstruction from the Indian side on the movement of goods and the problem was due to unrest, protests and demonstrations on the Nepalese side.

Indian freight forwarders and transporters have earlier voiced complaints about the difficulties they are facing in movement within Nepal and their security fears due to the prevailing unrest.

At least 40 people have died in over a month of clashes between police and protesters from the Madhesi and Tharu communities and ethnic minorities who say the new internal borders leave them under-represented in the country's Parliament.

The agitating Madhesi Front claims that the Constitution does not guarantee enough rights and representation to the Madhesi and Tharu communities residing in southern Nepal. Madhesis are Indian-origin inhabitants of the Terai plains bordering India.

Meanwhile, in a symbolic protest, Akhil Nepal National Free Students Union, the student wing of ruling CPN-UML, cooked Nepali traditional food -- Gundruk and Dhindo -- outside the Indian Embassy on Sunday.

The student activists cooked the foods by using firewoods. "We will live on forest food, but won't let our national pride down before India," said ANNFSU Secretary Radhika Khatiwada.

- PTI