

Europe's airspace reopens for business

AFP, London

Europe's airspace reopened for business as Iceland's volcano lost its fury yesterday, leaving passengers scrambling to get a flight home and airlines to count the 1.7 billion dollar cost of the crisis.

Three-quarters of flights scheduled in Europe should take place, said the body coordinating air traffic across the continent, a week after a volcanic eruption in Iceland caused the worst disruption to aviation since World War II.

While experts in Iceland said the Eyjafjallajökull volcano had lost most of its intensity, airline bosses were frantically adding up the cost of the crisis which their umbrella body said had cost 400 million dollars a day at its peak.

After authorities in Britain finally reopened the whole of its airspace on Tuesday night, all of Europe's main air hubs were up and running once more with Germany reopening its airspace at 0900 GMT. Even Iceland's Nordic neighbours Norway, Denmark and Sweden lifted the last of their flight restrictions.

"Eurocontrol expects approximately 21,000 flights to take place today in European airspace. On a normal Wednesday, we would

expect 28,000," said a statement from the Europe-wide coordinating body.

Millions had their travel plans affected since governments closed their airspace last Thursday and IATA, the body representing the global airline industry, put the overall cost at 1.7 billion dollars (1.3 billion euros).

European governments "must take their responsibility" and help the carriers, said IATA chief Giovanni Bisignani.

British Airways chief executive Willie Walsh had branded the ban unnecessary, with the disruption heaping more misery on an airline still reeling from a recent strike.

Flights were finally cleared for landing at London's Heathrow airport on Tuesday night, but BA flew around two dozen long-haul planes back to Britain even before the no-fly-zone was lifted.

Some were initially turned away and forced to land at other airports but there were scenes of jubilation on other planes when pilots announced they had been cleared to land at Heathrow, Europe's busiest airport.

British newspapers said Prime Minister Gordon Brown's Labour government, facing an election next month, had been "bounced" into a climb down after a game of brinkmanship.



Passengers walk with their luggage at Roissy-Charles-de-Gaulle airport in northern Paris as a plane takes off yesterday. All long-haul passenger services to and from France and three quarters of shorter flights are operating as scheduled after days of disruption caused by volcanic ash in Iceland.

France to ban full Islamic veil

AFP, Paris

The French government is drawing up a law to ban the full-face Islamic veil from all public spaces, despite a warning from experts that it could face a legal challenge, a spokesman said yesterday.

The spokesman for President Nicolas Sarkozy's government, Luc Chatel, said the bill would be presented to ministers in May and would go beyond a mere ban on women wearing the niqab and the burqa while dealing with French officials.

Last month, the State Council -- France's top administrative authority -- warned Sarkozy against a full ban on the veil, suggesting instead an order that women uncover their faces for identity checks or for state business.

N Korea 'plotted to kill high profile defector'

BBC ONLINE

South Korea says it has uncovered a plot to assassinate the most senior official ever to have defected from Communist North Korea.

Two North Koreans, said to have been posing as defectors themselves, have been arrested on suspicion of being on a mission to kill Hwang Jang-yop.

Hwang, 87, once a close confidant of North Korean leader Kim Jong-il, defected to the South in 1997.

Third Iraqi al-Qaeda leader killed

BBC ONLINE

US and Iraqi forces have killed another al-Qaeda in Iraq leader in the north of the country, army officials say.

The man identified as Ahmed al-Obeidi was killed in the northern province of Nineveh, Iraqi military spokesman Maj Gen Qassim al-Moussawi said.

The news comes the day after the government announced two leading insurgents had been killed.

Iraqi al-Qaeda leader Abu Ayyub al-Masri and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, who led an affiliated group, died on Sunday.

Gen Moussawi said Mr Obeidi, also known by the name Abu Suhail, was in charge of al-Qaeda in Iraq's operations in the northern provinces of Kirkuk, Salahuddin and Nineveh.

Gen Ray Odierno, commander of US forces in Iraq, said the man was "the military emir" of the region.

"He was the guy in charge of operations from Tikrit all the way up to Mosul out to the Syrian border," he told AFP news agency.

The BBC's Jim Muir in Baghdad says the Iraqi government is now convinced they have al-Qaeda on the run, but says that in the past when leaders are killed others have just stepped in to fill their posts.

Polish polls set for 20 June

AP, Warsaw

Poland's parliament speaker yesterday set June 20 as the date for an early presidential election after the death of President Lech Kaczynski in a plane crash, kicking off an election season overshadowed by the tragedy.

The date of June 20, announced by speaker Bronislaw Komorowski, was widely expected.

If no candidate musters at least 50 percent, a second round must be held two weeks later, on July 4.

Iran denies plans to develop US-hitting missiles

AFP, Tehran

Iranian Defence Minister Ahmad Vahidi denied yesterday the Islamic republic is planning to develop ballistic missiles capable of striking arch-foe the United States, as alleged by Washington.

"We have no such plans," Vahidi told the official IRNA news agency, describing the allegations as "part of the enemy's psychological warfare."

Vahidi was reacting to Tuesday comments by a senior US official James Miller, principal deputy undersecretary of defence for policy,

who told a senate hearing Iran could by 2015 develop missiles that could strike the US.

Miller added that his assessment assumed "foreign assistance" to enable Iran to improve its missile technology.

A report last year from the US Air Force National Air and Space Intelligence Centre had postulated that Iran could build an intercontinental ballistic missile that could hit US soil by 2015-2018, if it received outside help.

Analysts say Iran's Safir (Ambassador) space launch vehicle, which Tehran put into orbit in February 2009, has the potential to be converted into a long-range missile.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT FIRM ENLISTMENT FOR A DONOR FUNDED PROJECT

Institute of Microfinance (InM) is a nonprofit organization established to meet the research and training needs of microcredit programmes in Bangladesh. InM funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) through its PROSPER Programme, is the knowledge management partner of the PROSPER programme. InM will undertake a number of knowledge management activities over the next few years under funding from PROSPER. The programme invites applications for enlistment of qualified vendors/firms to undertake the followings tasks:

- Documentary & talk shows
- Advocacy Material printing
- Advertisement (Both print & electronic)

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The applications should be submitted within 15 days of publication of this notice to info@prosperprogram.org electronically or by mail to: **Communication and Information Officer, PROSPER Programme Coordination Unit (PCU), House 333, Road 113, Gulshan, Dhaka-1212.** Any questions should be directed to the PROSPER PCU through the above mentioned email.

UK ELECTION Nick Clegg attacks 'desperate' Brown

BBC ONLINE

Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg has indicated he might find it difficult to do a deal with Gordon Brown in the event of a hung Parliament.

In a Daily Telegraph interview, he says Mr Brown is "a desperate politician".

It comes as Mr Brown says that he wants a "new politics", with the two parties creating an informal alliance to keep the Conservatives out of power.

David Cameron warned any result short of a Tory victory "could reinforce the failure of the last 13 years".

The election campaign continues later with the SDLP's manifesto launch.

Mr Brown's interview with the Independent sees him calling for a "progressive alliance", appealing to Lib Dem supporters to think about backing his party.

"If you want a referendum on new politics, you've got to consider voting Labour," he said.

"We are the only party committed to a referendum on it. You won't get one with the Tories."

He said the Conservatives offered merely "a change of personnel and a return to the old politics", while Labour was "serious" about revamping the UK's electoral system.

'CLUTCHING AT STRAWS'

However Clegg, whose party is committed to the system of proportional representation, said the prime minister had "systematically blocked, and personally blocked, political reform".

"I think he is a desperate politician and I just do not believe him," the Lib Dem leader told the Daily Telegraph.

He also stressed there were many differences between his party's policies and those of Labour.

"Do I think Labour delivered fairness? No. Do I think the Labour Party, in its heart, has a faith in civil liberties? No. They are clutching at straws."

Maoists to seek no-trust vote against Nepal PM

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Kathmandu

After vacillating for almost a year, Nepal's opposition Maoist party yesterday decided to seek a no-trust vote against Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal.

"This government will not be able to draft a new constitution (within the deadline of May 28)," Maoist member of parliament and spokesman Dinanath Sharma told the media after the standing committee of the formerly outlawed party held deliberations Wednesday to decide its next strategy ahead of a 'grand push' against the government Thursday.

"It will not be able to complete the task even if it is given two more years. As long as this government stays, there can be no consensus among the parties because this government is against consensus, the constitution and the peace process."

Since their government fell last year, the Maoists, the largest party in Nepal after the 2008 elections, had been threatening to seek a no-trust vote against the government. However, with the two largest ruling parties sticking together, their offensive is doomed to fail for want of two-thirds majority in the 601-member parliament.

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British Council invites applications for the position of Deputy Head of IELTS Exams in its Examinations Services section in Dhaka.

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Closing date: 2 May 2010.

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Application with detailed CV, 2 copies of passport size photographs, attested copies of all educational certificates and mark sheets should reach the Registrar (2A/1, North East of Darussalam Road, Mirpur-1, Dhaka-1216) by 04/05/2010. Ph: 9004957-108, www.primeuniversity.edu.bd, info@primeuniversity.edu.bd

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