

Iran extends access to airspace for overflights after ceasefire

AFP, Tehran

Iran has expanded access to its airspace for international overflights following a ceasefire with Israel, though flight restrictions remain in place across much of the country, an official said yesterday.

“In addition to the eastern half of the country’s airspace being available for domestic, international and overflight operations, the airspace over the central and western parts of the country has now also been opened only for international overflights,” Majid Akhavan, spokesman for the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, said in a statement carried by the IRNA state news agency.

Flights to and from airports in the north, south and west of the country, including Tehran’s Mehrabad and Imam Khomeini international airports, remained suspended, according to Akhavan.

“All fellow citizens are requested not to go to airports located in the northern, southern and western regions of the country,” he said, urging travellers to follow updates through official sources only.



Palestinians look at the sand covering their tents and vehicles after the Israeli army targeted the tents of displaced people in the northern Al-Rimal neighborhood of Gaza City yesterday. Story on page 5.

PHOTO: AFP

Tarique greets Yunus on his 85th birthday

UNB, Dhaka

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday extended his birthday greetings to Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus on the occasion of his 85th birthday.

On behalf of Tarique, BNP chairperson’s personal secretary ABM Abdus Sattar handed over a birthday cake and a bouquet to the CA’s official residence at Jamuna at 6:15pm, said a BNP press release.



The CA’s Military Secretary Major General Ferdous Hasan Salim received the gifts on behalf of Yunus.

“Today marks the 85th birthday of Chief Adviser Dr Muhammad Yunus. On this occasion, BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman extended his greetings, wishing the chief adviser good health and a long life,” the release added.

The party also said the chief adviser expressed his sincere gratitude to Tarique for the warm birthday wishes.

Nearly 1 lakh

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“They concluded that, as of January 2025, some 75,200 people died a violent death in Gaza during the war, the vast majority caused by Israeli munitions,” it said.

According to the survey’s data, 56% of those killed have been either children up to the age of 18 or women.

“That’s an exceptional figure when compared with almost every other conflict since World War II,” Haaretz said.

Spagat said the survey’s data positions the Gaza war “as one of the bloodiest conflicts of the 21st century.”

“Even if the overall number of war victims in Syria, Ukraine, and Sudan is higher in each case, Gaza is apparently in first place in terms of the ratio of combatants to noncombatants killed, as well as in terms of rate of death relative to population size.”

Data also show that the proportion of women and children killed via a violent death in Gaza is more than double the proportion in almost every other recent conflict, including Kosovo (20 percent), northern Ethiopia (9 percent), Syria (20 percent), and Sudan (23 percent).

“I think we’re probably at something like 4 percent of the population killed,” Spagat said. “I’m not sure that there’s another case in the 21st century that’s reached that high.”

The Israeli army has pursued a brutal offensive against Gaza since October 2023, despite international calls for a ceasefire.

Last November, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza.

Israel also faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice for its war on the enclave.

Govt looks

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During the meeting, the adviser conveyed the government’s decision to appoint the Bangladesh Navy through direct tender to operate the terminal. The official added that the Navy will form a workforce to run the NCT.

The government’s decision comes amid widespread protests and criticism over the government’s earlier plan to lease out the NCT to UAE-based DP World.

On June 18, the shipping ministry decided in principle that the terminal would be operated by the CPA’s own management, as the current contract with private operator Saif Powertec Ltd expires on July 6.

CPA Secretary Md Omar Faruk, however, said they have yet to receive any written instruction from the ministry in this regard.

“The final decision about NCT’s operation will be made soon, after which the media will be informed,” he said.

Following the June 18 meeting, the CPA on June 25 floated an open tender to procure tractor-trailers with prime movers as part of preparations to operate the terminal.

Debate over leasing out the terminal to a foreign operator intensified after talks progressed between the interim government and DP World regarding a potential agreement. These discussions initially began under the previous Awami League government.

A coalition of left-leaning parties and organisations held a two-day road march from Dhaka to Chattogram, pressing home four demands, including the withdrawal of the government’s decision to hand over NCT operations to DP World. The march concluded yesterday.

Trade thru ports halts on Day 1

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They warned that the garment sector alone had incurred over \$230 million in losses due to the disruption. Delays in customs clearance at seaports, airports, and land ports have stalled both the import of raw materials and the export of finished goods.

Exporters are now under pressure from international buyers. Many said the delay would result in them being forced to ship by air.

Rising air shipment costs and the exposure of export goods to damage from inclement weather at ports are compounding the crisis, they said.

Despite the turmoil, the government did not issue any new messages to protesters yesterday.

Multiple attempts by this correspondent to contact Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed for comments were unsuccessful.

Along with the shutdown, the NBR Reform Unity Council, a platform of protesting officials, held their “March to NBR” programme. The council also urged Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus to step in, saying the crisis over NBR reforms must be resolved “in the greater interest of the state”.

Their demands include the removal of NBR Chairman Abdur Rahman Khan and the withdrawal of transfer orders of five officials involved in earlier protests over an ordinance to abolish the NBR and to separate the tax policy from revenue collection.

After weeks of tension within the revenue administration, the government on May 25 said amendments to the ordinance would be finalised by July 31. The plan, issued through an official press release, pledged consultations with all relevant stakeholders, including the protesters. The finance ministry announced that the NBR would instead be transformed into a specialised, autonomous agency.

But alleged non-cooperation of the NBR chairman and the transfers of officials triggered a fresh wave of protest after Eid-ul-Azha holidays.

Due to the work stoppage, customs valuation of goods has been suspended at ports, bringing trade to a standstill.

At Chattogram Custom House, the epicentre of the country’s trade processing, operations remained suspended amid the indefinite

shutdown. According to our Chattogram correspondent, service seekers faced immense suffering, and apparel exporters feared severe losses from missed shipment deadlines.

During a visit to the custom house, most offices were found deserted. Procedures for both import clearance and export shipments were suspended. Container handling at Chattogram Port came to a near standstill, with all customs activities, including assessment, physical examination, and sample verification, halted.

The port typically handles around 5,000 consignments daily. However, not a single consignment was cleared yesterday. Only export shipments that had completed assessment before the strike were allowed to be loaded onto vessels. Cleared import consignments, however, remained stuck as port gate customs officials refused to carry out mandatory scanning and inspection procedures.

Jewel Ahmed, operations manager at Nira Fashion, told The Daily Star, “A shipment of 12 containers carrying T-shirts was scheduled to depart for Singapore today [Saturday]. But now, we don’t know how long this shutdown will last.”

Syed M Tanvir, managing director of Pacific Jeans, said that while import clearance had been suspended in recent days, export activities were continuing before the shutdown.

“With export documentation and shipments coming to a halt, exporters are in serious trouble. Failure to ship goods on time could result in significant financial losses,” he said.

Several importers and exporters, speaking anonymously, expressed frustration with the government and customs officials. They said the dispute over NBR reforms should be resolved through dialogue, not disruption.

“This kind of shutdown won’t solve anything. Eventually, a resolution will come, but in the meantime, businesses are suffering the most,” said one exporter.

“Importers can’t clear their goods, and exporters are missing deadlines. These delays are causing significant financial losses And no one will be exempt from paying port

demurrage,” another trader added.

Mohammed Abul Hossain, proprietor of vegetable exporter Lee Enterprise, said 50–60 tonnes of fresh produce meant for Europe were ruined at Dhaka airport due to customs officers’ strike.

“We couldn’t get clearance. The entire shipment is now spoilt. We won’t be able to export,” he told The Daily Star over the phone.

Aminul Haque, vice president of the Benapole Import-Export Association, said the strike “practically brought the entire port to a halt” and warned of a looming crisis for the national economy unless swift action is taken, reports our Benapole correspondent.

Importer Al Mamun said, “With the customs cargo section closed, Indian port users couldn’t complete manifest entries or issue Car Passes.”

Our Brahmanbaria correspondent reported a similar situation at Akhaura Land Port.

Trader Hasibul Hasan said no new consignments could be cleared for India due to the strike. Only pre-cleared shipments were dispatched.

Yesterday morning, 26 trucks crossed into India’s Tripura state. Of these, 23 carried 92 tonnes of frozen fish, while three carried 66 tonnes of flour, all cleared on Friday.

Trade at Burimari Land Port in Lalmonirhat and Sonahat Land Port in Kurigram also stopped. Humayun Sawdagar, a trader at Burimari, said eight of his trucks were stranded at India’s Changrabandha port.

“If I can’t bring in the goods in time, I’ll suffer huge losses,” he said, adding that several export trucks were also stuck on the Bangladesh side.

At a press briefing yesterday, Hasan Muhammad Tarek Rikabdar, president of the protesters’ council, said the “March to NBR” would continue nationwide today. He described the movement as non-political and driven by the spontaneous participation of revenue officials, aiming to serve “the people and the country”.

“We’re ready to meet the finance adviser any time to resolve the crisis,” he said, reiterating demands for structural reform of the revenue system and removal of the NBR chairman.

individual who is not on the council. If that is not possible, the council may resort to the second option, requiring six votes, to appoint a former chief justice or a former judge of the Appellate Division. If that fails, the council may, upon unanimous agreement, appoint the president as the chief adviser. If that cannot be done, it may appoint the last retired chief justice as the head of the caretaker government.

If the last retired top judge declines to assume the role, the commission will approach the one who retired immediately before. If all former chief justices are unavailable or if all of them refuse, the commission will consider the last retired appellate judge. If the last retired judge refuses to take the responsibility, it will find one willing to shoulder the responsibility.

In its second round of discussions, which began on June 2, the commission has so far deliberated on nine issues and reached consensus on only two. It held joint discussions with 30 political parties.

Umama Fatema quits SAD

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the political party named NCP, I chose to work under this banner out of a sense of responsibility to complete the unfinished work of the July uprising. But if this banner operated independently beyond party lines and prescriptions, it would threaten the political future of many,” she said.

She alleged that attempts were made to sideline her for not aligning with party directives and that smear campaigns were launched by former allies.

“So I was subjected to immense pressure, both online and offline, to stop working under this banner. I took it as a challenge and tried to keep the banner active out of goodwill. I have nothing more to say about what followed.

“These so-called comrades treat people like tissue paper – discarding them as soon as they are no longer needed,” she wrote.

“After witnessing a major event like the July uprising, seeing everything collapse in front of my eyes was heartbreaking.

“After that, I discussed the matter with my friends and well-wishers. Then I decided to step away from

this banner. Though I didn’t resign formally, I effectively cut ties with the platform around April–May and focused on the ‘Empowering Our Fighters’ initiative,” she added.

Umama further said she voted in the recent council, hoping for positive change but was disheartened by irregularities.

“The voter list was extremely limited, comprising mostly members of one political group ... I truly wanted to see the platform succeed. But it became clear that with the way snakes have coiled themselves around it, any positive outcome is impossible,” she said.

“Some candidates did have genuine intentions, and I tried to support them. But later that night, I saw that someone who hadn’t even contested had been made a council member. The same old authoritarianism, posturing, and inner circle politics continue,” she added.

In the council, a new committee was formed with Rashidul Islam Rifat elected as president, Md Enamul Hasan general secretary. Muinul Islam organisational secretary, and Cynthia Jaheen Ayesha as spokesperson.

Shutdown is another economic peril

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scale shutdown well before the expiry of that deadline appears, at best, premature. Concerns over exclusion from dialogue are logical, but the shutdown of the revenue system is not.

This raises questions in government and business circles about the timing and intent of the protest. With formal discussions now scheduled to begin on July 1, this disruption is unnecessary.

That said, the government also bears responsibility for letting the crisis fester. Despite repeated calls for dialogue, the finance ministry has so far chosen to engage only with senior NBR leadership, sidelining protest leaders. This one-sided approach has deepened mistrust and reinforced perceptions that the reform process is being driven by control rather than consensus.

What began as a policy dispute is now increasingly viewed as a clash of egos between a defiant bloc of protesters and the NBR’s top leadership and the finance ministry. Personal mistrust and institutional battles are now influencing outcomes.

To restore normalcy and protect the broader economy, it would be prudent for the finance ministry to initiate direct engagement with the Reform Unity Council immediately. That means sitting down with those on the front lines of the protest, hearing their concerns in good faith, and working toward a negotiated settlement. Dialogue is not a concession – it is the foundation of any durable reform.

The protesters argue that they were excluded from the government’s June 19 committee tasked with drafting revisions to the ordinance, despite being the officials expected

to implement those changes. They also cite public remarks by the NBR chairman questioning the Council’s legitimacy and point to the abrupt transfers of five senior officials on June 21 and 22 as retaliatory.

As the shutdown continues, businesses are feeling the pressure. Export shipments are stalled, goods remain stranded at ports, and previously cleared consignments cannot move due to suspended customs scans.

Protesters say they are ready to meet with the finance adviser “at any time”. The upcoming July 1 meeting offers a pathway to resolution. But it is also a reminder that governance disputes, no matter how deep, require patience and respect for institutional process. The Reform Unity Council’s inclusion in that discussion is a positive development.

Still, the cost of reaching this point – a nationwide shutdown of customs and tax operations, disrupted trade, and shaken investor confidence – could have been avoided had both sides shown a greater willingness to engage earlier and more constructively.

Both sides must now step back from the brink.

Protesters need to recognise that halting core state functions indefinitely undermines the economy and the very public institution they work for.

For its part, the government should move swiftly to de-escalate. The path forward lies not in punitive transfers or continued exclusion of dissenting voices, but in principled dialogue and institutional inclusion.

There is no reason for that conversation to wait until July 1. With political will, it can – and should – begin now.