

GOVT SHUTDOWN US facing travel chaos as flights cut

AFP, Washington

Travelers across the United States were left scrambling to rebook flights as the government shutdown heaps pressure on the country's air traffic control system, prompting hundreds of flight cancellations at major American airports yesterday.

Airlines yesterday began implementing up to a 10-percent reduction in flights for 40 high-traffic areas of the country, complying with a Federal Aviation Administration order made on safety grounds.

More than 750 US flights scheduled for yesterday have been preemptively canceled Thursday, according to tracking website FlightAware.

American Airlines said it was reducing its flight schedules "amounting to 220 flights cancelled each day." Delta Airlines axed about 170 flights scheduled for yesterday, the carrier



said, while CNN reported Southwest Airlines nixed 100 flights set for that day.

The shutdown has left tens of thousands of air traffic controllers, airport security staff and others without pay, causing personnel shortages.

On Thursday, more than 6,400 US flights were delayed, with some 200 cancellations, FlightAware data showed, as passengers faced long lines at security checkpoints.

Major airports were impacted, with travelers at Boston and Newark airports facing average delays of more than two hours, and those at Chicago's O'Hare and Washington's Reagan National more than an hour.



Ukrainian firefighters extinguish a fire at the site of a Russian drone strike in Chuguiv, Kharkiv region, early yesterday. Ukraine's top general said Kyiv's troops were stepping up assaults on Russian forces around the eastern Ukrainian town of Dobropillia to ease pressure on the embattled hub of Pokrovsk.

PHOTO: AFP

Explosions heard near army-controlled Sudanese capital

Say witnesses as RSF agrees to US proposal for humanitarian truce

AFP, Port Sudan

Explosions were heard near the army-controlled Sudanese capital Khartoum yesterday, witnesses told AFP, a day after the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces said they agreed to a humanitarian truce.

Following the RSF's capture of El-Fasher, the army's last major stronghold in western Darfur, less than two weeks ago, the paramilitaries appear to be shifting their focus eastward towards Khartoum and the oil-rich Kordofan region.

Khartoum has seen relative calm since the regular army regained control this year, but the RSF -- at war with the army since April 2023 -- has continued its attacks in several regions, targeting both military and civilian sites.

A resident in Omdurman, part of the greater Khartoum area, told AFP on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal, that they were awoken "around 2 am (0000 GMT) by the sound of... explosions near the Wadi



Sayidna military base".

Another resident said they "heard a drone overhead around 4 am before an explosion struck near" a power station, causing an outage in the area.

In army-controlled Atbara, around 300 kilometres (186 miles) north of Khartoum, a resident said several drones "appeared over the city shortly after 3 am" yesterday.

"Anti-aircraft defences shot them down, but I saw fires breaking out and heard sounds of explosions in the east of the city," the resident said, also on condition of anonymity for security reasons.

Another Atbara resident told AFP: "I saw 10 drones over the city, and the anti-aircraft defences were shooting them down one by one, but at the same time, I saw fires in the east of the city."

There were no immediate reports of casualties, and neither the army nor the RSF have yet commented on the attacks.

Meanwhile, the Sudan Doctors' Union said that the RSF shelled a hospital in the besieged city of Dilling in South Kordofan on Thursday morning, causing several injuries, some critical.

The shelling "destroyed the hospital's radiology and medical imaging department", crippling one of the region's vital health facilities, the union said.

Dilling has been under RSF siege since June 2023.

India has 'largely stopped' buying Russian oil

Says Trump, hints at visiting the country next year

CNBC ONLINE

In a sign of easing pressure on India, US President Donald Trump said that trade talks with New Delhi were going well, and he could visit the country next year.

Trump who was speaking to reporters at the White House on Thursday said India "has largely stopped buying oil from Russia," and if Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended him an invite, he would visit the country in 2026.

Evoking memories of his last visit to India, Trump called Modi "his friend" and a "great man." In the recent months, relations between India and the US have been under strain.

Steep tariffs, \$100,000 fee for HIB visas, and Trump's repeated claims of having brokered a ceasefire between India and Pakistan and India's purchases of Russian crude are among issues that have led to a deterioration of ties between New Delhi and Washington in recent months, according to experts.

"Negotiations between New Delhi and Washington DC are ongoing and both sides appear optimistic about trade deal being reached by the end of the year, possibly even in the next few weeks," said Alexandra Hermann, head of Southeast Asia Research of Oxford Economics.

China's third aircraft carrier, the Fujian, enters service

REUTERS, Hong Kong

The commissioning of China's latest aircraft carrier this week marks a new chapter in its military modernisation effort but security analysts and regional diplomats say tough challenges lie ahead before it can be made fully operational.

President Xi Jinping attended the commissioning and flag-presenting ceremony of the Fujian in Hainan province on Wednesday, and boarded the vessel for an inspection tour, the official Xinhua news agency reported yesterday.

The Fujian is China's third aircraft carrier, with a flat flight deck and electromagnetic catapults for take-offs that make it a potentially far more powerful naval weapon than China's first two Russian-designed carriers.



Independent probe sought

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practices within the national women's team -- but her latest accusations were much more serious.

Jahanara claimed that she had given a detailed account of all the harassment she faced in a letter to BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury in 2022 but no actions were taken.

During that time, the media had reported that Jahanara had sent a letter to the BCB, but it was not discussed in light of any complaints of sexual abuse.

The women's wing chairman at the time Shafiqul Alam Nadel claimed that her letter had no mention of sexual harassment.

"Jahanara complained to me that Manjurul behaved badly with her regarding fitness and performance. After several complaints, we removed him from the women's side. But Jahanara never said anything about harassment and neither her complaint to the CEO delved into any description

of harassment," Nadel told The Daily Star yesterday.

Nadel in a separate interview to a news media yesterday, also said that if the allegations are not proven, the cricket board should take some action for the controversy being brought on former players, management and others.

Bangladesh batter and Jahanara's long-time teammate Rumana Ahmed corroborated many of her allegations.

"I have seen that when she used to practice, no one would communicate with her. One could sense that there was some anger towards her. She didn't share anything with us."

"The way she described things was actually how it happened. He [Manjurul] used to get too close while talking, would place his hands on shoulders. Even juniors complained about this to us," Rumana said.

Asked if she faced any harassment, she said: "No I did not. I would keep distance when he [Manjurul] would be

around."

She also questioned Nadel's interview where he defended some of Manjurul's behavior, "He [Nadel] never showed any concern. Whenever we would talk about the problems, he would always give assurances but would not take any steps."

"Strong steps should be taken. A chairman who we complained to, is talking in this way now although things were like that during his tenure. A proper investigation is needed," Rumana concluded.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) in a media release on Thursday said it would form a committee to investigate the allegations which will submit its findings within 15 working days.

However, given the severity of the issue, former Bangladesh men's team captain Tamim Iqbal called for an independent committee to investigate the matter.

"Although the BCB has formed an investigation committee, I believe a

separate and independent committee should be established under the National Sports Council or the government, with no one from the BCB involved," Tamim wrote on his social media page.

Bangladesh's sports advisor Asif Mahmud said the government will give all kinds of support to Jahanara and ensure "exemplary punishment" for the perpetrators.

"We will speak with the victim, and if she wishes to pursue legal action, since this is a criminal offence, we, on behalf of the government, will look into it with the most seriousness and ensure that those who were involved receive exemplary punishment," Asif said in an interview yesterday.

Meanwhile, Manjurul, currently in China, responded to the allegations in a Facebook post on Friday night, saying he welcomed BCB's decision to form an inquiry committee and is willing to face any investigation.

BNP strayed

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referendum before the national election are the same people who feared the result of student union elections. After their defeat in the Ducus [Dhaka University Central Students' Union] polls, they conspired in various ways to stop the polls at other universities," Taher alleged at the event, which was presided over by Nurul Islam Bulbul, ameer of Jamaat's South City unit.

At another programme, Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar said

23 hurt

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and near Kazi Sirajul Islam Mohila College Mor. Around 4:00pm, they brought out processions and clashed near the Boalmari municipality office, pelting each other with bricks.

Outnumbered, Shamsuddin's men retreated to Harun Shopping Complex. Nasirul's supporters then allegedly set fire to at least ten motorbikes, vandalised Shamsuddin's office on the complex's ground floor, and damaged several nearby shops.

Several senior upazila officials tried to intervene but failed to stop the violence. The clashes continued until around 5:30pm, when army personnel arrived and restored order.

Both sides later blamed each other.

Shamsuddin alleged that Awami League activists joined Nasirul's men in attacking his supporters and office, injuring 15 people and damaging portraits of Khaleda Zia.

Nasirul, however, claimed he was not present and that his men were attacked first. "One of our men was injured by a

ignoring the demand for a referendum under pressure from any political party could push the upcoming national polls into a crisis, reports BSS.

He urged the government to immediately issue an order to implement the July charter and announce a date for the referendum.

Speaking as the chief guest at an election rally in Khulna's Phultala upazila yesterday, the Jamaat leader mentioned that his party welcomes the proposal for dialogue among political parties to resolve the ongoing crisis.

machete. Bystanders later retaliated after bricks were thrown from the shopping complex," he said.

Mahmudul Hasan, OC of Boalmari Police Station, said three police personnel were injured during the clashes. "The situation is now under control," he added.

In Patuakhali, violence broke out around 9:00pm on Thursday, allegedly over who would get the nomination for the next national election -- BNP's Hasan Mamun or Gono Odhikar Parishad President Nurul Haque Nur, popularly known as "VP Nur."

Locals said supporters of both parties clashed at Dakshin Kupalbera intersection as they were returning after holding separate programmes in Kupalbera Bazar.

The injured have been admitted to Galachipa Upazila Health Complex.

Local Jubo Dal leader Ilias claimed Gono Odhikar Parishad men attacked them without provocation, while Aminul Islam, vice-president of Dhaka North Jubo Odhikar Parishad and brother of Nur, alleged BNP activists initiated the attack.

Five killed

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hospital in Afghanistan's southern Kandahar province, "five people died in today's incident -- four women and one man -- and six were wounded."

There was no immediate report of victims from the Pakistani side. The two countries quickly blamed each other for initiating the fire.

"While the third round of negotiations with the Pakistani side has begun in Istanbul, unfortunately, this afternoon Pakistani forces once again opened fire on Spin Boldak," Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said.

"The Islamic Emirate's forces, out of respect for the negotiation team and to prevent civilian casualties, have so far shown no reaction," the official added on X.

Pakistan denied the accusation and put the blame on Afghanistan.

"We strongly reject claims circulated by the Afghan side," Pakistan's Information Ministry said on X. "Firing was initiated from the Afghan side, to which our security forces responded immediately in a measured

and responsible manner."

Hamdullah Fitrat, deputy spokesman for the Taliban authorities, said "we don't know the reason" for the Pakistani fire, telling AFP that talks in Turkey were ongoing.

"Pakistan used light and heavy weapons and targeted civilian areas," said an Afghan military source who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Ali Mohammed Haqmal, head of Kandahar's information department said the firing was brief. Residents told AFP it lasted 10-15 minutes.

Pakistan confirmed that calm had been restored.

"The situation was brought under control due to responsible action by Pakistani forces and the ceasefire remains intact," the information ministry said. "Pakistan remains committed to ongoing dialogue and expects reciprocity from Afghan authorities."

Negotiations in Istanbul reached an impasse last week when it came to finalising ceasefire details, with each side accusing the other of not being willing to cooperate.

Onion prices soar by Tk 30 per kg

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He added that recent rainfall damaged part of the onions stored by farmers, worsening the supply crunch.

Several traders at Karwan Bazar said some wholesalers have started stockpiling onions, which may further destabilise the market.

Mohammad Mazed, general secretary of the Wholesale Onion Traders Association and also an importer, said fresh local onions will reach the

market in about six weeks. "Until then, there will be a shortage in supply," he said.

He added that onion imports from India have been suspended for a long time, putting extra pressure on the local market.

"To keep prices stable, imports must resume immediately; otherwise, prices may rise further," he warned, urging quick government action.

During visits to kitchen markets, including Shewrapara, Kazipara, Ibrahimpur, New Market,

Hatirpool, and Karwan Bazar, local onions were found selling for Tk 110-120 per kilogramme.

Mohammad Yusuf, owner of Yusuf Sabjibitan, said, "Last week we sold onions for Tk 80-90 per kg, but now it's Tk 115-120. We don't know why prices have suddenly increased. Wholesalers couldn't give us a clear answer."

Monir Hossain, a resident of Ibrahimpur, said, "I bought onions for Tk 80 per kg last week, but today it's Tk 110. If there was

a shortage, prices should have gone up gradually, not overnight."

"I now have to spend an extra Tk 60 for just two kilograms of onions. For people with fixed incomes like me, it's a real burden," he added.

Mohammad Rony, a grocery shop owner, said he stopped selling onions for a few days after the price hike as customers protested.

"But now I'm selling them at Tk 110 per kg since everyone else is selling at the same rate," he said.

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