

Passengers watch departure flight screens at Chicago O'Hare International Airport in Chicago. US aviation regulators issued an extremely rare ground stop of all flights across the country on Friday after a major communications outage, which the Department of Homeland Security said did not appear to be the result of any "nefarious attack".

PHOTO: AFP

Thousands of US flights cancelled, delayed in longest shutdown since 9/11

REUTERS, *Washington*

Airlines cancelled 4,500 US flights and delayed 4,400 more yesterday as the United States struggled to recover from the longest nationwide flight shutdown since the September 11, 2001, attacks.

Federal Aviation Administration head Bryan Bedford apologised for the disruption, saying the system was stable and he expected airline operations to largely return to normal by today.

The FAA issued a nationwide ground stop on Friday that halted nearly all departing flights for almost five hours due to a massive communications failure, which forced airlines to cancel nearly 10,000 flights and delay more than 7,000 others on Friday in one of the worst travel days in US history.

The issue prompted the White House to convene an emergency meeting in the Situation Room on Friday and federal agencies to scramble to determine if it was a cyberattack. Instead, Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said yesterday that FAA contractor L3Harris' LHX.N installation of at least one new router at a remote facility triggered the disruption.

"We're working to determine whether we had incompetence, meaning was it user error or installer error from L3Harris, or did they install a faulty router? We haven't determined what the fault was," Duffy said at a press conference.

L3Harris did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Its shares last traded down about 4% after hours on Friday.

The issue led to data overloading other communication centres. "We had over 1,000 connection attempts every four to five seconds, and what that did was (it) gave us issues with our communication with airplanes, and it also caused some disruption with our radar," Duffy added.

The issue affected communications at 17 of 22 en route centres — the FAA facilities that control aircraft during the cruise portion of a flight — across the country. Bedford said the FAA ordered the ground stop in case a centre lost total communications. "No facilities went dark. Nothing was fully lost," Bedford added.

The FAA said it was doing additional testing with L3Harris to see if there are any additional risks.

Delta Air Lines DAL.N, United Airlines UAL.O and American Airlines AAL.O all cancelled about 20% of their flights yesterday, while JetBlue JBLU.O cancelled 40%. Airlines have issued travel waivers allowing passengers to rebook flights for later dates without cost.

Though the FAA lifted the ground stop on Friday evening, the disruption for passengers was far from over, with tens of thousands of people stranded in airports. Airlines were trying to get flight crews and other personnel in position to resume flights.

The disruption stranded some college football teams on Friday before games scheduled for yesterday.

The FAA issued the ground stop because of an outage that appeared to affect a network that handles critical radio frequencies used by air traffic controllers to communicate with pilots, according to two airline officials. L3Harris oversees the network.

Friday's disruption is the latest and most dramatic sign of strain on a US air traffic control system beset by aging technology, equipment and communications problems and a shortage of several thousand controllers.

Two more die with measles-like symptoms

UNB, *Dhaka*

Two more children died with measles-like symptoms in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, taking the combined number of confirmed and suspected measles-related deaths to 1,306 this year.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), both deaths were classified as suspected, taking the suspected death toll to 1,201. Confirmed measles deaths remained unchanged at 105.

During the period, 1,084 new suspected cases and 83 confirmed cases were reported, taking the respective tallies to 246,646 and 25,111.

Since March 15, a total of 220,247 suspected measles patients have been hospitalised across the country, of whom 211,303 have recovered, DGHS data showed.

Four journos sent to jail in Tangail extortion case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Tangail*

A Tangail court sent four local journalists to jail yesterday after they were arrested in an extortion case filed in Sakhipur upazila.

Judicial Magistrate Jannatul Naim Mitu passed the order after police produced the accused before the court, said Court Inspector Md Lutfor Rahman.

The accused are Abdur Razzak Sujan, Sakhipur-Kalihati correspondent of NTV Online; Morshed Khan, Sakhipur correspondent of the Daily Manabkantha; Sheikh Monir, online in-charge of local weekly Sakhipur Barta; and Sanim Miah, an assistant to Sujan.

Fazlur Rahman Fazlu, joint general secretary of the Dariyapur union unit of BNP and president of the Sakhipur Upazila Merchants' Association, filed the case yesterday.

Locals detained the four in Deobari on Friday night and handed them over to police. They were shown arrested after the filing of the case.

While being escorted to the court, the accused journalists told fellow journalists that they had been framed after recording videos of some locals who were allegedly consuming drugs. They claimed that, after they refused hush money, Tk 8,000 was forcibly placed in one of their pockets to implicate them in an extortion case.

Meanwhile, Fazlu said he had filed the case at the request of villagers.

Sakhipur Police Station OC Murad Hossain said the case involved allegations of extortion. Police will submit a report after further investigation.

Gangs shake down 3 neighbourhoods

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Tk 1 lakh a month to keep their businesses running. They alleged that the collectors, operating in Emon's name, were now demanding an increase in the monthly payment. Traders in Rayerbazar's Banshpatti area said extortionists generally spared smaller shops. Major businesses now fear violent reprisals if they refuse to pay.

The extortion racket has also extended to property transactions, with both buyers and sellers forced to pay substantial sums whenever land or buildings change hands. Those who refuse face difficulties completing transactions or taking possession of their properties.

Building demolition contractors in the area reported similar intimidation. One contractor said he had secured a Tk 20 lakh demolition contract but was asked to pay Tk 5 lakh in extortion. After negotiations, he was forced to pay Tk 3 lakh. During the demolition work, men also took away construction rods worth Tk 50,000, Tk 1 lakh and Tk 1.5 lakh in three separate incidents, he alleged.

He said repeated extortion and theft of materials made it nearly impossible for contractors to accurately estimate costs and avoid heavy losses.

Meanwhile, repeated attacks on AJR Courier Service vehicles have left drivers and staff fearing for their lives.

Jayanta Chowdhury, assistant general manager of AJR Courier Service, told The Daily Star that the company's vehicles had been attacked at least 12 times in the capital since October 20, leaving six drivers injured. Several cases have been filed over the attacks.

The latest attack took place at 9:30pm on November 5, when an AJR covered van was intercepted in front of the Rayerbazar wholesale market and set ablaze.

Witnesses and company employees said 10 to 12 men on motorcycles vandalised the vehicle before throwing petrol bombs at it. Customers' goods and important documents belonging to various organisations were destroyed in the fire. The company initially estimated losses at Tk 1 crore to Tk 1.5 crore.

During a visit to the company's depot behind Sikder Medical College on Saturday, several vehicles were seen parked there. A mini pickup had extensive burn damage to its cabin and engine compartment. A company official said the vehicles had also been attacked and torched on November 5.

"The driver was severely beaten, and the attackers allegedly tried to burn him alive inside the vehicle. He remains hospitalised. "Two other drivers from this depot were also injured in separate attacks," the official added.

An AJR driver told The Daily Star, "We cannot drive our vehicles anywhere safely. There is no guarantee of when or where we will come under attack. Even returning home after duty has become frightening."

An official at the depot said the company operated more than 500 vehicles, mostly pickups, nationwide. "The continuing violence threatens to severely disrupt nationwide delivery operations," he said. He said police had contacted the company and offered assurances, but effective measures on the ground were urgently needed.

Sheikh Jahidul Islam, deputy commissioner of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Ramna Division, told The Daily Star that police were trying to arrest Emon but had yet to trace him. He said police were in regular contact with AJR authorities and had taken measures to protect the company's vehicles.

Involve retired officials in cleanliness drives in Dhaka

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country. Committees will be formed at the neighbourhood level, where they will serve as advisers or take responsible positions. We also want to involve young people alongside them," he said.

The retired officials and young volunteers will work with government officials to raise awareness about dengue prevention, waste disposal, keeping footpaths clear, drainage and household waste management.

Shahe Alam said the government had launched several cleanliness initiatives in Dhaka and other metropolitan cities, with committees involving different ministries and agencies beginning work on October 27.

To monitor cleanliness activities in Dhaka, 20 committees were formed around the regional offices of the two city corporations, each headed by a PMO director.

The committees include city corporation officials, executive magistrates, engineers, representatives from RAJUK, education and health authorities, Dhaka WASA and metropolitan police.

So far, the committees have visited 248 educational institutions, 129 government and private hospitals and clinics, 112 government residential quarters, 152 markets and shopping complexes, and 188 roads, parks, footpaths and public spaces.

Teachers were asked to raise awareness among students about cleanliness and tree plantation.

Shahe Alam said the premier also directed the authorities to establish more secondary transfer stations for household waste.

The meeting also decided that government accommodation allocations could be cancelled if residents failed to maintain proper waste management and hygienic conditions.

Shahe Alam said the committees had reported a shortage of cleaning workers in Dhaka.

The ministry has already approved recruitment of 2,000 workers for Dhaka South City Corporation and 1,500 for Dhaka North City Corporation, he added.

Dinesh Chandra championed

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Haque said Sen challenged this bias through extensive field research. While serving as headmaster of Victoria School in Cumilla in the 1890s, Sen travelled across Cumilla, Dhaka, and Chattogram to collect Bangla and Sanskrit manuscripts.

His research led to the publication of "Bangabhasha O Sahitya", a pioneering history of Bangla language and literature based on primary sources.

Sen also championed rural folk traditions despite criticism from Kolkata intellectuals, who questioned his interest in songs popular among Muslim and peasant communities.

Folk researcher Saymon Zakaria said Sen's "Maimansingha Gitika", published over a century ago, remains a cornerstone of Bangalee cultural identity.

Although Sen brought rural ballads to global attention, his reliance on secondary collectors and editorial standardisation raised questions about the gap between printed texts and evolving oral traditions.

"Dinesh Chandra Sen never conducted field research himself, which remains the primary ethnographic criticism of his work," Zakaria said, adding, "Sen nevertheless deserves credit for preserving the ballads and introducing them to wider audiences."

Zakaria stressed that contemporary researchers must engage directly with folk performers to understand evolving oral traditions.

Debkanya Sen, Sen's great-granddaughter, recalled how her family, alongside poet Jasimuddin, championed communal harmony and cultural unity across borders.

She said her great-grandfather considered Jasimuddin's poetry even more sacred than the Vedas for its message of humanity beyond religious boundaries.

"There were no barriers between Hindus and Muslims for our grandfather, and there are none among us today," she said.

Itihas Adda Coordinator Shamsuddoza Sajen also spoke.

The event was moderated by The Daily Star's Emran Mahfuz.

Local govt sidelined in urban planning

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consultation under pressure from real estate and industrial interests.

Citing the Oxford Economics Global Cities Index 2026, he said Dhaka ranked 515th among 1,000 cities, scoring 40.3 out of 100, while Mymensingh scored 18.7.

He criticised development authorities for approving high-rise buildings without consulting city corporations or residents, putting additional pressure on roads, utilities and public services.

Adil proposed ward-level and town-level coordination teams representing different social groups and institutional reforms to strengthen local governments.

Dhaka South City Corporation's chief urban planner Nazrul Islam called for ward-based action plans backed by databases of roads, drainage systems, footpaths and other infrastructure.

Development activities should be carried out through local government institutions under a single, realistic master plan prioritising public interests, he added.

Presenting the keynote paper, Md Nurullah, urban planner and former DSCC chief engineer, said the Local Government Division had only 90 staff members to oversee 5,479 local government institutions, while more than half of approved municipal posts remained vacant.

He proposed a National Physical or Spatial Planning Council chaired by the prime minister, a modern urban and rural planning law, and planning departments staffed by urban planners and geographic information system (GIS) specialists.

The dialogue was chaired by UDJFB President Matin Abdullah and moderated by General Secretary Hasan Imon.

Five journalists received the Best Urban Reporting Award 2026: Mostafizur Rahman of Dhaka Mail, Md Zahidul Islam of Kaler Kantho, Latiful Islam of Asia Post, Rashedul Hasan of Daily Sun and Gias Uddin Sajib of Channel 24.

The sixth edition of the magazine Dhakai was also unveiled.

Ex-BDR member's body found on Indian side of

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The OC said there were injury marks on the forehead and nose of the victim. The exact cause of his death can be known after autopsy.

He said the body had been recovered and sent to Khagrachhari District Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

Lt Col Md Ahsan Ul Islam, commander of BGB-43 Ramgarh Battalion, said BGB would take necessary steps in the matter in accordance with international border regulations.

Locals and family said Angthepru, a resident of the Fenir Kul area near the Ramgarh border, left home around 2:00pm Friday to collect grass for cattle. When he did not return home by 9:30pm Friday, his family members started searching for him.

His son, Thoi Angya Marma, said they searched everywhere but failed to locate him. Around 10:00pm Friday, they informed the BGB at the local Border Outpost (BOP). Subsequently, BGB also conducted a search.

Thoi Angya said they resumed the search early today with the help of villagers. At around 8:30am yesterday, they spotted a sack of grass near the Feni riverbank in the Fenir Kul border area. While searching the surrounding area, they found the body submerged in water on the Indian side of the river. He added that there were injury marks on his father's forehead, which was still bleeding at the time.

Meanwhile, after receiving information, BGB and police personnel went to the scene near boundary pillar № 2214/18-S. However, before their arrival, family members had already recovered the body from the other side of the river and brought it back to Bangladesh.

After preparing an inquest report, police took the body to the police station around 10:00am.

Proposed cyber law could stifle govt criticism

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Syed Abdal Ahmed, principal information officer at the Press Information Department under the information ministry, said people had faced harassment under the DSA and ICT Act.

He hoped the new cybersecurity law would not be used to suppress freedom of expression.

Sathi Akhter, arrested on October 26 after posting a video on social media saying, "I am now a victim after I voted for the BNP government", said she was detained simply for expressing her views following an alleged attack on her business establishment.

Shafiqul Alam, editor-in-chief of The Daily Waadaa, called for legal measures meeting international standards to prevent online character assassination, defamation and fabricated information while protecting freedom of expression.

New Age Deputy Editor Shahiduzzaman said democracy could not function without freedom of thought, expression and the media.

Free and fair elections alone could not ensure democracy, as people also needed access to information to make informed decisions, he added.

Lawmakers, journalists and rights activists attended the discussion, presided over by Odhikar Director ASM Nasiruddin Elan.

NCP lawmaker Abdullah Al Amin also spoke.

At the start of the event, Taskin Fahmina, advocacy director of Odhikar, presented a report prepared by the organisation.

80% of new healthcare workers to be women

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anniversary of the Institute for Developing Science and Health Initiatives (ideSHi) at a hotel in the capital.

Zubaida said millions of women in more than 90,000 villages across the country suffered from preventable illnesses, partly due to years of neglect of preventive healthcare.

The workers would raise awareness and deliver preventive services at the community level, she said, stressing the importance of research, testing and public trust in improving healthcare.

Dr Firdausi Qadri, eminent scientist and founder of ideSHi, said the institute worked on public health issues, including thalassaemia, cancer detection and genetic disorders, particularly inborn errors of metabolism.

Dr SM Ziauddin Hyder, special assistant to the prime minister on health affairs, said research, science, technology and innovation must be central to healthcare reforms.

He identified five priorities: disease prevention, stronger primary healthcare, pharmaceutical innovation, digital health and a sustainable research and development ecosystem.

ideSHi Chairman Ashfaq Qadri delivered the welcome address, while Abdul Muktadir, chairman and managing director of Incepta Pharmaceuticals Ltd, also spoke.

Legal gaps hinder justice for custodial torture victims

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agencies are taking advantage of this legal gap to get acquitted."

Rights activist Nur Khan Liton called for measures to ensure detainees were not subjected to torture. He suggested installing CCTV cameras in lockups and independent third-party monitoring of detainees before they were taken into law enforcers' custody.

ASK lawyer Md Shahinuzzaman said 194 incidents of custodial torture and death were recorded between 2021 and September 2026.

He said victims and their families often feared taking legal action against law enforcement agencies and other state forces.

Evidence collection was difficult and risky, while poor cooperation from forensic departments and investigation delays further complicated the process.

"Although investigation committees had been formed in most cases, their impartiality remained in question."

Supreme Court lawyer Molla Md Khalekuzzaman called for a special High Court bench to handle public interest litigation (PIL).

SC lawyer Asaduzzaman Babu said he had witnessed prison staff torturing inmates during his imprisonment and called for PILs over such incidents.

SC lawyer Probhat Tudu called for coordinated efforts, dedicated funding and a monitoring mechanism for PILs.

Imtiaz Hossain Rocky, younger brother of garment-waste trader Ishtiaque Hossain Jonny, who was tortured to death in police custody in 2014, recounted his family's struggle for justice.

He said two police informants were acquitted due to gaps in the law.

ASK Executive Director Tahmina Rahman delivered the welcome address, while its Chairperson ZI Khan Panna, a senior SC lawyer, chaired the discussion.