

WORLD

Strikes handicap Belgium transport

24-hour national shutdown disrupts air, rail, bus, subway and mail services

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels
chenweihua@chinadaily.com.cn

Belgium suffered a major disruption of its transport system from air to the ground and underground on Wednesday as a 24-hour general strike swept the nation.

All the flights to and from Belgium were canceled on Wednesday after the Skeyes air traffic control agency announced on Tuesday that it has "no certainty" on how many air traffic controllers would join the strike, but "forced to prohibit" national air traffic from 10 pm Tuesday to 10 pm Wednesday local time.

It means that no aircraft flying below 8,000 meters altitude — the space controlled by Skeyes — will be allowed to fly over the country. But government, military and emergency flights will be allowed.

The Brussels airport in Zaventem was almost empty on Wednesday morning, with only a dozen passengers standing in front of the Ethiopian Airlines counter trying to find their way around.

Bart De Koning, from the Belgian city of Kortrijk, said his flight to Kinshasa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, on Tuesday night was canceled. He and his friend are waiting for the airline to arrange a bus to Frankfurt, Germany, where there will be a flight in the evening to Kinshasa.

Koning said that he understands why people are striking. "They feel they have less money every year to pay bills and the government is not doing anything to help them," he said.

“

It's not easy because I have to go to office everyday by bus, unlike home workers, so I need help from car drivers.”

Eleonore, a digital communication manager

“But for me, the strike here is a waste of my time.”

The general strike was called three weeks ago by Belgium's three main trade unions, The General Federation of Belgian Labour, the Confederation of Christian Trade Unions and the General Confederation of Liberal Trade Unions of Belgium, following the breakdown of negotiations over wage increases. The unions have rejected the 0.8 percent limitation of wage increase in the next two years proposed by the government and demanded for a 1.5 percent rise.

Outside the Brussels airport terminal on Wednesday morning, Bjorn Vanden Eynde, secretary of the union CSC Transcom, and dozens of members in green jacket were picketing. CSC has members from aviation, maritime, postal services, road transportation, diamond sector and national television.

Eynde said that they are striking for better wages and pensions. He said companies are making a lot of money, but workers are not getting

their fair share. “We work hard, but there is no return,” he said.

He expressed that they will continue their actions if the government does not respond to their demands. But he added that the government has already indicated that it wants to sit down at the negotiation table immediately after the strike is over.

Charleroi airport, Belgium's second largest, was also closed on Wednesday.

Brussels Airlines, the flag carrier in Belgium, has canceled all of its 222 flights during the 24 hours, affecting an estimated 16,000 passengers.

'Not easy' for commuters

The national rail company, SNCB, said that about half of the usual trains are operating. Since last March, the SNCB has applied a system to ensure minimum service levels in the event of such collective action.

As most bus and Metro lines stop operating, roads in Brussels look more congested than usual with private cars and hurry pedestrians. Usually set-aside, bike sharing has become a popular choice for many commuters on Wednesday.

A digital communication manager, who only gave her name as Eleonore, was waiting for her friends to pick her up at the empty bus stop of Line 95. “It's not easy because I have to go to office everyday by bus, unlike home workers, so I need help from car drivers,” she said.

The strike has also caused disruption of other public services, including garbage collection and mail services. Trash is seen piling up on street side in some places. Bpost, the Belgian post service, is closed.

Chen Wenxin and Dong Yuwen contributed to this story.

Angry teachers



McGlone Academy special education teacher Acadia Yondorf (center) reacts during a rally as Denver public schoolteachers strike for a second day in Denver, Colorado, the United States, on Tuesday. A day earlier, more than half of the city's teachers walked off the job amid a pay dispute. MICHAEL CIAGLO/REUTERS

Briefly

KENYA 5 foreigners killed in light plane crashes

Five foreigners were killed when a light aircraft crashed in Kericho County in northwest Kenya on Wednesday, the police said. Regional police commander Edward Mwamburi said the deceased were all foreigners en route to Lodwar from the world-famous Masai Mara National Reserve when the plane developed mechanical problems and crashed at Kamwingi area in Londiani town, Kericho County. Witnesses said the plane might have developed a mechanical problem before hitting a tree. Passengers aboard were believed to be tourists and a pilot. Identities of the victims have not been established as investigations are underway.

SWITZERLAND Govt allows 3,500 work permits for Britons

The country will introduce a quota system allowing Britons to come to work in the country in the event Britain crashes out of the European Union without an exit deal. Under the system 3,500 British citizens coming to Switzerland for the first time will be allowed to work, the Bern government said on Wednesday. The cap for residence permits will be set at 2,100, with an additional 1,400 short-stay permits allowed. The quota, which will apply from March 30 to Dec 31 this year, is intended to replace the current Agreement of Free Movement of Persons between Switzerland and Britain which runs out March 30.

FRANCE Boxer protester on trial for punching police

A former boxer who became a hero to some of the country's "yellow vest" protesters after being filmed punching police officers during a demonstration in Paris goes on trial on Wednesday on charges that carry up to seven years in jail. Christophe Dettinger, 37, a former national light-heavyweight champion, was caught on camera on Jan 5 throwing a flurry of punches at an officer during clashes on a footbridge over the river Seine near parliament. The government describes the incident as a prime example of the violence that has characterized the "yellow vest" protests since they began in November.

XINHUA—REUTERS—AFP

International Education Column

If you are interested in this, please contact: i.education@chinadaily.com.cn

Trinity Western University's Great Wall MBA program
STEP INTO THE GLOBAL MARKETPLACE AS A LEADER

Study in China or Canada and equip yourself for strategic leadership, take part in forward-thinking conversations and learn real-world solutions for business in a rapidly changing world.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- World-class education in as little as 18 months
- Study in China and/or Canada
- Engage in a global classroom with other business leaders
- Expert faculty and instructors

Visit our website to learn more
TWU.CA/GREATWALLMBA

ESCP EUROPE BUSINESS SCHOOL

Bachelor in Management (BSc)

3 years in 3 countries!

Meet us in China this spring and discover more about the program for tomorrow's leaders!

Find out more! Applications for 2019 are open!

Admission Coordinator:
Cécile Marquet
+39 011 670 58 93
bachelorturin@escpeurope.eu

escpeurope.eu/bachelor

Discover the University of Dundee

One of the UK's Top 30 Universities

The Times / Sunday Times Good University Guide 2019 and The Guardian University Guide 2019

- Global Excellence scholarships of up to £5,000 per year of study
- The highest score globally for 'satisfaction with support' International Student Barometer, Autumn 2017
- 8th in the UK for student experience National Student Survey 2018
- 1st in Scotland and top 10 in UK for graduate prospects Complete University Guide 2019
- The Wall Street Journal, Lonely Planet and CNN have highlighted Dundee as one of the world's 'must visit' places

Learn more at: universityofdundee.cn

Lingnan University 嶺南大學

Admissions for 2019/2020 are now open to students. Act now by enrolling into one of our exciting postgraduate programmes!

Apply Now

- A range of Taught Postgraduate Programmes in different disciplines are offered
- The teaching pedagogy is to provide students with opportunities to learn about their chosen discipline through cross-cultural interactions and exchanges in the global field.
- Students have ample opportunities to stay ahead by participating in international symposiums or seminars and be up-to-date with the growing trends and challenges.

Enquires:
Division of Graduate Studies
(852) 2616 8720
dgs@LN.edu.hk

Wrocław University of Science and Technology

WUST is a region's leader and one of the best and most innovative technical universities in Europe

Contact us: <http://pwr.edu.pl/en/> <http://admission.pwr.edu.pl/> <http://dsm.pwr.edu.pl/en/>

Earn Your Masters Degree from Southern California's Premiere Polytechnic University

- Accountancy (accelerated)
- Geology
- Hospitality Management
- Interior Architecture
- Systems Engineering

Deadline to apply is April 1st
Visit www.ceu.cpp.edu/ch/degreeprograms today!