PAKISTAN NATIONAL CARRIER RESUMES NORMAL FLIGHTS AFTER STRIKE

News / Airlines



Pakistan's national airline resumed normal flight operations on Wednesday after employees called off an eight-day strike held in protest at a government plan to sell part of the carrier, officials said.

"Normal operations have been resumed," Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) spokesman Danyal Gilani said, adding that domestic and international flights would be running.

Two protesters were killed and eight wounded last week when striking employees and security forces clashed near Karachi's international airport.

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The strike, which grounded many PIA planes for several days, was the latest in a months-long series of protests against the plan to sell part of the airline, one of several companies the government has pledged to privatise under an International Monetary Fund (IMF) deal.

Strike leaders said late Tuesday they would end the agitation, but pressed for a delay in the privatisation.

"We have decided to end our strike on assurances given by a mediator," Suhail Baluch, chairman of PIA's Joint Action Committee, a grouping of unions, told reporters in Lahore on Tuesday.

Baluch said the privatisation should be postponed for a year, and the airline should be put under the watch of Khawaja Saad Rafique, the railway minister who has helped revive the country's railway system.

Baluch did not immediately answer telephone calls from Reuters to seek comment on Wednesday.

Last week, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif extended legislation to ban PIA employees from striking for six months, the government said in a statement.

The law specifies prison terms of up to a year and an unspecified fine for those convicted of infringements.

There have been no reports of striking employees being arrested under the act.

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