

Pakistan summons Indian envoy over Samjhauta Express disruption

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Islamabad: Pakistan summoned a senior Indian diplomat on Friday to convey concern over cancellation of a cross-border train service, authorities said.

The Delhi-bound Samjhauta Express, carrying both Indian and Pakistani passengers, was called back from the Wagah border on Thursday after Indian authorities informed Pakistani officials of farmers protest on the Indian side of the border.

The Indian farmers were holding a demonstration to demand compensation for destruction of their cotton crop, according to reports.

The train, which carried 193 Pakistani and Indian nationals, will depart for Delhi on Monday, said Pakistan Railways spokesman Rauf Tahir.

"Acting Deputy High Commissioner of India Raghuram was summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to express concern over the cancellation of operation of Samjhauta Express," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

"The cancellation caused inconvenience to more than 200 passengers from Pakistan and India," a foreign ministry statement quoted Mohammad Faisal, the Director General South Asia, as telling the Indian diplomat.

Pakistani authorities issued special certificates to allow the Indian nationals, whose visas to visit Pakistan were expired, to extend their stay in the country till Monday.

"The Government of Pakistan has taken all necessary steps to accommodate the stranded Indian passengers, who were not permitted to cross the border," the foreign ministry added.

A deadly bomb attack on the Samjhauta Express in February 2007 on the Indian side of the border killed 68 people, including 42 Pakistanis.

Pakistan has been demanding punishment to those involved in the terrorist attack blamed on extremist Hindus.

- IANS