

Goma awoke on Monday, January 29th, to a city eerily devoid of its usual whirring chaos.

A citywide motorcycle taxi strike, protesting a recent curfew imposed by the governor, had brought socio-economic activity to a grinding halt, sources say.

Reports indicated that the ubiquitous two-wheelers, usually a defining feature of Goma's streets, were nowhere to be seen, replaced by long lines of frustrated commuters and an unsettling stillness.

The governor's decision to restrict motorcycle taxi operation hours to 5 pm stemmed from concerns about rising insecurity. Some drivers, it was alleged, had been facilitating criminal activity.

However, for the city's residents, the consequences were immediate and tangible. Major intersections like the roundabout and the Rusthuru roundabout transformed into choke points, filled with bewildered passengers with nowhere to go.

Residents say that even taxi-buses, fearing reprisal from striking bikers, stayed largely off the roads, further amplifying the transportation paralysis.

Further, the impact extended beyond mere inconvenience. The education sector bore the brunt, with school buses and university shuttles staying grounded. Students and schoolchildren, facing impossible commutes, were forced to turn back home, their schedules disrupted and learning opportunities curtailed.

In the hotter neighborhoods of Majengo and Buhene, reports indicated that tensions flared. Angry bikers, alongside street children, barricaded roads with stones, halting any remaining semblance of movement. The situation escalated quickly, with reports of police intervention and arrests. Two motorcycles, symbols of the protest's fury, were reportedly set ablaze by demonstrators.

As of Monday afternoon, the full extent of the strike's impact remained unclear. The number of arrests and injuries was yet to be officially confirmed, but the disruption to daily life was undeniable. With tensions simmering, questions swirled about the strike's duration and the path to resolution.