

*France bracing for new round of nationwide strikes against government's pension reforms plan*

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Paris, February 6 (RHC)-- France is bracing for a new round of nationwide strikes so far this year against President Emmanuel Macron's plan to raise the retirement age, which has been dubbed by major trade unions as unfair. The protest action, which is slated to affect countryside train and air services this time around -- including the Eurostar line -- is scheduled to take place on Tuesday, French authorities said on Sunday.

Rail operator SNCF said only around half of the usual number of high-speed rail services on domestic lines would be running, while one out of four on the Eurostar line to London would not operate. During

past months, France has been witnessing frequent bouts of massive demonstrations against the government's proposed pension reforms plan.

The second round of the protests saw a record number of people taking part in a coordinated industrial action against Macron's plan to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64.

According to French labor unions, more than 2.5 million people marched across the country, causing a major disruption in refinery deliveries, public transport and schools. The leading CGT union said half a million people protested in the capitol Paris alone.

The number of people taking part in the second round of industrial actions on January 31 was slightly higher than the first nationwide demonstration, which took place on January 19th. The third bout of strikes is likewise expected to spawn crippling travel restrictions either within the country or afflict those who seek to use the transport services to head elsewhere in Europe.

France's civil aviation authority said delays and disruptions could be expected at airports even though it would activate minimum service guarantees. It said it had asked airlines to reduce flights by 20% out of Paris' Orly airport.

Also on Sunday, Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne offered to slightly soften the government's plans by letting some people who started work before reaching 22 years old to retire early, hoping to win the support of conservatives at parliament.

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