HALLOWEEN PROTESTS

French minister warns of 'very high' violence risk

Announces deployment of around 70,000 police officers

AFP, *Paris*

France's interior minister on Thursday evening warned of a "very high risk of public disorder" and announced the deployment of around 70,000 police officers for a new wave of protests this weekend.

France has been rocked by widespread anger over the rising cost of living and inequality, with nationwide demonstrations on October 17 degenerating into some of the country's worst rioting in years.

The Yellow Vest movement and student unions have called for a new day of protests today.

The demonstrations come in an increasingly tense political climate, with presidential elections six months away and far-right leader Marine Le Pen leading opinion polls.

"The day of October 31 presents a very high risk of public disorder," Interior Minister Laurent Nunez told reporters. Around 70,000 police officers and gendarmes will be deployed across France, matching the number mobilised a week ago, he said.



PHOTO: **PID**

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman returns home from Tokyo early yesterday, wrapping up his four-day state visit to Japan.

Binance hit by largest-known $6.3b crypto hack

North Korean group blamed; CEO blames 'compromised' engineer's laptop

REUTERS, *Singapore*

Hackers stole $6.3 billion from Binance, the world's biggest cryptocurrency exchange, in a record theft that analysts pinned on North Korea and said could shake faith in digital assets.

Cryptocurrency prices fell on the news, while Binance halted withdrawals and said it would cover the losses. About half the stolen assets were quickly frozen by stablecoin issuers such as Tether, Circle and the Trump-backed World Liberty Financial.

The bulk of the heist unfolded in around 20 minutes beginning late on Thursday and bore similarities to previous large attacks blamed on North Korea, according to US blockchain analysis firms TRM Labs and Chainalysis.

TRM said the attackers were able to order wallets that Binance uses to empty into hacker-controlled wallets, mirroring a 2025 heist at crypto exchange Bybit, which the US Federal Bureau of Investigation had attributed to Pyongyang.

Govt to recruit one lakh health workers in 3yrs

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and 24,856 in rural areas will be created in the second year, with the remaining 44,834 posts to be added in the third year.

At the meeting, HSD decided to send a proposal to the public administration ministry for creating the first 9,989 urban posts, but the decision is yet to be finalised, a health ministry official said, seeking anonymity.

"We held a meeting with the Cabinet Division in this regard. All the posts may be created at once, but recruitment will be carried out over three years. We are waiting for the meeting minutes to determine the next course of action," said the official.

HSD also instructed the authorities concerned to urgently fill existing vacancies for CHCPs, health assistants and family welfare assistants.

HOW WILL THE WORKERS OPERATE?

Muhit said the workers will visit households at regular intervals with specialised kits containing equipment to conduct basic tests.

They will talk to residents, assess their health conditions and use available medical records to provide appropriate health advice, he said.

The workers will be equipped with tablet computers and connected to a central system to access relevant health information and coordinate services.

"This will help us turn into reality our commitment to bringing healthcare to people's doorsteps."

Muhit said administrative restructuring within the government is a complex process that requires coordination among various departments and the alignment of grades. However, work on the plan has progressed considerably.

"A high-level committee has been formed [by the PMO] and it has already held several meetings. We have broadly agreed on bringing the three categories of workers together."

Work was under way on their training arrangements, and recruitment would begin in phases soon, he added.

MIXED REACTIONS AMONG HEALTH WORKERS

Fazlul Haque Chowdhury, member secretary of Bangladesh Health Assistant Association Central Coordination Council, said the proposed integration had not been discussed with the workers' body.

He said they were concerned about bringing workers with different educational qualifications, pay grades and employment statuses under a single cadre.

Health assistants are recruited in the 16th grade with HSC qualifications under the revenue budget, while family welfare assistants are appointedin the 17th grade with SSC qualifications. CHCPs are in the 16th grade but work under a trust, he said.

"We have different recruitment rules and service structures. Unless the authorities share the proposed structure with us, we cannot understand how the integration will work. There are mixed reactions among health assistants, and many are concerned about the move," he told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, Ferdusi Akter, general secretary of Bangladesh Family Welfare Assistants' Association, said they had also not been consulted about the government move.

She said health assistants and family welfare assistants have distinct responsibilities, and it was unclear how they could perform the same duties.

"We do not know how this will work... We have heard the health minister speak about this in the media, but the authorities have not sought our opinions," she added.

When asked, several health ministry officials said top officials of all the departments concerned were involved in the process and that the ministry was unlikely to hold any meetings with the associations on the plan at this stage.

"It is a policy decision of the government, and public employees are bound to follow it. There is no need to consult them on this at this stage," said one of the officials.

Global leaders urge Dhaka to speed up reforms

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The resolution said an extension was appropriate provided Bangladesh advances significantly on domestic reforms to address its persistent structural vulnerabilities.

It invited Bangladesh to continue implementing its national smooth transition strategy with UN support, to cooperate with bilateral, regional and multilateral development and trading partners, and to report regularly on progress in its annual submission to the Committee for Development Policy.

The Uruguayan representative, who moved the proposal on behalf of the G-77 and China, also urged reforms in key areas for a sustainable and smooth graduation.

The representatives of the European Union, Canada, and France made similar calls. The representative of Canada also spoke for Australia and New Zealand.

Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Irene Z Khan, said in a statement, "Bangladesh is graduating from the LDC category not because the international process calls for it, but because graduation is an aspiration of our people. It is a national imperative, and our government is firmly committed to achieving that goal."

Local entrepreneurs have called for lower production costs, faster issuance of trade licences and certification, adequate energy supply, more efficient land, air and sea ports, warehouses at port areas, skills development, and trade deals with major partners.

They also say bank interest rates remain high and the banking sector is vulnerable due to defaulted loans, making major reforms necessary.

Bangladesh has so far signed trade deals with Japan and South Korea to retain duty-free market access after graduation, and is negotiating with nearly a dozen other countries.

Nearly 75 percent of its exports are LDC-induced, and exporters currently enjoy duty-free access to 38 countries and trade blocs.

Product and market diversifications are needed as exports remain dependent on RMG, and both.

Bangladesh needs to reduce production costs and improve the business environment to make graduation successful, said Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

He also suggested diversifying the export basket, including within RMG and into pharmaceuticals and other promising products.

"Restoring macroeconomic stability will be extremely critical to protect export competitiveness. Persistently high inflation is pushing up domestic costs, causing the real exchange rate to appreciate against Bangladesh's major competitors," said Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, chairman of the think tank Research and Policy Integration for Development (RAPID).

He said securing a trade arrangement with the EU, Bangladesh's largest export market, should be an early priority, as should export diversification.

Bangladesh now has three more years to provide export subsidies under the flexibilities available to LDCs. Rationalising the tariff structure would support diversification but has received limited attention, he said.

Many priorities for graduation have been discussed extensively, and recommendations are already set out in the smooth transition strategy and other studies, Razzaque added.



PHOTO: **STAR**

DHAKA AIRPORT
a beautiful chaos

RBR



The crowd spilling out of the airport exit was innocence in its rawest form -- untamed, unpolished, almost defiant of the civility we expect in such spaces. It was less disorder than youthful abandon.

Families who had come to receive their loved ones returning after years abroad seemed locked in an unseen competition -- who would spot the hero first, who would hug him tighter, who would lift him off the ground in triumph. I silently thank God they have not yet learned to toss their hero in the air to mark his homecoming.

If only poor Odysseus had been met with such fervour at the end of his Odyssey. For our migrant worker heroes, the long, arduous journeys in distant lands are nothing short of epic voyages, filled with trials and transformations. Yet I struggle to reconcile the family's unrestrained energy -- the spontaneity that spills over and disrupts the quieter returns of those not hailed as heroes.

That hoard of people waiting tirelessly in the departure halls, unconcerned with rules or restraint, fractures the image of our nation and highlights the airport's inability to enforce basic crowd management.

The arrival halls resemble a theatre of confusion, with families spilling into every corner, queues dissolving into restless crowds, and announcements drowned beneath the din of voices. Congestion, poor signage, trolleys wedged in narrow aisles compounded by the trolley shortages, and idle e-gates compound the problem, leaving travellers vulnerable to delays and safety hazards. Officials admit that rising passenger loads place immense pressure on operations, particularly during peak travel seasons.

Customs adds another layer to the ordeal. Officers can stop you almost anywhere, with no clear line or managerial check to guide the process. You shuffle forward, hoping to avoid the harassment of having your suitcase pried open in public. The indignity is not in contraband -- there is none -- but in the spilling out of the private contents of a life laid bare before strangers. The only "offense" you might carry is a lily bulb or an air plant tucked away, a harmless souvenir treated with suspicion.

The inexperience reflects poorly on Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport's (HSIA) failure to maintain order in its incoming and outgoing traffic. HSIA, designed for 8 million passengers annually, handled over 12.72 million in 2025 -- including more than 1.13 million migrant workers and international travellers. In typical Dhaka fashion, making do with limited means, Dhaka airport has absorbed the lion's share of passenger growth, its strained infrastructure struggling to keep pace with steadily rising passenger numbers.

HSIA is a place where order teeters perpetually on the edge of collapse, and where the sheer volume of passengers overwhelms the fragile systems meant to contain. We wait, almost impatiently, for the new international third concourse with upgraded technology and modern management. Until that vision materializes, the airport feels less like a global gateway and more like a mufassil train junction -- chaotic, noisy, and bursting at the seams.

And perhaps, like Odysseus navigating storms and sirens, our migrant workers too must endure the turbulence of homecoming -- not on the high seas, but in HSIA, where every embrace is epic, every reunion theatrical, and every passage through customs its own trial.

MY DHAKA

Rooppur Unit 1

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systems, as well as protection and safety mechanisms.

"As reactor power is progressively increased, the performance of major plant systems is monitored and verified under operating conditions," Zahedul said.

The process includes checks on turbine control and protection systems, the generator and related equipment to ensure all systems function properly before commercial operation.

Under the current phase, known as Stage C, reactor power will be gradually increased to produce steam, drive the turbine and generate electricity. Power output will be raised step by step while engineers closely monitor the turbine and associated systems, he added.

Officials stressed, however, that the start of the power-generation process does not mean electricity is yet being supplied to the national grid. Unit 1 must complete a series of tests under Stage C before synchronisation with the grid can take place.

The Bangladesh Atomic Energy Regulatory Authority approved the unit's transition to Stage C on Thursday, clearing the way for the power-generation tests.

Officials hope the unit will begin supplying electricity to the national grid by the end of this year.

Built on the banks of the Padma River in Ishwardi, Pabna, at a cost of $12.65 billion with Russian financial and technical assistance, the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant comprises two VVER-1200 reactors. When both units become fully operational, the facility is expected to add 2,400 megawatts of electricity to the national grid.

We were chased

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"We don't believe everything he says outright. We are verifying each piece of information. Based on his information, we recovered a black motorcycle. But we have not yet been able to verify whether it is the motorcycle in question."

Asked about Dip's statement of being chased by people in uniform, the PBI officer said Dip had told the investigators that he and Tahsif ran in different directions after seeing two police officers.

"Nobody chased them. There are security guards at a nearby garment factory. Perhaps they mistook them for police personnel and ran. We cannot say who they actually saw without verifying the information."

According to Dip, the two separated sometime between 1:30am and 2:00am on Wednesday, but he could not say which direction Tahsif went, said the PBI officer.

However, Tahsif's father AKM Enayetul Karim dismissed Dip's claim that they had fled after seeing two people who appeared to be police officers, calling the claim ridiculous. He also claimed that his son knew how to swim.

"I don't think he has ever been to that area [Mazar Basti]. A defence officer would run away from the police is absurd. That is simply out of the question," he told reporters yesterday.

Earlier, he alleged that his son was murdered and his body dumped into the river.

Tahsif, former Bangladesh Air Force flight lieutenant, left his Uttara home on Tuesday evening and did not return. River police recovered his body from the Turag near Rajabari Ghat in Uttarkhan on Wednesday afternoon.

His name came to the limelight following allegations that he had circulated a video clip purportedly showing ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina leaving the country by aircraft from Kurmitola Airport on August 5, 2024.

PBI took Dip into custody from his Mohammadpur house early yesterday.

Jubaida Begum, who runs a tea stall in the Mazar Basti area, said she had noticed a motorcycle without a number plate parked there since Wednesday morning.

Police came to the area in a van yesterday morning and took the bike away, she said, adding that they later brought the vehicle back.

Around 12:30pm, Additional DIG Enayet and Additional Superintendent of Police Mostafa Kamal of River Police visited the area with Dip.

Asked why Tahsif and Dip visited the area around 2:00am, Enayet said the investigators were examining the circumstances.

"There must have been a reason. We are looking into it. We cannot confirm anything without verification."

He said the investigators were using technological evidence to establish when Dip was in the area and whether his statement matched the available information. Dip reportedly returned home after 2:30am on Wednesday.

Enayet, however, declined to disclose all the information provided by Dip, saying unverified details could mislead the public.

No case had been filed as of 8:00pm yesterday.

Talking to this newspaper yesterday, Additional Inspector General of River Police Md Rezaul Karim said they contacted Tahsif's family several times regarding the matter.

"They said they were considering it," he said, adding that the police would file a case if the family did not do so by today.