Clashes Erupt in Belgium Anti-Austerity Demonstration

Brussels, November 7 (RHC)-- Clashes have broken out between police and people protesting against the new Belgian government's austerity measures in the capital, Brussels, leaving a number injured.

The clashes came after a two-hour peaceful march by some 100,000 workers in the city on Thursday. Belgian police deployed tear gas, water cannon and pepper spray against the demonstrators when some of them began hurling objects at officers, torching bins, overturning cars, and setting off fireworks.

The protest marked the start of a month-long campaign against the economic and social reforms announced by Belgium's new center-right coalition government led by Prime Minister Charles Michel.

The austerity plans, which are intended to save 11 billion euros during the new Belgian administration's term in office, include an increase in retirement age as well as taxes.

Protest organizers say the government's policies are unjust as they target workers instead of businesses. However, the government claims it needs the austerity measures to keep the budget deficit within European Union constraints. It also claims that businesses need more lenient tax policies to become more competitive in the global market.

European countries are struggling with an economic crisis that erupted in early 2008, leaving millions unemployed and in financial distress. According to official figures, over 125 million people across the

European Union -- about a quarter of the bloc's entire population -- either live in poverty or are at the risk of poverty.

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