

French tourism industry in turmoil over violent unrest in Paris

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Dhaka: Since the death of a 17-year-old Nahel during a traffic stop in a Paris suburb on June 27, hotels have been suffering a wave of cancellations of reservations in all the territories affected by the damage and clashes, said Chef Thierry Marx, President of the main association for hotel and catering industry employers.

On June 30, Marx said, he was receiving daily alerts from industry professionals who have suffered "attacks, looting and destruction of their businesses, including some restaurants and cafes".

"Our establishments are intrinsically hospitality venues, and sometimes even refuges and places of help in crisis situations. They must not suffer the consequences of anger that they have not aroused and we condemn these actions," he added.

Marx urged the authorities to do "everything" to guarantee the safety of people in the hotel and catering industry in the world's most popular tourist destination.

The French retail federation (FCD) also called for reinforced police security around stores, said Managing Director Jacques Creyssel.

The riots "gave rise to real scenes of looting", he added, with "over a hundred medium and large food or non-food stores vandalised, looted or even burned".

These incidents "are extremely serious and have an extremely heavy cost", according to Creyssel, who said he had asked the economy, interior and trade ministers to act.

The Paris Ile-de-France Chamber of Commerce said it was ensuring its teams were mobilised to "provide the necessary support and technical assistance, particularly in terms of continuing operations, insurance compensation, etc..." for traders and managers of affected companies.

The GHR organisation for independent hotels and restaurants in France deplored that "foreign (TV networks) are starting to show images of Paris on fire and blood, which does not correspond to reality".

"Will the violence and riots continue and cause a real wave of cancellations? That's the risk," Managing Director Franck Trouet said.

"Asian tourists, in particular, who are very concerned about security, may not hesitate to postpone or cancel their trip," he warned.

Didier Arino, Managing Director of the Protourisme firm, said, "Tourists who know us well, like the Belgians or the British, who also have problems themselves in their suburbs, will be able to make sense of things."

However, in the end, he said, "It's as if we were doing a negative publicity campaign worth several tens of millions of euros for destination France."

The confederation of tobacconists was also indignant at the "looting and ransacking of shops, including 91 tobacconists during these last days of clashes."

"If it continues like this, it can significantly complicate the organisation of the Olympic Games, especially since a good part of the events will take place in Seine-Saint-Denis," a disadvantaged area in the north of Paris, said Jean-Francois Rial, president of the Paris Tourist Office.

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