

France to make masks compulsory in enclosed public places



French President Emmanuel Macron

Reuters | Paris

France will in the next few weeks make it compulsory for people to wear masks in shops and other enclosed public spaces to stop a resurgence of the COVID-19 outbreak, President Emmanuel Macron said yesterday.

The virus, which killed more than 30,000 people in France, has been on the decline, but Macron said it was spreading again in some places as France opens up beaches, bars and restaurants after a two-month lockdown.

"We have some signs that it's coming back a bit," Macron said in an interview with French broadcasters. "Faced with that, we must anticipate and prepare."

"I want us, in the next few weeks, to make masks compulsory in enclosed public places. I ask fellow citizens to wear

masks as much as possible when they are outside, and especially so when they are in an enclosed space," Macron said.

Up to now, France has required people to wear face coverings on public transport and in public spaces where social distancing is not possible, but has not mandated the wearing of masks in shops.

Macron, speaking on the Bastille Day national holiday, also said he wanted COVID-19 testing available for everyone, without having to be referred by a doctor.

The biggest challenge France faced in the next six months was an expected wave of joblessness as firms hit by the epidemic lay off workers, he said.

He also said he was working with his government to ease the impact, especially on young people emerging into the workforce this summer after they finished their studies.

Channel blocked with disposable foam food take away containers in Lagos



People walk past a drainage channel blocked with disposable foam food take away containers in Lagos

Police patrolling a street in Medellin



Women wearing personal protective equipment look at mounted police patrolling a street in Medellin amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mother of Korean Air chief gets suspended sentence for assault

- The family has come under scrutiny in recent years after being embroiled in multiple criminal probes

- Charges include cursing, kicking, slapping, and throwing a pair of scissors

AFP | Seoul

A South Korean court yesterday found the mother of Korean Air's chief executive guilty of repeatedly assaulting her employees, but gave her a suspended sentence.

Lee Myung-hee is the matriarch of the Cho family, which controls the Hanjin transport and logistics conglomerate where her son Cho Won-tae succeeded her husband as chairman following his death last year.

The family has come under scrutiny in recent years after being embroiled in multiple criminal probes over assault, embezzlement and smuggling luxury goods, as well as a power struggle at the Hanjin group,



Lee Myung-hee, matriarch of the Cho family, was given a suspended sentence for abusing staff

which includes Korean Air.

Lee, 70, faced multiple allegations of assault against her staff -- from drivers and housekeepers to construction workers -- including cursing, kicking, slapping, and throwing a pair of scissors.

Seoul Central District Court convicted her on Tuesday but gave her a two-year jail sentence suspended for three years, and 80 hours of community service, on the grounds of her age and the fact that the victims did not want her to be punished.

"In contrast to Lee's position as the wife of the chairman of a conglomerate, the victims, as drivers or housekeepers, had no choice but to endure Lee's unfair actions," the court said, according to Yonhap news agency.

It added Lee had "admitted her responsibility" and reached an agreement with the victims, factors which were taken into consideration.

The most notable incidents involving the family have centered on Lee's two daughters -- who previously held manage-

ment positions at Korean Air -- who became viral sensations for temper tantrums dubbed the "nut rage" and "water rage" scandals.

Her younger sister Cho Hyun-min was accused two years ago of throwing a drink into an advertising agency manager's face during a business meeting.

YOU KNOW WHAT

Cho Hyun-ah, the elder daughter, made global headlines in 2014 for kicking a cabin crew chief off a Korean Air plane after she was served macadamia nuts in a bag rather than a bowl.



China rushes to contain floods after record rainfall

- Flooding along the river -- the world's third longest -- has been an annual summer scourge since ancient times

Shanghai

Soldiers erected sandbag flood barriers in a city near China's largest freshwater lake after the heaviest rainfall in nearly six decades drenched the swollen Yangtze River basin.

The vast Yangtze drainage area has been lashed by torrential rains since last month, leaving 141 people dead or missing and forcing the evacuation of millions more across several provinces.

Flooding along the river -- the world's third longest -- has been an annual summer scourge since ancient times, but this

year's inundation has been especially severe.

The downpours have intensified since last week, causing dozens of Yangtze-basin waterways to post record-high water levels, while more than 400 had exceeded warning levels, Vice Minister of Emergency Management Zheng Guoguang said on Monday.

"Since June, average precipitation in the Yangtze river basin has been the highest since 1961," he told a news briefing in Beijing.

Authorities had been monitoring a flood crest as it neared Wuhan, the metropolis of 11 million that the Yangtze winds through and which had already suffered the vast number of China's deaths and cases in the coronavirus pandemic, which first emerged in the city.

They said river levels were decreasing after the crest passed Wuhan on Monday with no re-

ports of major new flooding there.

Record rainfall

Concern was now shifting downstream to Poyang Lake, which drains into the Yangtze in hard-hit Jiangxi province and is the largest freshwater lake fully within China's borders.

State-run Xinhua news agency said water levels at a key hydrological station on the lake broke a record set in 1998, when more than 4,000 people were killed in China's worst flooding in recent decades.

State media reported that more than 100,000 people -- including rescue personnel, soldiers, and ordinary citizens -- had been thrown into flood-control efforts in Jiangxi.

Around half of those were deployed at Poyang Lake, where many dikes and levees had collapsed, state television reported.

In the city of Jiujiang, near

where the lake drains into the Yangtze, soldiers wearing orange life vests fortified the river bank with a wall of sandbags piled as high as a man.

The Yangtze's length is exceeded only by the Nile and the Amazon, and its drainage basin is home to around 400 million people.

Summer rains and seasonal glacial melt in the river's Tibetan plateau headwaters cause routine annual flooding.

But environmentalists say the threat has worsened over the decades due in part to rampant construction of dams and levees that have cut connections between the river and adjacent lakes and floodplains that for centuries had helped absorb the summer surge.

Conservationists also warn that the rapid melting of Himalayan glaciers due to climate change may lead to more dangerous summer flooding.



Chinese soldiers erect a sandbag barrier along the shore of Poyang lake after heavy seasonal rains in Jiujiang, in China's central Jiangxi province