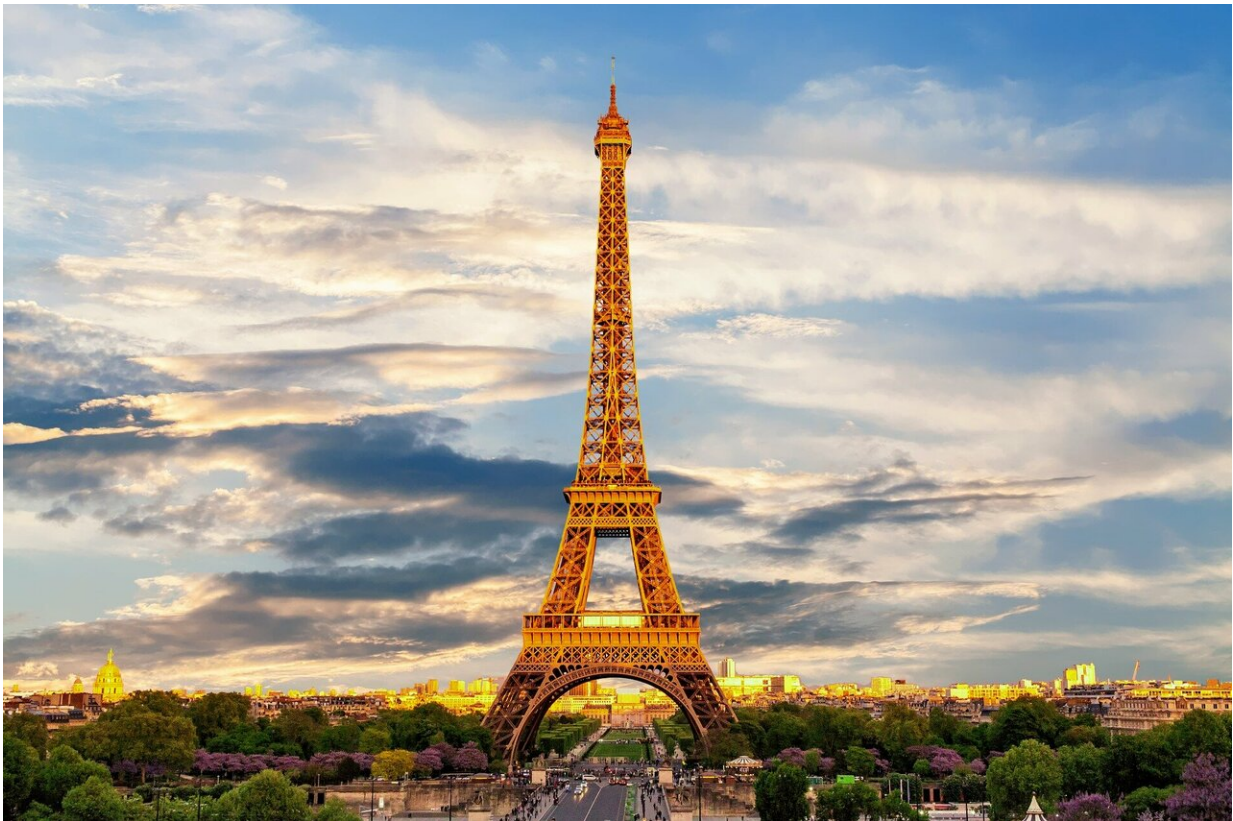


France's Macron to address nation over coronavirus Thursday

March 11 2020



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President Emmanuel Macron will make a televised address on France's response to the coronavirus outbreak Thursday, as authorities prepare for a surge in cases in the coming weeks.

France has reported 33 coronavirus deaths and nearly 1,800 infections, according to the latest figures.

Macron's prime-time address will come just three days ahead of the first round of nationwide municipal elections, which some officials are urging to postpone because contagion fears could keep many voters from turning out.

The government has so far ruled out any delay to the vote, and has largely shied away from drastic containment measures for the country as a whole, excepting regions that have reported clusters of cases.

"Our [goal](#) is not to shut down the country," [government](#) spokeswoman Sibeth Ndiaye said at a press conference after a weekly cabinet meeting.

Macron had warned Tuesday that France is "just at the beginning of this epidemic".

Ndiaye would not be drawn on what steps might be taken if France raises its epidemic alert to the maximum level three, as widely expected in the coming days.

"I cannot tell you what specific measures will be taken," she said, though one move will be to ensure that [infected people](#) stay at home as far as possible, as opposed to overwhelming hospitals at a time when they are still dealing with the annual winter flu [epidemic](#).

"The question is how to ensure that we handle the most serious cases," she said.

But she indicated that a widespread clampdown on people's movements, as implemented by Italy this week, was unlikely at this stage.

"We are taking proportionate measures, which are different from those taken by Italy," she said. "Italy has taken measures that did not stop the virus' spread."

Meanwhile, Macron's office said his chief of staff Patrick Strzoda, who was confined to his home this week after coming into contact with an infected person, tested negative for the new coronavirus.

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