French PM unveils plan to ease Covid-19 lockdown citing risk of economic disaster, admits 'second wave' still possible

By: RT
28/04/2020



France's Prime Minister Édouard Philippe has announced that the country will begin to ease out of lockdown on May 11, adding that the country has never before faced such a situation - even in wartime.

Speaking in parliament on Tuesday, Philippe said people will need to be cautious as the strict national lockdown ends to avoid setting off a second wave of infections which he said would "strike a weakened hospital fabric" and impose a "re-confinement" that would ruin progress made during the initial restriction period.

The PM said the lockdown measures imposed to curb the spread of the virus helped save at least 62,000 lives in a month, according to one study, but keeping it in placed meant risking economic collapse. French people would now have to learn to live with the virus and take precautions to protect themselves, he added.

Philippe insisted that there would be enough protective masks available to meet the country's needs after the lockdown ended.

While the plan now is to begin easing restrictions on May 11, the lockdown won't be removed if the health indicators are bad, he added. It will depend on new cases of the infection dropping below 3,000 per day.

If the lockdown is lifted, it will be followed by a monitoring phase in place until June 2, Philippe said. Social distancing measures will still be in place after May 11, with gatherings of more than 10 people banned, indoors and outdoors.

Government forms which had been needed to explain the purpose of people's trips outside will no longer be needed unless a person is traveling more than 100km.

Though the lockdown may be eased, Philippe said he would be tabling a bill to extend the state of emergency until July 23.

As part of continued precautions, shopkeepers will be allowed to demand that shoppers wear masks, and booking for train journeys will be compulsory to allow for social distancing. High school students will also be required to wear masks, while citizens over 65 will be encouraged to remain cautious when going out.

As of April 28, France has reported more than 166,000 confirmed cases of Covid-19 with over 23,000 deaths due to the disease, making it one of the worst affected countries worldwide.