

French nursing homes employees take to streets in protest

Paris: Employees of a major group of French nursing homes have taken part in protests across France to call for better pay amid the coronavirus crisis.

Protesters gathered outside homes owned by the Korian group in Paris, Lille and other French cities in response to a call from several unions.



A woman holds a sign reading in French "Macron's government medals: lies, incompetence, endangering the lives of others, cynicism, dictatorship on the move" during a protest in Marseille's Old Port, in France. Credit: AP

The government is formally opening two months of talks with healthcare workers on Monday over changes to France's public health system, which has suffered from decades of cuts.

Korian is one of the market leaders in the provision of care for older adults. It has more than 850 facilities in Europe, employing more than 53,000 people and caring for 300,000 people in France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain.

In France, where Korian manages nearly 300 care homes, the group is facing several lawsuits filed by families who have lost loved ones during the coronavirus pandemic. Prosecutors have opened police investigations.

France has counted more than 14,000 COVID-19 deaths among nursing home residents, accounting for nearly half of the country's total of more than 28,300 deaths.

Facing anger from healthcare workers, President Emmanuel Macron [promised a "massive" investment plan for France's public health sector. Details will be unveiled in July.](#)

The government said that all staff working in public hospitals and nursing homes in the regions hardest hit by the virus will get a €1500 (\$2500) bonus from the state.

Doctors and nurses have long denounced low salaries, staffing shortages and overwhelmed services in hospitals.

Before the virus crisis, emergency room workers held strikes and protests for months demanding more hiring and funding.

The number of people in hospital with coronavirus in France fell by 387 to 16,798 on Monday, resuming a gradual decline that had been interrupted on Sunday.

The health ministry said numbers in intensive care fell by 46 to 1609, continuing a more than six-week downtrend.

France did not publish a new death toll on Monday.

A total of 28,367 people had died from the virus as of Sunday.

AP