

Louvre hardens against heists

Surveillance cameras, security staff among over 20 emergency measures planned

PARIS: The head of the Louvre Museum said that new surveillance cameras and anti-intrusion systems will soon be installed at the Paris landmark after last month's stunning crown jewels heist.

The cameras – some 100 of them – will be up and running by the end of next year while anti-intrusion systems will start to be put in place within two weeks, Louvre director Laurence des Cars said on Wednesday.

She described the systems as equipment that will prevent intruders from getting close to the museum buildings but did not offer specifics.

The new surveillance cameras will try to ensure "complete protection of the museum's surroundings," she said.

"After the shock, after the emotion, after the assessment, it's time for action" at the world's most visited museum, des Cars told the Committee of Cultural Affairs of the National Assembly.

Taking action: Visitors queuing up to enter the Louvre Museum in Paris. Last month's heist pushed the museum to beef up its security. — AFP



She said it was all part of more than 20 emergency measures that will be implemented.

The new measures also include the creation of a "security coordi-

nator" position at the museum, and the job has been posted this month, she added.

On the day of the heist, it took thieves less than eight minutes to

force their way through a window into the Apollo Gallery with the help of a freight lift and steal the €88mil (RM421mil) trove.

Des Cars unveiled some new details about the security breach that allowed the Oct 19 robbery, saying the power tools used by robbers to cut through the display cases were disc cutters meant for concrete.

"It's a method that had not been imagined at all when the display cases in the Apollo Gallery were replaced in 2019," she said.

At the time, they had been designed primarily to counter an attack from inside the museum with weapons, she added.

Footage from museum cameras show that during the robbery, the display cases "held up remarkably well and did not break apart," she said.

"Videos show how difficult it was for the thieves."

Des Cars stressed security improvement is a priority of the decade-long "Louvre New

Renaissance" plan launched earlier this year, with an estimated cost of up to €800mil (RM3.84bil), to modernise infrastructure, ease crowding and give the *Mona Lisa* a dedicated gallery by 2031.

With the Louvre crumbling under the weight of mass tourism, des Cars has restricted the daily number of visitors to 30,000 in recent years.

The famed glass pyramid inaugurated in 1989 was meant to welcome about four million visitors a year, she recalled. This year, already more than eight million people visited the Louvre.

"The extensive modernisation that the Louvre underwent in the 1980s is now technically obsolete, with equipment that has been over-performing for 40 years," des Cars said.

On Monday, the Louvre announced it was temporarily closing some employee offices and one public gallery because they were structurally fragile. — AP