



This file photo shows an interior view of the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris in the aftermath of a fire that devastated the cathedral. —AFP photos

Six months on, Notre-Dame's rebirth still years away

One day after the blaze that scarred Notre-Dame, President Emmanuel Macron addressed a nation in shock at the damage to one of its great cultural landmarks, with a promise that rang as clearly as the peal of the cathedral's bells. "We will rebuild the cathedral even more beautifully and I want it to be finished within five years," Macron said on national television on the evening of April 16, 2019. "And we can do it," he added.

But six months after the April 15 fire that tore through the roof of the 13th-century Paris cathedral and toppled its spire, the reconstruction process is shaping up to be much more complex than many anticipated. Workers have had to clean up

significant quantities of lead that melted from the roof and contaminated areas around the cathedral, with critics saying the authorities were slow to warn the public of the risks.

There remains no consensus on how the cathedral should look after reconstruction, with many experts wanting the spire to be rebuilt exactly like the original, and Macron arguing for an innovative solution. Above all, the process of securing an edifice still at risk of collapse after the fire damage has taken precedence over any reconstruction. It is only at the end of 2020 that a complete check will allow architects to work out how to restore the cathedral. No reconstruction is expected to start before 2021.



In this file photo Patrick Palem, expert of the heritage restoration, holds the head of a statue showing the face of French architect Eugene Viollet-le-Duc as Saint Thomas, stored in SOGRA workshop in Marsac-sur-Isle near Bordeaux, one of the statues which sat around the spire of the Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris and removed for restoration.