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SPAIN'S DEATH TOLL OVERTAKES CHINA'S

Madrid.—Spain's coronavirus death toll jumped by 738 over Tuesday night to exceed that of China yesterday, where the disease originated, as the country struggled to cope with an accelerating health crisis.

With 3,434 fatalities, Spain now has the second highest number of deaths globally after Italy's 6,820. Nursing homes across the country have been overwhelmed by cases and a skating rink in Madrid has been turned into a makeshift morgue.

Police stood guard yesterday outside the capital's Palacio de Hielo rink, normally a popular venue for children's birthday parties, as hearses and ambulances arrived at the building.

Broad avenues in Madrid and Barcelona were virtually deserted, as were towns and villages across



Spain, while fire engines and tractors sprayed disinfectant to clean streets.

Authorities began to carry out mass testing for

public workers in a requisitioned fairground in Madrid, one of the worst-hit regions.

Spanish medical staff,

who themselves account for thousands of infected cases, have taken out lawsuits against the government, complaining of the lack of basic protective equipment like masks, scrubs and gloves.

The Spanish army has asked NATO for ventilators, protective gear and testing kits, Armed Forces Chief Miguel Villarroja said yesterday.

The government had ordered 432 million euros worth of masks, gloves, testing kits and ventilators to be delivered over the next eight weeks, with the first large batch expected this week, Health Minister Salvador Illa said.

In an example of how companies are changing assembly lines to produce medical products, a shoe factory in northern Spain has switched to making

Britain's embattled logistics industry calls for Brexit to be delayed

● Britain's logistics industry is urging the government to delay its departure from the European Union because it cannot prepare for Brexit while battling to get food and medical supplies into the country during the coronavirus pandemic. The FTA, which represents members from the road, rail, sea and air industries, said it was petitioning government to urgently seek an extension to the transition period before the planned departure date at the end of the year.

"This is not about the relative merits of Brexit, or any trading arrangements which our industry will need to adopt," said Elizabeth de Jong, Policy Director at FTA. "Logistics is facing unprecedented challenges, both in terms of keeping the UK economy supplied with all the goods it needs to function, as well as coping with the increased disruption to staffing levels caused by sickness and self-isolation and concerns about the viability of their businesses."

simple protective masks - first for its own personnel and then for distribution.

"Now we are working hard to ... make something a little more sophisticated for it to reach medical use," Basilio Garcia, chief executive of the Callaghan shoe factory, told Reuters.

Spain was on Day 11 of a 15-day nationwide lockdown which is to be extended to 30 days.

"We have achieved a near total reduction in social contact," health emergency chief Fernando Simon told a news conference, adding that Spain was nearing the peak of the epidemic.

However, the infection rate is still soaring with the number of coronavirus cases increasing by a fifth in 24 hours to 47,610 yesterday.

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ROYAL SCARE



● Prime Minister Boris Johnson has wished Prince Charles a speedy recovery following news that the 71-year-old heir to the British throne has contracted coronavirus, Johnson's official spokesman said yesterday.