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Anyone coughing at UK police, shop workers faces two years in jail

London.—Anyone claiming to have coronavirus who deliberately coughs at emergency workers faces being jailed for two years, Britain's Director of Public Prosecutions said yesterday. Max Hill said there had been reports in recent days of people coughing in the faces of police, other emergency workers and shop staff. Those responsible could face charges of common assault, he said.

"Emergency workers are more essential than ever as society comes together to tackle the coronavirus pandemic," Hill said in a statement. "I am therefore appalled by reports of police officers and other frontline workers being deliberately coughed at by peo-

ple claiming to have COVID-19. Let me be very clear: this is a crime and needs to stop."

On Wednesday, a 45-year-old man admitted three counts of assaulting an emergency worker after claiming to have coronavirus and directing coughs at London police officers arresting him for another offence, the Crown Prosecution Service said.

In Blackburn, northern England, a 40-year-old man was jailed after threatening to spit at officers on Monday after they had asked why he was out with two others following the government's announcement that social gatherings should cease and that people observe strict rules on social distancing.

REAL WAR

● Spain extended its coronavirus lockdown yesterday **to at least April 12** as Europe's second-worst hit country **fought "a real war" procuring medical supplies** in an overheated Chinese market that officials said was rife with fraud and speculative deals. The **death toll rose by 655 overnight to 4,089**. That was down from 738 deaths the previous day when Spain overtook China by the total number of deaths since the outbreak began. **Inside**



British firm says antibody test is being validated

London.—Prototypes of a coronavirus antibody test which could be a game-changer in the fight against the pandemic are being assessed and are ready to be optimised, the developer of the technology said yesterday.

Antibody tests are de-

signed to establish whether people have previously been infected, as opposed to antigen tests which show if someone actually has the COVID-19 disease caused by the virus.

Health technology firm Mologic said assessment

and validation of its COVID-19 diagnostic test had begun this week at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and St George's Hospital, and that global partners would also examine the prototypes.

"Completion of the first prototypes is a significant

step in Mologic's development of a rapid diagnostic test for COVID-19 and we are proud of our team's achievement in reaching this point so quickly, while maintaining the most rigorous standards," said Paul Davis, Co-Founder and Chief Scientific

Officer at Mologic.

"Diagnostics are a critical weapon in the fight against this pandemic and, once ready, this test will enable affordable, more accurate and earlier diagnosis of infection, limiting the spread of the disease."

Britain has bought 3.5

million antibody testing kits from different suppliers and is currently making sure they work before distributing them.

A health official told lawmakers on Wednesday that such test kits would be available within days to be sent to households.