

Spain lifts some lockdown measures for non-essential workers



Madrid, April 13 (RHC)-- Staff in food distribution, communications, sanitation and other non-essential sectors are now allowed to go to work in Spain, despite the country's status as the world's second-largest COVID-19 hotspot with over 17,000 deaths.

These workers were able to return to work on Monday following a 14-day self-isolation regime that saw all industries – except for healthcare and food – shut down across all of Spain, local media reported. Back in late March, the “non-essential” staff were sent on paid leave following a decision by Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez.

With the lockdown partially lifted, schools, bars, restaurants, cultural and leisure facilities will remain closed until the COVID-19 peak has passed. The containment measures have taken a heavy toll on Spain's tourism industry and have also led to a recession in other sectors.

The news comes as Spain's daily death toll went up from 525 on Saturday to 603 on Sunday. Its total number of coronavirus casualties is now at 17,209; its pool of confirmed cases -- which nears 167,000 -- puts it behind only the United States.

The prospect of easing the shutdown stirred up fierce debate among the Spanish political elite, who now have to choose between reviving the economy and containing the epidemic. The government of Catalonia criticized the decision, describing it as “recklessness;” while the Madrid authorities warned that another wave of coronavirus cases would be “unforgivable.”

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