

China exported more than 220 billion masks in 2020: government

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Selling masks abroad has become an important driver of China's exports

China exported more than 220 billion face masks last year, the commerce ministry said Friday, the equivalent of nearly 40 per person outside China as demand for protective gear skyrocketed during the

coronavirus pandemic.

Shifting billions of dollars' worth of the coverings has become an important driver of China's exports after COVID-19 virtually halted [economic activity](#) in the earlier part of 2020 and ravaged growth.

On Friday, vice-minister for commerce Qian Keming told reporters that in addition to masks, China exported 2.3 billion pieces of [protective gear](#) and one billion test kits last year, "making an important contribution to the global fight against the epidemic".

The mask shipments alone were worth 340 billion yuan (\$52.6 billion), a customs official said earlier this month.

"(The volume) is equivalent to providing nearly 40 masks to each person in the world outside China," said customs spokesman Li Kuiwen.

China, where COVID-19 first emerged in late 2019, was also the first country to bounce back after imposing strict lockdowns and virus control measures.

It is expected to be the only major world economy to clock positive 2020 growth.

But on Friday, commerce ministry official Chu Shijia added that China still faced a "severe and complex" environment in foreign trade and investment this year.

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