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Russia Bans Export of Masks, Hazmat Suits to Fight Coronavirus

By AFP

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Wang Quanchao / Zuma / TASS

Russia has banned the export of masks, respirators and hazmat suits to ensure access to the items for medics treating coronavirus patients and the public, under a decree published Wednesday.

The ban covers 17 types of equipment including face masks, plastic shoe covers, gloves, surgical scrubs, gas masks, hazmat suits and "reusable anti-plague" suits.

The ban aims "to protect the interests of Russian citizens" as the coronavirus outbreak has killed more than 3,000 people and infected around 92,000 globally.

It does not affect supplies leaving the country as humanitarian aid or for personal use. The decree is dated Monday, when it entered force, and is set to expire on June 1.

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Russian President Vladimir Putin last month called for the closure of pharmacies that hike prices for face masks.

Russia has had six confirmed cases of coronavirus, including three people repatriated from the Diamond Princess cruise ship off Japan and two Chinese citizens. The first case in Moscow, a Russian man who had travelled to Italy, was announced Monday.

The country has imposed a near blanket ban on visits by Chinese citizens, although flagship airline Aeroflot is still running some flights to and from China.

It has also restricted entry for Iranians and for those travelling from South Korea.

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