

Trump bans travel from Europe to U.S.

He blames EU for failing to take precautions and restrict travel from China; U.K. excluded from ban

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump late on Wednesday suspended travel from Europe to the U.S. for 30 days in an "aggressive" effort to halt the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic that has sparked a run on the stock market and is rapidly multiplying.

The ban will not include travellers from the U.K., which recently left the EU, Mr. Trump said.

In a primetime address from the Oval Office to a worried nation, Mr. Trump sought to rebuff critics who say his leadership has been lacking during the crisis, insisting that "the virus will not have a chance".

"This is the most aggressive and comprehensive effort to confront a foreign virus in modern history," he said.

He announced a series of measures designed to ease the financial burden for people having to take weeks off from work while on quarantine.

But his most far-reaching announcement was the halt on European travel – and that suffered a moment of major confusion when he mistakenly appeared to say he was also stopping trans-Atlantic trade.

Mr. Trump said the travel ban would go into effect from "midnight Friday".

He then said "these prohibitions will not only apply to the tremendous amount of trade and cargo, but various other things".

The White House afterwards clarified that "the people transporting goods will not be admitted into the country, but the goods will be".

And Ken Cuccinelli, acting Deputy Secretary at the Homeland Security Department, went on Twitter to



Nowhere to go: Travellers' queue at an information desk at the Paris Charles de Gaulle airport on Thursday after the U.S. announced a 30-day ban on travel from Europe. *AFP

reassure Americans that the ban on travel from Europe wouldn't apply to "citizens or legal permanent residents or their families".

In his address, Mr. Trump put a harsh accent on Europe's role in the spread of the virus, which began in China and has now travelled around much of the world, bringing sometimes fatal flu-like symptoms.

"The European Union failed to take the same precautions and restrict travel from China and other hotspots" as the U.S., Mr. Trump said.

Italy toll crosses 1,000

About 4,500 people have died so far worldwide. As of Wednesday, there were more than 1,000 confirmed infections in the U.S. and 32 deaths, according to a tally compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

Meanwhile, Italy's death toll passed 1,000 on Thursday, with 189 new fatalities taking its toll in just over two weeks to 1,016, second behind China, official data showed.

Sri Lanka confirms second case of COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka on Thursday reported its second confirmed case of COVID-19. Health authorities diagnosed the first on March 10.

Both patients are tour guides, and are currently receiving treatment.

Meanwhile, schools have been closed for a few weeks as a precautionary measure, officials said.

Sri Lanka has also enforced a mandatory quarantine of all passengers arriving from Iran, Italy and South Korea. Further, authorities have placed visa on arrival on hold.

Tom Hanks, wife Rita in Australian hospital

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SYDNEY

Tom Hanks and wife Rita Wilson were isolated in an Australian hospital on Thursday after contracting the new coronavirus, the actor said.

The two-time Oscar winner is easily the most famous person yet to

disclose they have COVID-19.

Australian officials said the couple were being treated at a Queensland hospital.

Chet Hanks later posted on social media that his parents were doing fine and thanked fans for their concern.

Why are oil prices crashing?

The collapse of a Saudi-Russia deal has rattled markets

STANLY JOHNY

Oil prices saw their biggest single-day crash in almost 30 years on March 9, throwing global equity markets into turmoil. The price of a barrel of Brent crude closed down 24% at \$34.36 after a price war was initiated between Saudi Arabia and Russia, two of the world's largest oil producers. It recovered slightly on March 10, but crashed again. On Thursday, Brent crude price was hovering around \$33 a barrel. Prices crashed by almost 50% this year, from \$66 a barrel on December 31, 2019 to the current levels, primarily driven by lack of demand.



Crude shock: An oil tank at Aramco's Shaybah oilfield in Saudi Arabia, in this file photo. *REUTERS

demand shock) rattled the markets, crashing prices.

EXPLAINER

What do Saudis want?

As it was clear that Russia was not ready to cut its output further, the Saudis moved to the attack mode. The plan is to flood the markets with Saudi oil and depress the prices, which would hurt all oil exporters. Riyadh may have multiple targets. One is to exert pressure on Russia and make it come back to the negotiation table. And if both sides agree to a new deal, they can reverse the decision to ramp up production and collectively take steps to pump up prices. Second, if the Russians do not blink, the plan is to capture market share from Russia with discounts.

Third, bleed the U.S. shale oil producers who could not sustain production at depressed prices. In a way, Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman, the de facto ruler of the kingdom, is trying to take on both Russia and U.S. shale oil companies with a single move.

But the question is whether Saudi Arabia could sustain the price war for a longer term. Roughly 90% of Saudi budget revenues are coming from the petroleum sector. The Kingdom wants prices to be over \$60 a bar-

rel to balance its budget. Prolonged depressed prices will leave a bigger hole in the Saudi budget, complicating further the Crown Prince's economic reform and diversification agenda.

What's Putin's plan?

Though Russia had been cooperating with OPEC for three years, there's a growing opinion in Moscow that the output cut was hurting Russian energy companies. Russian companies also want to open the taps and gain more market share.

Furthermore, there's a convergence of interests between Saudi Arabia and Russia in hurting the U.S. shale oil companies, which are flooding markets with shale oil and challenging the supremacy of traditional oil producers in determining the prices (U.S. output was more than 12 million barrels a day in February).

Russia is in a relatively stronger economic position than Saudi Arabia. Oil now accounts for less than a third of its budget revenue. The country has also built a war chest of \$435 billion in foreign exchange reserves. Russian President Vladimir Putin may be in for a long game—to weaken both U.S. shale oil industry and the OPEC's clout in the market. If so, the glut won't drain away any time soon.

ELSEWHERE



U.S., U.K. troops among 3 dead in Iraq rocket attack

BAGHDAD
Two American soldiers and a British soldier were killed on Wednesday in a rocket attack on an Iraqi air base north of Baghdad. Later, 26 Iran-aligned Iraqi fighters were killed in alleged U.S.-led airstrikes in Syria. *AFP

'Activist Chelsea Manning attempted suicide'

WASHINGTON
Former U.S. military intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning tried to commit suicide on Wednesday, two days before a court hearing on her refusal to appear before a jury, a support group said. *AFP

Up to 10,000 people in U.K. 'likely' have COVID-19

Now, focus is on delaying spread: Boris

REUTERS
LONDON

Britain likely has between 5,000 and 10,000 people infected with coronavirus, chief scientific adviser Patrick Vallance said on Thursday, as Prime Minister Boris Johnson stepped up the response to the outbreak.

Mr. Johnson decided to move up to the so called "delay phase" from the "contain phase".

"This is now not just an attempt to contain the disease as far as possible but to delay its spread," he said.

Mr. Johnson said those showing symptoms of having the virus should self-isolate for at least a week. "It's going to spread further," Mr.

Johnson said. "I must level with you, level with the British public – more families, many more families are going to lose loved ones before their time."

The number of confirmed COVID-19 cases across the U.K. rose 29% to 590 in the last 24 hours. Ten people have died so far. "If you calculate what that really means in terms of the total number, it is much more likely that you have somewhere between 5,000 and 10,000 people infected at the moment," Mr. Vallance said. The British plan for dealing with the outbreak has three main phases – containment, delay and mitigation.

Trudeau, wife in isolation over virus fears

REUTERS
OTTAWA

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his wife Sophie are in self-isolation after she came down with flu-like symptoms, according to an official statement on Thursday.

After returning from a speaking engagement in London, Ms. Trudeau began exhibiting mild flu-like symptoms.

Mr. Trudeau, who is exhibiting no symptoms, will continue to work from home until his wife's COVID-19 test results come in, it added. Face-to-face meetings with provincial premiers scheduled for Friday will instead be held by phone.

Brazilian who met Trump tests positive

REUTERS
BRASILIA

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro's communications secretary, Fabio Wajngarten, who attended a meeting at Donald Trump's resort in Florida on Saturday and posted a photo of himself standing next to the U.S. President has tested positive for COVID-19, the Brazilian government said on Thursday.

Mr. Wajngarten is in quarantine at his home.

Mr. Trump said he was not worried that he may have been exposed to the virus. "Let's put it this way: I'm not concerned," Mr. Trump told reporters, while meeting with Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar in the Oval Office.

Iran toll at 429, seeks \$5 billion aid from IMF

REUTERS
DUBAI

Iran on Thursday reported 75 new deaths from COVID-19, bringing the death toll to 429 in the worst-hit country in the Middle East. "We have identified 1,075 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the last 24 hours, meaning that there are 10,075 infected people in the country. The death toll is 429," Health Ministry spokesman Kianush Jahanpur said.

Iran has asked the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for \$5 billion emergency funding to help it fight the outbreak.

'Far-right terrorism is biggest threat to democracy in Germany'

AfD party's most radical faction Flügel under lens: Intel chief

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BERLIN

Far-right terrorism and extremism are the biggest danger facing democracy in Germany today, the domestic intelligence agency chief said on Thursday, after the country was hit by several extremist attacks in recent months.

The most radical right-wingers number 32,000 in the country, said BfV chief Thomas Haldenwang, adding that 13,000 are considered potentially violent.

"Right-wing extremism and right-wing terrorism are currently the biggest danger for democracy in Germany,"



Thomas Haldenwang

he said at a press conference.

His agency also placed under formal surveillance the far-right AfD party's most radical faction Flügel (The Wing), which now has about

7,000 members.

Founded in 2013, the AfD has grown and shifted further right over the last seven years. Railing against Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision in 2015 to keep Germany's borders open to refugees, the AfD has increased its support base. It is now the largest opposition group in the Bundestag, Germany's lower house of Parliament.

The AfD's most radical wing, the Flügel, was founded by far-right firebrand Bjoern Hoerck, who has sparked outrage with statements on Germany's Nazi past.

Ban imports from Xinjiang: U.S. lawmakers

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

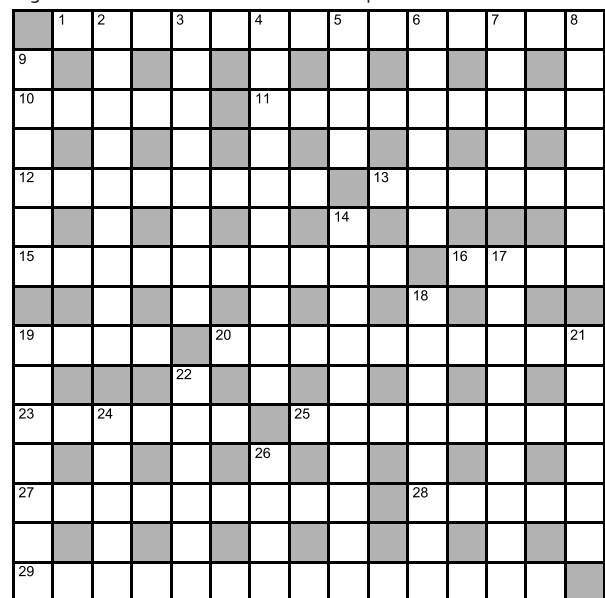
Lawmakers in Washington have proposed a ban on most imports from China's Xinjiang region, charging that goods produced by Uighur forced labourers were easily making their way into the U.S.

The U.S. already bans products made through slavery, but with rights groups saying as many as one million Uighurs and other minorities are held in camps in Xinjiang, lawmakers said forced labour was interwoven into the region's economy.

"These practices in Xinjiang are one of the world's largest human tragedies," Senator Marco Rubio said.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12882

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(set by Spinner)

- 15 Slowdown sees drop in supply (10)
- 16 A police wing, one that neutralises basic threats? (4)
- 19 Band has broken up after a bit of soul-searching (4)
- 20 Breeds untruths after incomplete review with counsel (10)
- 23 Weakened sailor feasted with daughter (6)
- 25 Places where the stove burns, liquid thickens? (8)
- 27 Press covering violent riot killing one in institute (9)
- 28 Collect advance around first of August (5)
- 29 Calmest chimp on ground gives performance (14)

- 5 Undiluted gin finally put away (4)
- 6 "Everything is revolving around energy, friends!" (6)
- 7 Secret meal in leader's absence (5)
- 8 Chosen decathlete runs without funny looking hat (7)
- 9 Dramatically flew down, getting start of operation moved (6)
- 14 Chaotic reaction on admitting player, last of coronavirus cases (10)
- 17 Caught rioter misbehaving with one on introduction of new law (9)
- 18 In retrospect, rumours spread! (8)
- 19 It's a man's organised resilience (7)
- 21 Extremely shady stay order (6)
- 22 One who holds the cards basically oversees rough men's refinement (6)
- 24 Web is endless in space underneath ceiling (5)
- 26 Investor's decision's rubbish (4)

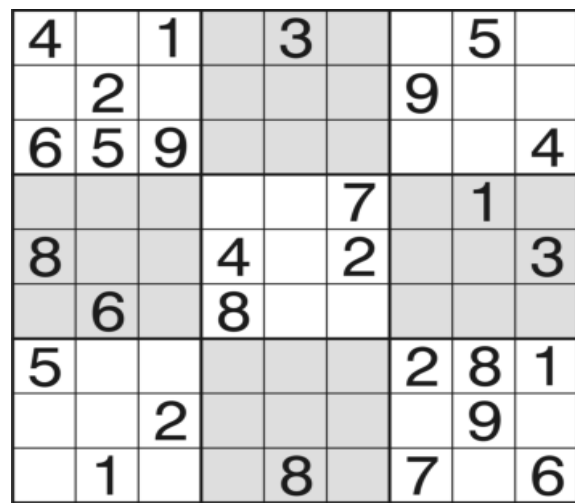
ACROSS

- 1 Ideal doctor patients revere (14)
- 10 Relishes spices without root (5)
- 11 Dare to reform, adopting measure from the East (9)
- 12 Invited to join around fall (8)
- 13 Studied bank following trainee model (6)

DOWN

- 2 Unending desire to run away with money covers (9)
- 3 With time running out, hit back, getting top spot sewed up (8)
- 4 Cycle regularly in work out – Mostly very effective! (10)

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution to puzzle 12881

H	M	A	T	P	T								
F	E	V	E	R	I	S	H	E	N	A	M	E	L
A	R	E	R	I	L	L	E	N					
E	D	G	E	I	N	G	R	E	D	I	E	N	T
S		L	H	V	M	E							
S	H	A	B	B	Y	W	H	I	M	P	E	R	S
I	R	A	S	S									
P	A	I	N	T	H	E	N	E	C	K			
M	I	G	H	T	H	E	R	A	T	T	E	N	D
N	I	T	T	M	O								
F	A	L	S	E	A	L	A	R	M	H	E	L	P
R	I	O	T	R	I	J	I						
V	O	O	D	O	K	E	R	G	S	E	N	E	
W	E	R											

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

6	4	9	8	3	7	2	5	1
8	7	5	4	2	1	9	3	6
2	1	3	6	9	5	4	8	7
4	8	6	3	7	2	1	9	5
1	3	2	5	8	9	6	7	4
9	5	7	1	4	6	8	2	3
5	9	8	7	1	4	3	6	2
7	2	4	9	6	3	5	1	8
3	6	1	2	5	8	7	4	9

FAITH

Lovely man-lion form

It is often assumed that Narasimha avatara was taken for the purpose of killing Hiranyakasipu. But, in fact, the Lord took His half-lion, half-man form to protect His devotee Pahlada, said M.A. Venkatakrisnan in a discourse. Because protecting Pahlada required the killing of the demon, the Lord killed Hiranyakasipu.

In the Vishnu Sahasranama, Narasimha avatara is extolled. The twenty-first name Narasimha vapuh is explained by Parasara Bhatta thus: in order to protect His devotee, He assumed the Narasimha form at His will. If we worship Him, He gets rid of the hurdles in our path. The next nama is Sri-maan, and this means that the Narasimha form was lovely. It was a unique form with a combination of different species of living things – man and lion. And yet, it did not look odd. The combination of the two forms was perfect. In fact, it was so beautiful that anyone who had seen this form of the Lord would henceforth not find an individual man or lion good looking. Independently, they would not have the charm of the combination of the two forms in Narasimha.

Kesava is a reference to Narasimha's beautiful hair. In a lion, it is its mane which gives its majestic look. And celebrates Narasimha's mane with the words Veri mayir. Amrtyuh, the 200th name, means that He is an enemy of death itself, since He is death for the god of death. Narasimha is sarvadrik, because He gives to friend, foe and a neutral person what each one deserves. Pahlada is His bhakta, and so He gets Narasimha's blessings in full. Hiranyakasipu is an enemy, and is killed. The celestials are neutral. They do not take sides in the fight between the Lord and the demon. They just make sure that they applaud the winning side. To them, the Lord gives back their territory, namely devaloka.



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