

Trump says 'great' bond with Xi changed after COVID-19



I had a great relationship with President Xi. I like him, but I don't feel the same way now. I certainly feel differently. I had a very, very good relationship, and I haven't spoken to him in a long time

DONALD TRUMP

Reuters | Washington

US President Donald Trump yesterday said his relationship with Chinese President Xi Jinping has frayed in the wake of the novel coronavirus pandemic and that he has not spoken to his Chinese counterpart in a long time.

"I used to have a very good relationship with him," Trump told Fox Sports Radio in an interview, citing their Phase One trade deal last year. "I had a great relationship with President Xi. I like him, but I don't feel the same way now."

Trump said his feelings changed amid COVID-19.



A view of cardboard cutouts, displaying images of US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping, with protective masks near a gift shop in Moscow, Russia

"I certainly feel differently. I had a very, very good relationship, and I haven't spoken to him in a long time."

Trump, who is seeking re-election in the Nov. 3 US election, made challenging China a key part of his 2016 presidential campaign and touted his friendly ties with Xi during

much of his first term in office as he sought to make good on his trade deal promises.

But he said on Tuesday that the fallout from the outbreak was worse than the conflict over trade. "This is a thousand times the trade deal what happened with all of the death and ... the world had to shut-

down. It's a disgrace," he told Fox.

First reports of the virus emerged from China in late 2019 and it has now infected more than 20 million people and killed at least 735,369 worldwide, including at least 5.1 million cases and at least 163,160 deaths in the United States.

Trump: If Biden wins, you'll 'have to learn to speak Chinese'

● **Demonizing China has been central to Trump's reelection campaign**

Huffpost

President Donald Trump continued his xenophobic warnings about China yesterday claiming that if he loses the election, everyone in the U.S. will have to learn to speak Chinese.

"Look, China will own the United States if this election is lost by Donald Trump," he said in an interview with conservative radio host Hugh Hewitt. "If I don't win the election, China will own the United States. You're going to have to learn to speak Chinese, you want to know the truth."

Demonizing China has been central to Trump's reelection campaign ever since the coronavirus pandemic took hold. The president and his allies have attempted to shift attention away from the White House's actions by blaming China for the global pandemic.

In late January, Trump put restrictions on travelers from China. And he has repeatedly referred to the coronavirus as the "China virus" and "kung flu." Yet for weeks, begin-

ning in late January, Trump still praised Chinese officials for their response to the virus.

"China is working very hard," he said on Feb. 7. "They're working really hard, and I think they are doing a very professional job."

"President Xi loves the people of China, he loves his country, and he's doing a very good job with a very, very tough situation," Trump added on Feb. 18.

National security adviser Robert O'Brien recently claimed that China is trying to hack into U.S. election infrastructure in an effort to help Joe Biden win the presidency. The claim conveniently fits into another narrative that Trump has been pushing, which is that Biden is catering to Chinese interests.

One ad from the Trump campaign, for example, alleges: "The coronavirus infected millions. Crushed the world economy. One nation deserves the blame: China. They lied about it. Covered it up. Joe Biden coddles China."

But according to The Wall Street Journal, officials familiar with the matter say that the "U.S. doesn't currently have intelligence showing that Beijing is directly trying to hack election-related systems."

New cases end New Zealand's 'COVID-free' status



New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern during a news conference

Reuters | Wellington

New Zealand announced yesterday it was shutting down its largest city, Auckland, after four new cases of COVID-19 were discovered in the city, the first evidence of domestic transmission after being coronavirus-free for 102 days.

New Zealand's successful fight against COVID-19 was hailed globally and the Pacific island nation of 5 million was seen as one of the safest places, as the pandemic raged globally.

Director General of Health Ashley Bloomfield said the four cases were within one family in South Auckland. One person is in their 50s. They had no history of international travel. Family members have been tested and contact tracing is under way.

News of the cases sent panic across the country with media reporting people rushing to supermarkets to stock up, and businesses preparing to shut.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said Auckland would move to level 3 restriction from noon on Wednesday as a "precautionary approach", which would mean people should stay away from work and school, and gatherings or more than 10 people would again be restricted.

The restriction would be applied for three days until Friday, which she said would be enough time to assess the situation, gather information and make sure there was widespread contact tracing.

"This is something we have prepared for," Ardern said in a surprise news conference, adding that the increased caution was as the source of the virus was unknown.

"We have had a 102 days and it was easy to feel New Zealand was out of the woods. No country has gone as far as we did without having a resurgence. And because we were the only ones, we had to plan. And we have planned," she said.

Egyptians vote for newly created Senate

● **Polling stations opened at 9 a.m. (0700 GMT)**

● **Authorities have reported just over 95,000 coronavirus infections and 5,000 deaths**

Reuters | Cairo

Egyptians began voting yesterday for members of a newly created second chamber of parliament, with restrictive measures in place aimed at curbing a resurgence of novel coronavirus infections.

The Council of Senators will be an advisory body without legislative powers. It will include 200 elected members and 100 appointed by the president.

As in Egypt's main parliamentary chamber, supporters of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi are expected to dominate.

Officials say the Senate will enhance political participation, but the build-up to the elections was low key, which commentators attributed to the coronavirus pandemic, a lack of awareness about the new chamber and apathy.

Last year, a referendum approved constitutional changes that could allow him to stay in office until 2030, widening his powers over the judiciary and establishing the Senate.

One hundred Senate members will be elected as individual candidates and 100 from a closed list system, where people vote for parties.



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Nearly 63 million people out of a total population of more than 100 million are eligible to vote

The only closed list to be submitted is headed by the strongly pro-government Mostaqbal Watan party, though it included two parties from a coalition that rejected last year's constitutional changes.

Nearly 63 million people out of a total population of more than 100 million are eligible to vote, according to state news agency MENA.

Polling stations opened at 9 a.m. (0700 GMT) and will close at 9 p.m., over two days of voting. Results are due on Aug. 19.

Measures to guard against the coronavirus include the steri-

lisation of voting stations and obligatory masks.

Officially confirmed cases of the virus in Egypt have rebounded slightly after a sharp fall, with some officials and doctors warning of a second wave of infections.

Authorities have reported just over 95,000 infections and 5,000 deaths.



Sisi was elected president in 2014 with 97 per cent of the vote, and re-elected four years later with the same percentage.