

# business

## Google staff discussed ways to fight travel ban

Washington, United States

Google employees discussed how to counter President Donald Trump's 2017 travel ban by modifying search functions to help people contribute to immigration advocacy groups and contact lawmakers, the Wall Street Journal reported yesterday.

They began the email discussion two days after Trump signed the first version of his travel ban targeting people from seven mainly Muslim countries, the paper reported.

Staff discussed how to tweak search functions and work against "islamophobic, algorithmically biased results from search terms 'Islam', 'Muslim', 'Iran', etc.", the Journal reported.

They looked at similar measures for the search terms 'Mexico', 'Hispanic', 'Latino', etc."

An email from an employee of the Search Product Marketing division referred to brainstorming inside Google over how to respond to ban.

Trump's controversial measure was challenged in court and underwent several iterations before ultimately being upheld by the US Supreme Court.

The report is certain to anger Trump, who has accused Google of blocking conservative viewpoints in its search results.

## Japan inflation edges up

Tokyo, Japan

Prices in Japan edged up modestly in August, according to government data yesterday, as the world's third-largest economy continues its years-long battle with deflation.

Inflation stood at 0.9 percent year-on-year in August, still far below the Bank of Japan's two-percent target, even though slightly higher than 0.8 percent in July and June and 0.7 percent in May.

The latest figure was in line with market consensus.

With fresh food and energy stripped out, prices rose by even less -- just 0.4 percent year-on-year in August, the internal affairs ministry said.

Japan has battled deflation for many years and the central bank's ultra-loose monetary policy appears to be having limited impact.

The Bank of Japan will not raise interest rates "for an extended period of time", its chief said after the latest rate-setting meeting, even as US and European peers tighten monetary policy.

Deflation is bad for the economy partly because the expectation of falling prices discourages spending and dampens growth.

# China, Russia warn US it is 'playing' with fire

## Putin's spokesman accused Washington of playing unfairly

Moscow, Russia | AFP

Moscow and Beijing lashed out yesterday at Washington's new anti-Russian sanctions that also target China for the first time, warning the United States could face consequences.

President Vladimir Putin's spokesman accused Washington of playing unfairly and using new measures to squeeze Moscow out of the global arms market, after the United States slapped sanctions on China for buying Russian warplanes and missiles and threatened to target its other clients.

"This is unfair competition, dishonest competition, an attempt to use non-market methods that run counter to norms and principles of international trade to squeeze the main competitor of US makers out of the markets," said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. Peskov said



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that "Washington's continued sanctions hysteresis" dealt a new blow to US-Russia ties but could not immediately say if Moscow would retaliate, or how.

On Thursday, Washington placed financial sanctions on the Equipment Development Department of the Chinese Defence Ministry, and its top administrator, for its recent purchase of Russian Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jets and S-400 surface-to-air missile systems.

It was the first time a third country has been punished under the CAATSA sanctions legislation for dealing with Russia, signalling Donald Trump's readiness to risk relations with other countries over Moscow.

### Beijing warning

Beijing -- which is locked in a trade war with the United States -- urged Washington to withdraw sanctions or "bear the consequences".

"The US actions have seriously violated the basic principles of international relations and seriously damaged the relations between the two countries and the two militaries," said Chinese foreign ministry spokesman

Geng Shuang. "We strongly urge the US to immediately correct their mistake and withdraw their so-called sanctions, otherwise the US will have to bear the consequences."

United in their resentment of America's global influence, China and Russia have sought in recent years to tighten up their ties and this month conducted week-long joint military drills, Moscow's largest ever war games. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned that Russia would act to end its dependency on the US dollar.

"We will do everything to stop being dependent on the countries who behave towards their partners in this way," Lavrov said on a visit to Sarajevo.

His deputy, Sergei Ryabkov, earlier said Washington was rocking global stability and said sarcastically that placing sanctions on Russia has become Washington's favourite "pastime". "It would be good for them to remember there is such a concept as global stability which they are thoughtlessly undermining by whipping up tensions in Russian-American ties," said Ryabkov.

# Bug in cake gives Ikea India embarrassment

Mumbai, India

Ikea's first store in India faced a fresh sticky problem after a customer said he found an insect emerging from chocolate cake served to his daughter at the outlet's 1,000-seater cafeteria. It is the second such embarrassment for the home retailer since the Hyderabad store opened in August, after

another customer said he found a caterpillar in his rice earlier this month. "I found an insect inside the chocolate cake which came out while my daughter was eating the cake at IKEA store today in Hyderabad," consumer Kishore tweeted with accompanying photos and a video.

An Ikea spokesman said in a statement that a fly was on the cake and that it "eventually flew

away" -- but the consumer said that the bug was "not a flying insect". Ikea said it was taking steps to avoid such incidents but refuted media reports of local authorities collecting samples of cakes or issuing fines.

Ikea is seeking to wow India with its Nordic-cool furniture and fittings, as well as products and is aiming to open 25 outlets in India by 2025.

## Coca-Cola, Walmart to cut plastic pollution in oceans

Montreal, Canada

Coca-Cola, Walmart and other big multinationals pledged yesterday to help reduce plastic pollution in the world's oceans in support of a campaign by five of the G7 industrialized nations.

Britain, Canada, France, Germany and Italy, along with the European Union, signed the Ocean Plastics Charter at a leaders' summit in Canada's Charlevoix region in June.

The United States and Japan abstained but non-G7 nations

Norway and Jamaica are also backing the plan to ensure 100 percent of plastics are recyclable by 2030.

On the second day of a G7 ministerial meeting in Canada's Atlantic port city of Halifax, Canadian Environment Minister Catherine McKenna announced "a new partnership with businesses" to reduce plastics waste.

Backers include Loblaws, Walmart, Nestle Canada, IKEA, Dow Chemicals, the Coca-Cola Company, BASF Canada and A&W Canada.

# Singapore Airlines bans lion bones in cargo

Singapore, Singapore

Singapore Airlines said yesterday it has stopped accepting lion bones for cargo after the carrier was singled out in a report for transporting the animal parts from South Africa.

Campaigners have long called for a ban on the controversial trade in big cat bones, which are sought after for medicine and jewellery in Southeast Asia.

Singapore Airlines was the sole carrier importing lion bones from South Africa to Southeast Asia last year, according to a report released in July by the non-profit EMS Foundation and



Singapore Airlines says it has banned lion bones as cargo on its planes

animal rights group Ban Animal Trading.

At least 800 lion skeletons had been exported with the blessing

of the South African government in 2017, the report said, making it the world's largest exporter of lion bones.

The airline said it had stopped accepting lion bones as cargo, but did not say when the policy had come into effect.

"Singapore Airlines does not accept the carriage of lion bones as cargo following a review which took into account increasing concerns around the world," the company said in an email. EMS Foundation director Michele Pickover said her organisation had sent the report to the airline and "appealed to them to immediately stop its involvement in this terrible trade".

"I believe that once they were informed about what this trade entails they took the correct and

logical decision not to support it," she said.

South Africa has been sending lion bones to Southeast Asia since at least 2008 and it was likely that Singapore Airlines had been transporting them since that year, Pickover added.

Lion bones and other body parts are highly sought after in parts of Southeast Asia -- particularly Laos, Thailand and Vietnam -- for use in jewellery and for their supposed medicinal properties. In Vietnam, lion bone is cooked and turned into balm while claws and teeth were used as body ornaments, the report said.