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Putin and Xi Attack Attempts to Blame China for Late Virus Response

By AFP

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Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping on Thursday rejected as counterproductive attempts to blame Beijing for delaying informing the world about the coronavirus, the Kremlin said.

Putin and Xi spoke after U.S. President Donald Trump's administration berated China for not sharing data more quickly.

Washington is also investigating the origins of the coronavirus — which has killed more than 138,700 people worldwide — saying it doesn't rule out that it came from a laboratory researching bats in Wuhan, China.

The Kremlin said that during phone talks with Xi on Thursday Putin praised "consistent and effective actions" of the Chinese "which allowed the epidemiological situation in the country to stabilise."

The leaders did not reference the White House directly but stressed the "counterproductiveness" of attempts to blame China for not informing the world about the appearance of a dangerous new infection quickly enough.

Since emerging in China late last year, the pandemic has turned the world upside down, forcing half of humanity indoors and sending the global economy into freefall.

Putin and Xi also stressed the two countries' "strategic partnership" and said Russia and China were ready to help each other during the pandemic by exchanging specialists and supplying medical equipment, protective gear and medicines, the Kremlin said.

"The two leaders expressed confidence that our countries will be able to successfully overcome the pandemic-related challenges by continuing to closely cooperate," Putin's office said.

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