
POLITICS GOES VIRAL AS ITALY STRUGGLES WITH OUTBREAK

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ROME — Italy is asking: Why us?

There are no clear answers as to why the country has been hit harder by the coronavirus than anywhere else in the EU, with more than 320 confirmed cases and 10 deaths. But there is no shortage of theories and proposed solutions, proffered by experts and by politicians ranging from Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte to far-right leader Matteo Salvini, adding to the confusion.

The irony for Italians is that their government was one of only two in Europe to suspend all direct flights to and from mainland China because of the outbreak. While that measure sounded tough, scientists and World Health Organization experts repeatedly made clear that such restrictions are ineffective as people can still arrive from risk areas via indirect routes.

For some experts, the greatest threat to Italy is not from the coronavirus itself but from the panic that has followed — with potentially serious repercussions for the economy and tourism sector.

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