



REBECCA CONWAY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

In New Delhi, the government is distributing food every day, but people waiting in line have fought over a plate of rice and lentils.

Stand on Drug Led to Ouster, Official Asserts

By **MICHAEL D. SHEAR**
and **MAGGIE HABERMAN**

WASHINGTON — The official who led the federal agency involved in developing a coronavirus vaccine said on Wednesday that he was removed from his post after he pressed for rigorous vetting of hydroxychloroquine, an anti-malaria drug embraced by President Trump as a coronavirus treatment, and that the administration had put “politics and cronyism ahead of science.”

Rick Bright was abruptly dismissed this week as the director of the Department of Health and Human Services’ Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, or BARDA, and removed as the deputy assistant secretary for preparedness and response. He was given a narrower job at the National Institutes of Health.

In a scorching statement, Dr. Bright, who received a Ph.D. in immunology and molecular pathogenesis from Emory University, assailed the leadership at the health department, saying he was pressured to direct money toward hydroxychloroquine, one of several “potentially dangerous drugs promoted by those with political connections” and repeatedly described by the president as a potential “game changer” in the fight against the virus.

“I believe this transfer was in response to my insistence that the government invest the billions of

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TRADEOFF Officials must decide how many deaths are acceptable to reopen the country. **PAGE A13**

135 Million Face Starvation. That Could Double.

By **ABDI LATIF DAHIR**

NAIROBI, Kenya — In the largest slum in Kenya’s capital, people desperate to eat set off a stampede during a recent giveaway of flour and cooking oil, leaving scores injured and two people dead.

In India, thousands of workers are lining up twice a day for bread and fried vegetables to keep hunger at bay.

And across Colombia, poor households are hanging red clothing and flags from their windows and balconies as a sign that they are hungry.

“We don’t have any money, and now we need to survive,” said

Pandemic Moves Globe Toward Unparalleled Crisis of Hunger

Pauline Karushi, who lost her job at a jewelry business in Nairobi, and lives in two rooms with her child and four other relatives. “That means not eating much.”

The coronavirus pandemic has brought hunger to millions of people around the world. National lockdowns and social distancing measures are drying up work and incomes, and are likely to disrupt agricultural production and sup-

ply routes — leaving millions to worry how they will get enough to eat.

The coronavirus has sometimes been called an equalizer because it has sickened both rich and poor, but when it comes to food, the commonality ends. It is poor people, including large segments of poorer nations, who are now going hungry and facing the prospect of starving.

“The coronavirus has been anything but a great equalizer,” said Asha Jaffar, a volunteer who brought food to families in the Nairobi slum of Kibera after the fatal stampede. “It’s been the great revealer, pulling the curtain back on the class divide and ex-

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ADAM DEAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Protected, They Serve

Buddhist monks from Wat Matchanthikaram, a temple in Bangkok, wore masks and face shields on Wednesday to guard against the spread of the coronavirus on their rounds to receive alms.

The Social Distancing Origin Story: It Starts in the Middle Ages

By **ERIC LIPTON**
and **JENNIFER STEINHAUER**

WASHINGTON — Fourteen years ago, two federal government doctors, Richard Hatchett and Carter Mecher, met with a colleague at a burger joint in suburban Washington for a final review of a proposal they knew would be treated like a piñata: telling Americans to stay home from

work and school the next time the country was hit by a deadly pandemic.

When they presented their plan not long after, it was met with skepticism and a degree of ridicule by senior officials, who like others in the United States had grown accustomed to relying on the pharmaceutical industry, with its ever-growing array of treatments, to confront evolving health challenges.

A High School Project Advanced the Idea

Drs. Hatchett and Mecher were proposing instead that Americans in some places might have to turn back to an approach, self-isolation, first widely employed in the Middle Ages.

How that idea — born out of a request by President George W. Bush to ensure the nation was better prepared for the next contagious disease outbreak — became the heart of the national playbook for responding to a pandemic is one of the untold stories of the coronavirus crisis.

It required the key proponents — Dr. Mecher, a Department of Veterans Affairs physician, and

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CALIFORNIA DEATH EXPANDS TIMELINE OF VIRUS’S SPREAD

Case Earlier in Year Raises Questions on Transmission and U.S. Policy

This article is by **Thomas Fuller**, **Mike Baker**, **Shawn Hubler** and **Sheri Fink**.

SAN FRANCISCO — Weeks before there was evidence that the coronavirus was spreading in U.S. communities, Patricia Dowd, a 57-year-old auditor at a Silicon Valley semiconductor manufacturer, developed flulike symptoms and abruptly died in her San Jose kitchen, triggering a search for what had killed her. Flu tests were negative. The coroner was baffled. It appeared that she had suffered a massive heart attack.

But tissue samples from Ms. Dowd, who died on Feb. 6, have now shown that she was infected with the coronavirus — a startling discovery that has rewritten the timeline of the virus’s early spread in the United States and suggests that the optimistic assumptions that drove federal policies over the early weeks of the outbreak were misplaced.

The unexpected new finding makes clear that the virus was circulating in the Bay Area of California as early as January, even before the federal government began restricting travel from China on Feb. 2. It also raises new questions about where else the virus

might have been spreading undetected.

With little local testing throughout February — in part because of botched testing kits from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, along with strict guidelines that limited who could get tested — officials were not aware of the virus transmitting locally in the country until Feb. 26, in Solano County, Calif.

Previous cases had involved people who had traveled to China, where the outbreak began, or who had been exposed to someone who was sick. But the Feb. 26 case in Solano County was of unexplained origin. Similar cases of community transmission were quickly identified in nearby Santa Clara County, which includes San Jose, as well as in Washington State and Oregon.

The new test results made public late Tuesday show that even this timeline failed to reveal how long the virus had been circulating. Ms. Dowd had not recently traveled outside the country, the authorities said, and yet she died a full 20 days before the earliest recorded case of community transmission. Another previously un-

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Infection Turns Factory Towns Into Hot Zones

By **DIONNE SEARCEY**

As soon as she heard about a cluster of coronavirus cases at the Tyson pork-processing plant on the edge of Columbus Junction, Iowa, Cindy Johnston felt a ripple effect through her small community along the Iowa River.

Ms. Johnston, who manages a Dairy Sweet burgers and ice cream shack, sent home four teenage employees because their parents work at the Tyson plant. Parents of other teenage workers were too afraid of potential infection to let their children report to work at Dairy Sweet. Then, she learned of the death of an employee at the Tyson plant; it was the father of a classmate of her son.

“I’ve lived in this community all my life, and I’ve never seen it so scared,” said Ms. Johnston, who is 52, nearly the same age as the father who died.

Across the country, some big cities on the coasts are starting to experience a leveling off of Covid-19 cases, but a staggering number of small Midwestern towns anchored by meatpacking plants and other factories are finding themselves as new hot spots of the virus.

The new cases are worrying because many officials are contemplating reopening the nation’s businesses. The outbreaks are now raising the prospect of a new spread in less populous communities in the middle of the country and complicating these company towns’ debates over when to restart public life.

Tyson Foods closed the plant in Columbus Junction earlier this month. The company announced Wednesday that it was closing a plant in Logansport, Ind., as well as a large pork-processing plant in Waterloo, Iowa, after calls from public officials to shutter the facility amid a growing outbreak. A

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GEORGIA The president criticized the governor, a political ally, for reopening too soon. **PAGE A4**



JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

Chase has handed out \$14 billion through the relief program.

Banks Steered Richest Clients To Federal Aid

By **EMILY FLITTER**
and **STACY COWLEY**

The federal government’s \$349 billion aid program for small businesses devastated by the coronavirus pandemic was advertised as first-come, first-served. As many business owners found out, it was anything but.

That’s because some of the nation’s biggest banks, including JPMorgan Chase, Citibank and U.S. Bank, prioritized the applications of their wealthiest clients before turning to other loan seekers, according to half a dozen bank employees and financial industry executives who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the banks’ operations.

Customers of Citi’s private bank, where the minimum account size is \$25 million, didn’t have to use an online portal to apply for a loan; they could simply submit paperwork to their banker, who would put in an application on their behalf. At Chase, the nation’s largest bank, nearly all private and commercial banking clients who applied for a small business loan got one, whereas only one out of every 15 retail banking customers who sought loans was successful. Some banks provided highly personalized, so-called concierge service to their richest clients by enlisting representa-

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SPORTSTHURSDAY B8-11

Easy Call in N.F.L. Draft

L.S.U.’s Joe Burrow, who grew up in Ohio, will head home if the Bengals make him the top pick on Thursday. **PAGE B8**

A Not-So-Bad Loss for Boston

The Red Sox will lose a draft pick for stealing signs in 2018. The punishment could have been worse. **PAGE B11**

INTERNATIONAL A17-18

Israel’s Tactical Warning Shots

To avoid killing Hezbollah fighters in Syria and risking a war with Lebanon, Israelis are telling the militant group about attacks in advance. **PAGE A17**

Trump Puts Tehran on Notice

The president said he had ordered the Navy to “shoot down” any Iranian boats that harass Navy warships. **PAGE A18**

NATIONAL A19-21

‘Fight for Basic Human Rights’

The U.S. may share less intelligence with anti-L.G.B.T. nations, a bid to get them to decriminalize homosexuality. **PAGE A19**

BUSINESS B1-7

Hands-On Again at Amazon

Jeff Bezos, who has shunned day-to-day management, is guiding his company’s response to the pandemic. **PAGE B1**

Resort Group Gets Virus Relief

Hotels and luxury properties that funneled money back to a single company have secured about \$40 million in small-business program funding. **PAGE B1**

North Sea Oil in Trouble

Dropping crude prices from the pandemic, coupled with infections on drilling rigs, are imperiling the vast industry that sprawls across the waters off Scotland and Norway. **PAGE B7**



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Look Up in Awe

Sleek skyscrapers define New York. Our critic strolls and speaks with the architect Annabelle Selldorf. **PAGE C1**

Can We Get Artists Working?

The Federal Art Project once gave work to thousands of artists. But now, politics and society are different. **PAGE C1**

THURSDAY STYLES D1-6

At Home, and Forgoing Fashion

“I think about putting on lipstick, but then I ask myself: ‘Why?’” More women are asking such questions. **PAGE D1**

Don’t Hide From Dark Humor

Laughter is a coping mechanism during periods of sickness, death and anxiety. So you shouldn’t feel guilty. **PAGE D1**

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Gail Collins **PAGE A23**

