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Southern DAILY Make Today Different

Southern Daily News is published by Southern News Group Daily

Monday September 08, 2020 | www.today-america.com | Southern News Group

TikTok troubles narrow gap between Beijing and ByteDance founder Zhang Yiming



Zhang Yiming, founder and global CEO of ByteDance, poses in Palo Alto, California, U.S., March 4, 2020. Picture taken March 4, 2020. REUTERS/Shannon Stapleton

BEIJING/HONG KONG (Reuters) - ByteDance founder Zhang Yiming has long positioned himself as a global internet entrepreneur, largely eschewing Chinese government involvement, but U.S. demands to sell his crown jewel TikTok are testing the boundaries with Beijing.

Zhang Yiming, founder and global CEO of ByteDance, poses in Palo Alto, California, U.S., March 4, 2020. Picture taken March 4, 2020. REUTERS/Shannon Stapleton

A year ago, ByteDance was approached by the Chinese government with offers of help when TikTok, a short-video app with a huge following among young people globally, faced political heat in India, a source familiar with the situation told Reuters. But the company sent only mid-level staff to meet with government officials, signalling that the company wanted to go it alone.

The 38-year-old Zhang, who has trodden a different path to other high-profile Chinese tech tycoons, shifted tack in August when President Donald Trump threatened to ban TikTok in the United States unless it was sold to a U.S. firm.

Zhang's team sought a meeting on his behalf with China's ambassador in Washington, Cui Tiankai, two sources familiar with the matter said.

While Zhang was only hoping for an informal chat with Cui to seek advice, his approach was seen as a turning

point, government and industry sources told Reuters.

The embassy directed the ByteDance team to the foreign ministry in Beijing. Although no further talks took place, and Cui and Zhang did not speak, the Chinese government interpreted the approach as a signal that ByteDance was open to assistance.

China entered the fray on August 28, by revising a tech export control list that experts said would give them regulatory oversight over any TikTok deal. Reuters could not determine if Beijing's interpretation of Zhang's approach and the Chinese government move were linked.

One of the sources said that by standing up for ByteDance, Beijing wanted to demonstrate to private companies caught in the crossfire of China-U.S. strategic competition that the country is firmly behind them.

"We want to show all other countries that this is what the Chinese government will do if you bully any of our companies, so don't follow what the U.S. is doing," the source said.

The diplomatic dance taking place around TikTok follows years of acrimony between Washington and Beijing over the role of China's Huawei Technologies [HWT.UL], which the U.S. has alleged is effectively a Trojan horse for Chinese espionage.

Huawei and Beijing have repeatedly denied any such activity.

Asked about its engagement with ByteDance, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman said he was not aware of the specifics of the situation, adding that the United States was over-generalising the concept of national security and abusing its power.

"Not only does it go against market principles and international rules, it is a mockery to the principles of market economy and fair competition that the U.S. prides itself on," he added.

A senior U.S. administration official said China had blocked U.S. tech companies such as Facebook and Twitter for years and the United States' actions were designed to protect the private information of its citizens.

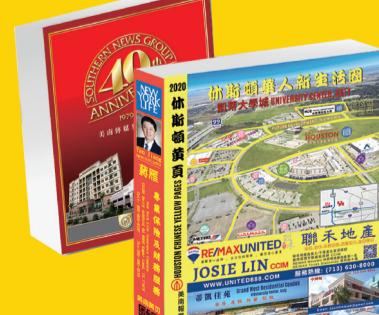
"We're just very concerned that, essentially, anything that could be done on that platform would be subject to the Chinese Communist Party's algorithmic attempts to control human behavior worldwide."

The Chinese embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment. ByteDance declined to comment.

TikTok has said it would not comply with any request to share user data with the Chinese authorities.

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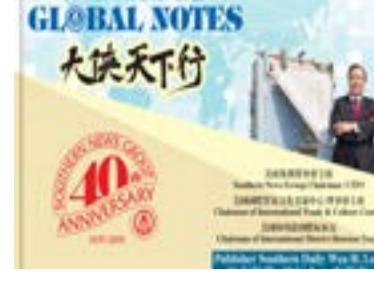
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Mr. Lee's Commentary and Dairy



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Tuesday, September 8, 2020

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WHO Chief Urges Nations To Join In Preventing 'Vaccine Nationalism'



World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus at a news conference last month in Geneva. He is urging countries to join a pact aimed at ensuring access to drugs to prevent COVID-19. (Photo/Fabrice Coffrini/Pool/AFP via Getty Images)

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Urging countries to join a global vaccine agreement, the head of the World Health Organization on Tuesday reiterated concerns that, once developed, drugs to prevent COVID-19 might be hoarded by some countries at the expense of others. Speaking in Geneva, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus issued a call to avoid "vaccine nationalism" by joining the COVAX Global Vaccines Facility – a pact aimed at ensuring access to such drugs around the world. WHO has set an Aug. 31 deadline to establish terms for the new pact. Tedros said he sent a letter to the WHO's 194 member states, urging participation.

"Nationalism exacerbated the pandemic and contributed to the total failure of the global supply chain," he said, noting that hoarding by some countries led to shortages of protective gear in the early days of the pandemic. He said that the world's interconnectedness means that "a vaccine developed in one country may need to be filled in vials with stoppers that are produced in another, using materials for the high-grade glass that is only available from yet another country. Sharing finite supplies strategically and globally is actually in each country's national interest," Tedros said. WHO's push for an international pact to share vaccines comes as the European Union, Britain, Switzerland and the United States are forging deals with drugmakers that have prospective COVID-19 vaccines in various stages of trials. China and Russia also are working on vaccines. According to a Johns Hopkins University tally, since the start of the pandemic, there have been nearly 22 million coronavirus cases worldwide, with nearly 776,000 deaths.

To avoid such a scenario, the World Health Organiza-



Rwanda. Health care workers should be first in line for pandemic vaccines, global health experts say. (S. Wohlfahrt/AFP/Getty Images)

'Vaccine nationalism' threatens global plan to distribute COVID-19 shots fairly

As soon as the first COVID-19 vaccines get approved, a staggering global need will confront limited supplies. Many health experts say it's clear who should get the first shots: health care workers around the world, then people at a higher risk of severe disease, then those in areas where the disease is spreading rapidly, and finally, the rest of us. Such a strategy "saves the most lives and slows transmission the fastest," says Christopher Elias, who heads the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Global Development Division. "It would be ludicrous if low-risk people in rich countries get the vaccine when health care workers in South Africa don't," adds Ellen 't Hoen, a Dutch lawyer and public health activist. Yet money and national interest may win out. The United States and Europe are placing advance orders for hundreds of millions of doses of successful vaccines, potentially leaving little for poorer parts of the world. "I'm very concerned," says John Nkengasong, director of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

To avoid such a scenario, the World Health Organiza-

tion and other international organizations have set up a system to accelerate and equitably distribute vaccines, the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) Facility, which seeks to entice rich countries to sign on by reducing their own risk that they're betting on the wrong vaccine candidate. But the idea has been put together on the fly, and it's unclear how many rich countries will join.



Recent history isn't encouraging. A cocktail of powerful antiviral drugs revolutionized HIV treatment in the West in 1996, saving many lives, but it took 7 years for the drugs to become widely available in Africa, the hardest hit continent. "That was catastrophic and that experience is high in my mind," Nkengasong says. During the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic, the United States and many European countries donated 10% of their vaccine stocks to poorer countries—but only after it became clear they had enough for their own populations. "Too many had to wait too long for too little," says Richard Hatchett, CEO of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, a partner in COVAX.

This time, too, rich countries' biggest concern is to protect their own citizens. The U.S. government has signed deals worth more than \$6 billion with several vaccine companies as part of Operation Warp Speed, which aims to provide the U.S. population with vaccines by January 2021. Europe's Inclusive Vaccines Alliance, formed by France, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands, has signed a deal to buy 400 million doses of AstraZeneca's vaccine for use in EU member states. The United Kingdom has inked deals with AstraZeneca and other companies as well. China is developing its own vaccines; it's unclear how early it will be willing to share or whether the shots will come with political strings attached. The idea behind COVAX is to invest in about 12 different vaccines and ensure early access when they become available. "The goal is to have 2 billion doses by the end of 2021," says Seth Berkley, director of GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, the third COVAX partner: 950 million for high- and upper middle-income countries, 950 million for low- and lower middle-income countries, and 100 million for "humanitarian situations and outbreaks that are out of control." A first \$750 million deal with AstraZeneca for 300 million doses was

announced on 4 June.



Berkley accepts that many rich countries will do their own deals with manufacturers. But signing up to COVAX in addition is an insurance policy, he says. If the vaccines have invested in fail to materialize, they would still have access to others through COVAX, although only enough for 20% of their populations. The money they invest will be used to guarantee lower prices for poorer countries. Separately, the COVAX Advance Market Commitment is collecting donations from the higher-income countries. GAVI says COVAX will need \$2 billion in donations to pay for the vaccine doses in 90 countries. "We're trying to do everything we can to try to have a global approach because we think it's the right thing to do from a science point of view and from an equity point of view," Berkley says.

COVAX is planning to spread its own risk by investing in a variety of vaccine strategies. Single-dose vaccines could be easier to give in refugee camps, for instance, whereas a double-dose regimen might work fine at a European doctor's office. Some vaccines are based on new technology, creating more uncertainty about regulatory approval and manufacturing capacity. COVAX also hopes to source its vaccines from companies in different locations, so that no single country can stop them from being exported. COVAX is a clever way to try to hold together the interests of different countries, says David Fidler, an adjunct senior fellow for global health at the Council on Foreign Relations. "Even from the point of view of raw self-interest that governments often have, you can see why this would look attractive," he says. "They're not ignoring the political reality." But he worries countries may hesitate to sign up, and that those that do may renege on the deal once the scramble for doses actually begins.



So far, more than 70 countries that plan to finance their own vaccine have expressed interest in signing up with COVAX. (They have to formally commit by the end of August and provide an advance of 15% of the overall amount.) Whether they will come through is another matter. Some countries in the European Union—which often stresses the importance of global solidarity—have indicated they intend to donate money, but may not order vac-

cines themselves through COVAX. "Where the procurement of doses for themselves is concerned, we are still actively discussing with them," Hatchett says. "There are models where we could work together."

Nkengasong says Africa needs to explore other avenues as well. "We welcome the COVAX Facility arrangement but we cannot just wait for discussions in Geneva," he says. "We need to take charge of our own destiny." At an African Union meeting in late June, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa called on leaders to secure vaccine supplies for the continent and ensure that vaccines are manufactured there. Nkengasong says African governments are approaching banks to finance deals with pharma companies similar to those signed by the United States. "We need to come together as a continent of 1.3 billion people to not be left behind."

Kate Elder, a vaccines expert at Doctors Without Borders's Access Campaign, sees COVAX as perhaps the best shot at an equitable distribution of vaccines, but says it should be more transparent. "How did they choose AstraZeneca? What conditions are there in the agreement with AstraZeneca if the company doesn't meet volume commitments?" she asks. "None of the conditions around that are known."



Both COVAX and governments should also ensure that funded vaccine producers make their data freely available to any company that wants to use them, 't Hoen adds. "I'm very worried that they are doing this without strings attached, that the know-how that is developed with this public funding does not become publicly available for others to use," she says.

What's needed most for COVAX to work is political commitment at the highest levels of government, says Alexandra Phelan, a lawyer at Georgetown University who specializes in global health. Without "a really big international effort," for instance at the United Nations or the G-20, the early doses of vaccines are unlikely to go to those who need them most, Phelan says. "It will be slow, it will be inadequate, and there will be unnecessary deaths."

It didn't have to be this way, Fidler says. Experts have long warned that a devastating pandemic was likely to hit some day, but the international community failed to put in place a mechanism to ensure equitable access to a pandemic vaccine. "So for an entirely foreseeable, expected, predicted, global problem," he says, "we have nothing." (Courtesy sciencemag.org)

WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

09/05/2020

CORONAVIRUS DIARY

Professor Esther Lee Will Host Our TV Show

The 2020 Presidential election is less than sixty days away. This election will definitely influence the future of the world.

We are ready to invite the best speakers to discuss the topics on our daily television show. One of them is professor Esther Lee. She was an education professor at the University of Houston for many years. She is not just

an educator. She is also a social activist who ran for the U.S. Congress and served in important posts in both the Reagan and Bush administrations.

We are so happy that even though she is retired, she has agreed to come back to the television stage and talk about today's politics.

Dr. Lee will be on our prime time schedule twice a week during our special



report on the 2020 election. In the meantime, she will also talk about the culture impact this pandemic time has made on our families.

Dr. Lee is our leader. She came from Taiwan when she was very young. Later she became a professor, a politician and an author of many books. She has

published her success story and really represents our generation of new immigrants.

November 3, 2020, is such an important date for all of us as our nation is rapidly changing. It is in all our hands to be a part of that change and we all need to go out and vote.



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Editor's Choice



Director Roger Michell and actor Jim Broadbent pose during the photo call for "The Duke" September 4. REUTERS/Yara Nardi



Model Cecilia Rodriguez poses during the screening of the film "Padrenostro" at the Venice Film Festival, September 4, 2020. REUTERS/Yara Nardi



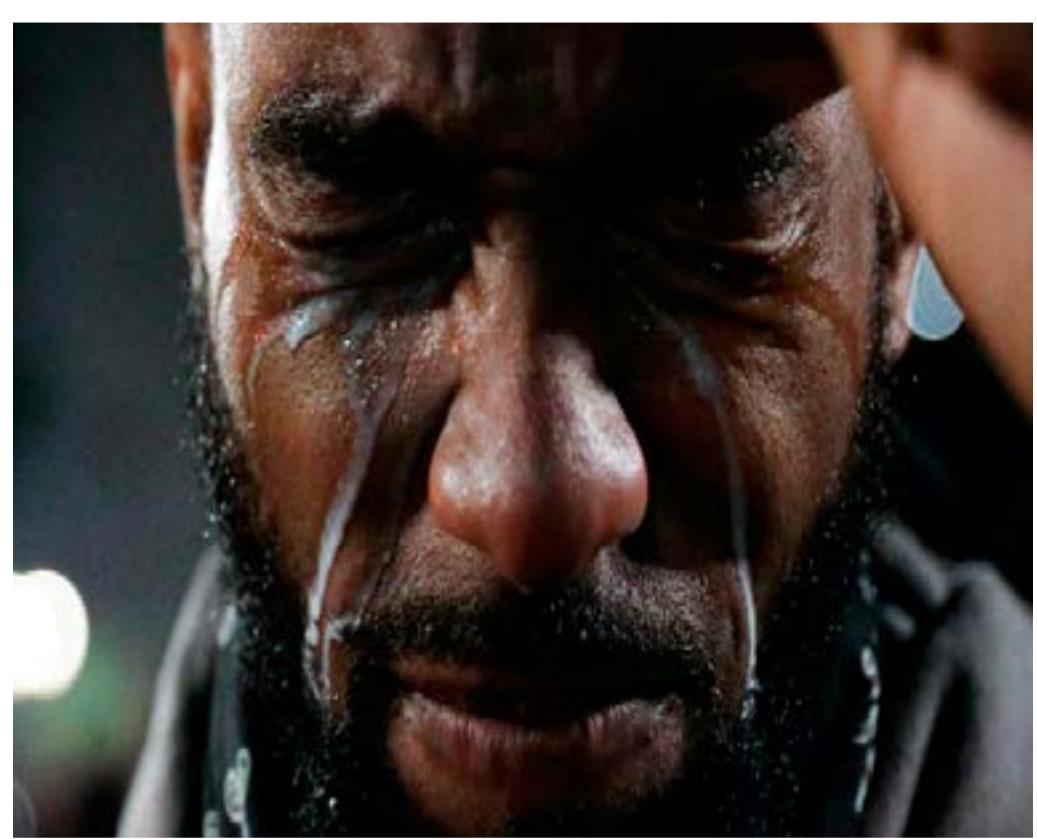
Federal law enforcement officers fire tear gas and other munitions to disperse protesters during a demonstration against police violence and racial inequality in Portland, Oregon, July 30, 2020. REUTERS/Caitlin Ochs



A chimney stands at the site of a burned house from the LNU Lightning Complex Fire in Napa, California. REUTERS/Adrees Latif



A man removes the debris after a five-storey building collapsed in Raigad in the western state of Maharashtra, India. REUTERS/Stringer



A protester reacts to milk poured on his eyes after being tear-gassed during a protest against racial inequality in Portland, Oregon, July 19, 2020. REUTERS/Caitlin Ochs



A parrot stands on a girl's shoulder on the first day of reopening the Giza zoo on the outskirts of Cairo, Egypt. REUTERS/Mohamed Abd El Ghany



U.S. Postmaster General Louis DeJoy testifies before a House Oversight and Reform Committee hearing on slowdowns at the Postal Service ahead of the November elections on Capitol Hill in Washington. Tom Williams/Pool via REUTERS

USPS Delays Could Keep 25% Of Older Americans From Getting Life-Saving Prescription Medications



(Photo/Tareq Ismail on Unsplash/Drugs, Health & Medical, Politics)

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — United States Postal Service delays are in the spotlight right now. On that note, a poll from the University of Michigan is illustrating just how important the mail system is for many Americans' medicinal needs. Researchers say USPS delays could prevent millions of people from getting their prescription medications on time.

Close to one in four Americans between the ages of 50 and 80 attain at least one medication via the mail. Moreover, that percentage increases to 29% once the field is narrowed to only Americans taking at least one prescription medication.

All in all, 17% of respondents within that age group say they receive all their medicines through the mail. Also, 35% of respondents who receive medication in the mail say this arrangement is actually a requirement mandated by their insurance provider.

These numbers, while no doubt still very relevant today, were originally collected in 2017 as part of the National Poll on Healthy Aging. However, this portion of the poll had never been released up until now. It's important to note that respondents did not specify which mail delivery service (UPS, USPS, etc) they use to order

medicine. Circling back to Americans who are required to order medication through the mail, 53% say doing so helps them save money. Another 42% feel it's simply more convenient. Meanwhile, close to 30% say they like ordering medicine via the mail because they've been taking their medications for a long time and don't need to discuss anything with a pharmacist. Another 29% say their doctor automatically sets up medication deliveries through the mail for them.



The importance of the USPS has been called into question as of late. But these stats certainly suggest that the U.S. mail system makes life easier for many among us — at least when it comes to medicine. (Courtesy <https://www.studyfinds.org/>)

Postal Service delays of prescription drugs put thousands of American lives at risk

COMMUNITY

"Without it, people are going to die," said a retired nurse in Michigan whose pain medication arrived late.

Jan Stowe saw countless patients go through withdrawals during her 40-year nursing career, but last month she experienced it herself when the U.S. Postal Service failed to deliver her medication for chronic back pain and muscle spasms.

A nurse for combat veterans during and after the Vietnam War, Stowe said she could identify her own symptoms but couldn't do anything but wait in her Traverse City, Michigan, home. "I was jittery. I was anxious. I wasn't able to concentrate. I was pacing. I was feeling nauseous. I was sweating. It was all the symptoms," Stowe said of last month's experience. "I mean, I've never taken heroin, but I've taken care of drug addicts. Now I know what it feels like." Stowe, whose back problems forced her into retirement, is among thousands of Americans who have missed their prescription medications because of Postal Service delays. A dramatic decrease in on-time deliveries since the beginning of July has put lives in jeopardy as a growing number of people depend on getting their prescriptions by mail.



A U.S. Postal Service letter carrier walks her route in Northumberland, Pa.,

The Postal Service manages 1.2 billion prescription drug shipments a year — or about 4 million each day, six days a week — the National Association of Letter Carriers reported earlier this year. That number has grown during the pandemic, and many recipients are accusing President Donald Trump and the White House of orchestrating mail delays to undermine mail-in voting. Postmaster General Louis DeJoy said last week that he would suspend any operational changes to the Postal Service until after the election to avoid any impact on voting by mail. But that doesn't address secondary effects, such

as delayed prescriptions and the economic fallout on small businesses.

Erin Fox, a pharmacotherapy professor at the University of Utah, emphasized that most prescriptions fulfilled through the mail treat chronic conditions, rather than short-term prescriptions, like a course of antibiotics.

She said these medications often treat cholesterol or high blood pressure — and without them, patients could have heart attacks or strokes — but also consist of inhalers, insulin and anti-rejection medicines for people who have had organ transplants.

"Delays with the postal system is very concerning because patients may not be able to access the chronic medications that they need," she said.

For Ray Carolin, an Air Force veteran and former Secret Service agent who lives in Lafayette, Indiana, delayed medications can be the difference between life and death. When the Postal Service doesn't deliver the medications sent by the Veterans Administration, which fulfills 80 percent of its prescriptions by mail, Carolin is left scrambling to find the drugs he needs and forced to pay out of pocket.

"Those drugs are pretty important to me — they keep me alive," Carolin said. "And on one occasion I had to drive 60 miles to go over to the VA hospital in Indy because I hadn't received some heart medicine. And on another drug that I had to have, I had to go to CVS Pharmacy locally here in Lafayette as opposed to driving over to Indianapolis, and I had to go buy my medicine because I didn't get it from VA."

Sens. Bob Casey and Elizabeth Warren, of Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, respectively, are attempting to bear down on the

issue by reaching out to the companies that actually fulfill the prescriptions.

The two Senate Democrats sent a series of letters to the top five mail-order pharmacies and pharmacy benefit managers — including Cigna's service, CVS and Walgreens — about the delivery delays of prescription drugs sent to older people, veterans and millions of other Americans, who, they wrote, face "grave risks if President Trump's efforts to degrade the mail service results in delays and disruptions." Casey told NBC News that he had received more than 97,000 letters from constituents about the policies instituted by DeJoy, a longtime Republican ally and former logistics executive who admitted during a congressional hearing Friday that his changes had caused some of the delays.

Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, pressed DeJoy about prescription drugs on Friday, telling him of the "heartbreaking stories" he's heard, sharing the anecdote of a veteran with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease who reached out to his office after enduring a long wait to receive his inhaler. "We are working here feverishly to get the system running, add stability and also to hire more workers to handle the delivery process," DeJoy said. "We all feel bad about the dip in our service level."

Constituents from all 67 of Pennsylvania's counties have reached out to Casey's office, from "veterans missing medications in Clarion County to small-business owners in Wexford who depend on reliable postal service to deliver their products to their customers," Casey said. (Courtesy <https://www.nbcnews.com/>)



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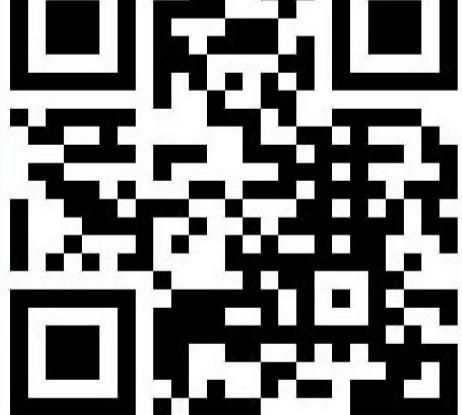


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