

Coronavirus - Lab Leakage! - No way, problem child, China, can be put to bed!

TIOL - COB(WEB) - 766

JUNE 03, 2021

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WITH

the pandemic having walloped mankind and the global economy with all the ferocity at its command, a decay in its surge of infections has finally been recorded across the world, including India - one of few harder hit countries. However, the serried walls of silence for almost a year have, in the recent weeks, paved the pathway for a surge in interest over the issue of origin of COVID-19. Zoonotic spillover vs Lab Leak theory! During Mr Trump's presidency it was a hot-button issue. But it was not taken seriously enough either by the Americans or US allies in Europe or even virologists as they saw him suffering from 'Pinocchio effect'! His sharply depreciated geopolitical credibility and unmistakable derision for science

further shovelled scientific community away from his conspiracy theory. Treating the same as conspiracy-mongering emanating from his pork-barrel politics, some of the seasoned epidemiologists, virologists and ecologists rather hurriedly preferred to debunk the prospect of a lab-leakage from the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) and called all the talks as baloney! **SacrÃ© bleu!**

Poor science reporters in the Western media, since such scientists are their only source of information, also cloned their response in rejecting the lab leakage theory!

Let's now jump from 2020 to 2021 and hold your breath! With the daily caseload steadily plummeting to a few thousands from lakhs at the peak and the Biden Administration finding time to catch breath and China not wasting its breath, the White House think tank felt coerced to think afresh about the 'patient zero'! With the pandemic doing a 'Chernobyl', strangely not for China, but for the US and the rest of the world, the US woke up in nervous sweat with the mystery question - Is coronavirus (SARS-2) natural or lab-designed? With the canine virus still on prowl and there is no let-up in its virulence - over 17 crore cases with close to 36 lakh deaths, officially, how is that nothing is known about its origin and how it spread so rapidly? Being in the know of some intelligence clues coming in dribs and drabs and a good number of virologists writing for scientific journals and not ruling out the possibility of a lab leakage as tin-hat nonsense, the Biden Administration found meaty reasons to take the mic and order its intelligence community to double their efforts and submit a report within 90 days. In addition, the US, the UK, India and many others also demanded at the WHO General Assembly that a fresh investigation, transparent and purely scientific, needs to be undertaken to throw fresh light on how the virus jumped directly from horseshoe bats to humans or was there an intermediary host? It is globally believed that such a finding is hugely important to prevent future pandemics as being forecast by the WHO and other researchers at embarrassing frequency.

Let's now examine a chain of events which desperately warrants more facts and hard evidence to help scientists arrive at a definitive conclusion. What nudged the White House to call for full-fledged investigation at the cost of its already strained diplomatic relations with China is the intelligence input that at least three employees of the WIV were rushed to hospital with COVID-like symptoms in November 2019 - a month before China reported the outbreak to WHO on December 31, 2019. Since it was not a case of some yankee peddling some risible fantasies, it logically raised eyebrows and also demonstrated that the WIV is complicit with the Communist Government of China in concealing the suspected leakage of the virus. But, given the fact that lab leakage is a pedestrian event at all prominent research labs across the world, why should China put its political and diplomatic might behind concealing the incident unless it knows that unethical and dangerous nature of research, perhaps military in nature, being done at WIV may expose its devilish geopolitical ambitions and besmirch its global shrewdly-crafted image! China was in the know that SARS-1 had escaped from labs twice in 2003 - Singapore and Taiwan and then twice from Beijing lab in 2004.

Even smallpox had sneaked out of British lab in 1978. Since viruses under research and re-tooling do escape from even the best of labs, why did China hide even basic information like when was it first detected and where? Why did it fear an earful from the international community or was it simply fearless about it as such a macabre pandemic would be an enabler to build a new world order dominated by China?

The community of virologists today stand asundered. A large number now suspect on the basis of the news report that some WIV researchers were hospitalised before the Wuhan outbreak was reported. Even as such suspicion deepens the WHO has gathered vital studies done by

Italian researchers who found that even before China notified the WHO about the outbreak, a good number of Italians, obviously having business links with China, had developed SARS-2 anti-bodies in the month of October 2019! Mixed samples were also sent to Amsterdam labs for re-verification and there was not even an iota of change in the final finding. This piece of information indeed becomes more critical today as it points towards an irrefutable evidence that if Coronavirus had already infected Italian visitors in October, the spread of infection in local communities in Wuhan ought to be prior to that - perhaps in September!

If that is so, why was China in sleep mode till December 2019 when the WHO's China office was notified of 'pneumonia of unknown cause'? It was only on January 11, 2020, China shared genome sequencing with WHO. In this backdrop, should the world not work on the hypothesis that China was 'cleaning' its murky and messy backyard so that 'highly explosive' nature of its bio-weapon linked research was not exposed to the world. It was also perhaps erasing all data establishing the 'romantic' link between the WIV and its military, the PLA?

Also See - [COVID-19 - China teeters on brink of becoming pariah - Is India ready to encash it!](#)

The 'data dusting' operation is further corroborated by the WHO team of investigators who were allowed to spend barely three hours inside the Wuhan Institute in certain areas only and no epidemiologically sensitive data about the first patients and their symptoms were shared. The WHO team was keen to visit all the locations of horseshoe bats to find evidence of the first and most widely accepted hypothesis initially that coronavirus is a Nature's cuss! However, China could at best provide 'guided' and regulated tour to certain locations and declined to share all the data.

What goes to strengthen the leakage theory is the well-meditated 'distraction' campaign orchestrated by China immediately after the virus began demonstrating its lethal powers in many countries.

It indulged in 'Wolf Warrior' diplomacy to muddle the waters so that none talks about the origin of the virus.

To give it a hard push it also acted bumptiously in South China Sea against the neighbouring countries. It also got into a belligerent scuffle and then a border stand-off with India. It soon took over Hong Kong abusing the sanctity of its agreement with the British. It also escalated the trade war not only with the US alone but also many other countries. All such activities were largely designed to cause a tectonic shift in the global attention away from the patient zero!

Incidentally, at home turf, China also began purging all such voices which may prove its possible culpability! It thus acted as a quick and ruthless 'Eraser' for many scientists and journalists who initially played the role of whistleblowers. Not only suppression of information but its no-tolerance policy towards truth tellers can well be gauged from the latest incident of incarcerating a blogger who had commented on the hand-combat between the Indian and Chinese soldiers and how miserably the latter had perished in a good number!

What lends credence to the lab-leakage hypothesis is the nature of research being done at WIV on bats - the source of coronavirus. It is well known that WIV is headed by a globally known virologist Dr Shi Zhengli who is also known as the 'Bat Lady'. Her team of researchers has spent many years to fathom mutations that permit bat viruses to spill over into human populations. In 2015 her team had designed a chimera created from a bat coronavirus and a mouse coronavirus that was quite efficacious in replicating in human airway cells.

WIV was incidentally working in close association with the US Government-funded research institutions earlier. Among the projects, one of them was about enhancing the striking capability of virus, known as Gain-of-Function (GoF) experiment. Such a project is all about playing with the genetic code of the virus and claying a lethal hybrid one

! It is generally done to enhance a country's bio-weapon capacity. It was President Obama who had put an embargo on such a project in 2014. As soon as the embargo lapsed in 2017, the Directors of key US Research bodies got powers to permit such a project and Ms Zhengli is reported to have got approval for one on coronavirus. The US not only partly funded but also provided technical support, in bona fide belief, to set up a high-security lab of BSL-4 category - such labs are designed to deal with most lethal pathogens. It is widely believed by a large section of the virologist community that all safety and security features were not put in place but the research which was initially rolled out in another BSL-2 or BSL-3 lab in the vicinity of the WIV continued on hundreds of bat samples collected from dark bat caves and mines in Yunnan province of South China.

Also See - [Spiky Hairballs of Protein have killed too many of us - Where is Patient zero? - Can Nature be a bio-terrorist?](#)

Interestingly, such a fact that Yunnan province is over 1500 km away from Wuhan, goes to militate against the much-touted hypothesis of zoonotic spillover. For such a spillover to take place, what is scientifically and mandatorily required is the presence of a host which is starkly missing in this case. Secondly, no COVID-19 infected patient was found in the territories between Yunnan and Wuhan! It is not possible, say virologists. Secondly, every virus theoretically

evolves, infects other animals, then humans and finally crosses the threshold of pathogenicity in terms of infectiousness to be worried about. SARS-2 is unique in many ways - it straightaway gained the rocket-momentum to jump from bats to human and then there is no natural emaciation after a period of time. On the contrary, its ferocity is rising more lethal and it has been mutating more rapidly. And its every new variant is turning out to be crueler which questions the long-established scientific principles followed by virologists worldwide.

In a nutshell, the preponderance of probability favours the lab leakage hypothesis rather than the natural spillover! Secondly, going by the global legal jurisprudence, the onus would have rested on the WHO and other finger-pointers of such a hypothesis provided the Dragon would have cooperated and shared all the necessary data. Since the spirit of cooperation is unmistakably missing on part of cock-a-hoop China, the ball has fallen in its lap to disprove the circumstantial evidence of a thuggish coverup operation. Since China is least expected to share the truth, the origin of COVID-19 will forever remain a 'blackhole'

and the community of virologists would have to begin their work for forecasting next pandemic from any blind spot of their liking. No amount of geopolitical pressure is going to work as China having unshakeable sense of its own virtue, enjoys extra influence at the WHO because of its hefty voluntary contribution as well as its veto power at UN Security Council. And it has already telegraphed its snarky comments on fresh investigation. Though the Biden Administration and many other democracies may push for more scientific information on this issue but China's constant response is going to be high-decibel infodemic to distract all investigation into its territories. And thus, it is almost impossible to put China, the problem child, to bed!