



GLOBAL WEATHER

LR: Light Rain HR: Heavy Rain

TDS: Thundershower LC: Light Cloud SNY: Sunny

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# COVID: CHINA REJECTS WHO'S PLAN TO REVISIT WUHAN LAB LEAK THEORY

#### BEIJING

CHINA will not participate in the second phase of WHO's investigation into the origins of the Covid pandemic, a top official announced on Thursday, after the possibility of the virus leaking from a bio lab in Wuhan was included by the UN's top health agency in the next stage of its inquiry. China also dismissed reports that some of the employees of the Wuhan Institute of Virology were infected with the virus before it spread to the central Chinese city and the world, killing over 40 lakh people.

China will not follow the World Health Organisation's suggested plan on the second phase of Covid origin-tracing, Zeng Yixin, the vice minister of the National Health Commission (NHC), told reporters here.

The work plan on the secondphase origins study proposed by the WHO contains language that does not respect science, he said.

China's broadside against the WHO and its Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who previously won Beijing's praise and support for praising President Xi Jinping's handling of the coronavirus, came after he asked China to be transparent and provide raw data.

"Asking China to be transparent, open and cooperate, especially on the information, raw data that we asked for at the early days of the pandemic. We owe it to the millions who suffered and the millions who died to know what happened," Tedros had said.

More than four million people have died worldwide since



A medical worker collecting a sample of a nucleic acid test for detecting coronavirus in Nanjing, in Jiangsu province, China | AFP FILE

the start of the pandemic in December 2019 and WHO has faced growing pressure to further investigate the origins of the virus. Ghebreyesus outlined the terms of the inquiry's next phase. This included looking at certain science research

institutions. He has now called on China to be more co-operative about the early stages of the outbreak.

Zeng said the plan has listed the hypothesis that China had violated lab regulations and leaked the virus as one of the major research objectives, and he was very shocked after reading the proposal, state-run China Daily reported.

Instead, the next-phase origin tracing should focus on various regions and countries, he said, reiterating Beijing's claim that Covid broke out in several places in the world and China was the first to report about it in December, 2019 when it emerged in Wuhan. Zeng said he was shocked by the WHO's work plan as it has been compromised by political manipulation and disrespect of scien-

tific facts.

He said China had allowed the WHO experts to visit all places they wanted to go and meet all people they wanted to see early this year, adding that the results of the WHO-China joint study are able to stand the test of time.

"We hope the WHO can carefully consider the advice by Chinese scientists, take investigating the origin of Covid as a scientific question free from political interference, and properly conduct sustained investigations into the origin of the virus in various countries across the world," he said.

Zeng also dismissed reports that three employees of the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), from where the US alleges the virus may have been leaked, fell sick shortly before the first documented cases of Covid.

PTI

# Explosion in Gaza Strip market kills 1, injures 10

#### GAZA CITY

AN explosion tore through a house in a popular market in the Gaza Strip on Thursday, killing one person and wounding 10, the Palestinian territory's interior ministry said.

It was not immediately clear what caused the explosion.

The blast in the Al-Zawiya area collapsed large parts of the house and damaged dozens of buildings and shops nearby, according to the statement. Explosives engineering teams were investigating; civil defense teams and the police were able to control the ensuing fire. The blast shook the neighbourhood on the third day of Eid al Adha.

The Israeli army signalled it wasn't involved, calling the explosion an internal matter in Gaza.Gaza City is already



Palestinian rescuers and security personnel work at the scene of an explosion in the Al-Zawiya market area of Gaza City | AP/PTI

struggling with heavy damage sustained from an 11-day war in May between Israel and Gaza's militant Hamas rulers. At least 254 people were killed in Gaza during the conflict, including 67 children and 39 women, according to the Gaza health ministry. *AP* 

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# Syria accuses Israel of carrying out airstrike

#### DAMASCUS

SYRIA accused Israel of carry ing out an airstrike in a central province early on Thursday, the second such attack in as many days. The aerial attack caused material damage, it said. The country's state news agency quoted an unidentified Syrian military official as saying the air defence systems shot down most of the missiles in the attack in the region of Quseir in Homs province. The report did not say what was targeted. There was no immediate comment from Israel.

Neighbouring Lebanon's president, Michel Aoun, urged his foreign minister to protest with the UN the use of Lebanese airspace to carry out attacks on Syria. Lebanese media reported that a rocket fell inside Lebanon in Lahfed, a village in the north, on Thursday, causing a large crater.

Israel has launched hundreds of strikes against Iran-linked military targets in war-ravaged Syria over the years but rarely acknowledges or discusses such operations. Late Monday, Syria reported an Israeli airstrike near northern Aleppo province, but did not elaborate.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitor that has activists on the ground in Syria, said Monday's strikes targeted weapons depots belonging to Iranian-backed militiamen operating in Aleppo's Safira region. The group also confirmed Thursday's strikes, saying they destroyed ammunition and weapons depots belonging to the Lebanese militant Hezbollah group in Homs. The Iranbacked group has been operating in Syria for years, siding with President Assad's forces in the devastating civil war and helping the government reclaim most of the country. AP

#### EXPRESS READ

### Nod for Zuma to attend brother's funeral

Johannesburg: Jailed former
South African president Jacob
Zuma was granted compassionate
leave on Thursday to attend his
brother's funeral. Zuma arrived at
his late brother Michael Zuma's
residence under security escort to
attend the latter's funeral.
Michael died on Sunday after
battling an undisclosed illness for
seven years.
PTI

## Syrian govt shells kill 7 of same family

Beirut: Syrian government artillery shells struck a village in the last rebel enclave in the country on Thursday, killing seven members of the same family, including four children, rescue workers said. The shelling is part of an ongoing military escalation in the area in northwestern Syria, which had been under a cease-fire sponsored by Russia and Turkey since last year.

#### MANAPPURAM FINANCE LTD.

#### **GOLD AUCTION NOTICE**

KEELKATTALAI, 107640700028367, 8368, 8403, 8419, 8420, 8548, 8562, 8568, 8592, 8593, 8594, 8682, 8709, 8755, 9220, 9222, 9227, 9240, 9242, 9244, 9248, 9261, 9265, 9266, 9273, 9281, 9301, 9313, 9336, 9337, 9351, 107640730006336, 6470, 6563, 6685, 7210, 7217, 7218, 7219, 7243, 7255, KELAMBAKKAM, 117390700022160, 2161, 2187, 2189, 2232, 2235, 2327, 2374, 2472, 3060, 3068, 3085, 3094, 3096, 3107, 3123, 3134, 3141, 3159, 3176, 117390730008995, 9011, 9145, 9202, 9273, 9359, 9362, 9364, 9365, 9368, 9426, 9507, 9768, 117390730010102, 0129, 0159, 0175, 0207, 0232, 0232, 0233, KOTTIVAKKAM, 110490700026344, 6345, 6451, 6485, 6565, 6952, 6955, 6956, 6962, 6967, 6975, 6976, 6981, 6992, 6999, 7010, 7013, 7022, 7040, 7044, 7047, 110490730007544, 7545, 7779, 7796, 7983, 8061, 8105, 8106, 8168, 8169, 8170, 8171, 8193, 841

The pledges, in specific and the public, in general, are hereby notified that public auction of the gold ornaments pledged in the below accounts is proposed to be conducted at the following branches on 16.08.2021 from 10.00 am onwards. We are auctioning gold ornaments defaulted customers who have failed to make payment of his/her loan amount despite being notified by registered letters. Unauctioned in any other days without further notice. Changes in venue or date (if any) will be displayed at auction centre and on website without any further notice.

8414, 8540, 9311, 9584, 9613, 9656, 9657, 9697, 9709, KOVILAMBAKKAM, 115170700023381, 3382, 3967, 3985, 4003, 4005, 4043, 4145, 4289, 4421, 4982, 4984, 4997, 5006, 5007, 5017, 5029, 5030, 5040, 5052, 5063, 5073, 5074, 5075, 5093, 5095, 5110, 5112, 5115, 5116, 5144, 5151, 5152 7361, 7362, 7930, 7936, 7938, 7944, 7958, 7966, 7967, 7971, 7973, 7976, 7978, 7988, 7989, 7990, 7991, 7992, 7999, 8000, 8011, 8022, 8044, 8048, 8049, 8050, 8058, 129040730004116, 4142, 4313, 4317, 4318, 4319, 4320, 4322, 4323, 4324, 4328,4337, 4362, 4364, 4365, 4366, 4382, 4415, 4429, 4457, 4588, 4685, 4912, 5329, 5336, 5356, 5360, 5370, 5371, SRIPERUMBUDUR, 110120700024856, 4908, 5065, 5067, 5127, 5186, 5263, 5268, 5317, 5320, 5340, 5914, 5917, 5918, 5921, 5937, 5938, 5947, 5949 . 6933, 6936, 6939, 6950, 6953, 6954, 6956, 6960, 6968, 6974, 6976, 122480730007619, 7947, 7948, 7949, 7953, 7954, 7979, 7989, VALLAL PACHAIAPPAN STREET KANCHIPURAM, 109920700053078, 3082, 3158, 3201 109920730006609, 6941, 7106, 7294, 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