

## China world’s second biggest weapons producer: researchers

AFP, Stockholm

The opaque Chinese arms industry has made the Asian nation the world’s second largest producer of munitions, a clear shift from a decade ago when China relied on imports, researchers said in a new report yesterday.

The report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) suggests that China’s weapons production, which has previously been shrouded in mystery owing to a lack of transparency, has grown as three of the world’s top 10 arms companies are Chinese.

“We can with confidence say that China is the second largest arms producer in the world, behind the US and ahead of Russia,” Nan Tian, co-author of the report, told AFP.

The report notes however that the lack of transparency remains an “important caveat” when studying the Chinese arms industry.

The vast majority of the estimated \$70-\$80 billion (63 to 72 billion euros) worth of Chinese munitions sold every year are bought by the different branches of China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA).

This still represents a dramatic shift over the last 10 years as China in the past was a big importer of weapons from Russia and Ukraine.

“They no longer need to rely on other countries for their weapons,” Tian said.

Chinese arms companies are also much more specialised than their international counterparts.

Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC), the country’s largest arms company, for instance, mostly produces aircraft and avionics, while most large non-Chinese producers cover a wide range of military products.

SIPRI researchers have previously struggled to obtain reliable data on the size of the Chinese arms industry, since the producers are all state-owned entities.

“Everything is locked under the term national security,” Tian said.

In the report the researchers have looked into four specific Chinese companies, all of which rank among the world’s top 20, and say that with an increase in the available data on these companies “it is now possible to develop reasonably reliable estimates of the scale of the Chinese arms industry.”

Though there are no official statistics on Chinese arms exports available, the report notes that the Chinese arms “industry has developed to a point where there is an increased demand for its weapons overseas,” and estimates place China as the world’s fifth largest weapons exporter, SIPRI said.

## Buses

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city air in 100 days.

The microparticles sucked into the filters weighed the equivalent of a tennis ball, Go-Ahead Group said.

The buses themselves are fuelled by diesel, a spokesperson confirmed, though he said the engines were “Euro 6”-compliant -- a vehicle emissions standard set as acceptable by the European Union.

“We want to play our part in tackling the crisis in urban air quality and show that buses can be integral to cleaning up our cities,” David Brown, Go-Ahead’s chief executive, said in a statement to CNN.

While Go-Ahead is believed to be the first company in the UK to develop an air-filtering bus, it is not the first in the world.

Buses fitted with a rooftop air filtration system were rolled out in Delhi in 2018, in a move designed to help tackle the city’s pollution problem.

The five buses were developed by the Manav Rachna Innovation and Incubation Centre as part of a pilot, with 30 more buses set to be introduced in future, according to India’s Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Climate Change.

## West Bengal

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and that states are constitutionally bound to follow any law passed by the Centre, the Congress and the Left have pointed to the federal structure of India.

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said such a resolution “represents the will of the people” as it comes through their elected representatives. Kerala said the amended version of the law is unconstitutional, and the assembly had a duty to pass a resolution against it.

The Citizenship Amendment Act makes religion, for the first time, the test of Indian citizenship. The government says it will help non-Muslim refugees from three Muslim-dominated neighbouring countries if they fled to India because of religious persecution.

Critics say the bill discriminates against Muslims and violates secular tenets of the Constitution.



Medical staff are seen outside an isolation ward as patients (unseen) coming from Hong Kong requested medical checks as a preventative measure following a coronavirus outbreak, at a government-run Fever Hospital in Hyderabad yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

# World mourns Kobe Bryant

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A five-time NBA champion and two-time Olympic gold medalist, Bryant is widely regarded as one of the greatest basketball players in history.

He was an iconic figure who became one of the faces of his sport during a glittering two-decade career with the Los Angeles Lakers.

All-time basketball great Michael Jordan said Bryant was “like a little brother” to him.

“Words can’t describe the pain I’m feeling,” the former Chicago Bulls star said. “We used to talk often and I will miss those conversations very much.”

Dozens of firefighters and paramedics battled across hilly terrain to reach the flaming wreckage of the Sikorsky S-76 but found no survivors, officials said.

Fans and mourners descended on the area but police warned people to stay away.

“As you can imagine, it’s a logistical nightmare in a sense because the crash site itself is not easily accessible,” Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva told reporters.

The National Transportation Safety Board said an 18-strong team of investigators would be sent to California to probe the crash.

WORLDWIDE TRIBUTES  
Tributes to Bryant flooded in from former US presidents, pop stars and athletes from different sports, a sign

of how the man known as the “Black Mamba” had transcended basketball.

“Kobe was a legend on the court and just getting started in what would have been just as meaningful a second act,” Barack Obama tweeted.

“Laker Nation, the game of basketball & our city, will never be the same without Kobe,” former Los Angeles Lakers star Magic Johnson tweeted.

American football star Tom Brady wrote simply: “We miss you already Kobe.”

At the Australian Open, Australian tennis player Nick Kyrgios wore a Lakers jersey before he took on Rafael Nadal.

At the Staples Center in Los Angeles, crowds of shocked fans gathered to pay tribute as the venue which witnessed many of Bryant’s career highlights hosted the music industry’s Grammy Awards.

Hundreds, many wearing purple and gold Lakers shirts, placed flowers and candles at a makeshift memorial for their hero.

“This dude is everything to me man. It makes no sense,” said distraught Lakers fan Bobby Jimenez.

Singer Alicia Keys paid a somber tribute at the Grammys.

“To be honest with you, we’re all feeling crazy sadness right now,” Keys told the audience. “Los Angeles, America and the whole wide world

lost a hero. And we’re literally standing here heartbroken in the house that Kobe Bryant built.”

Across the NBA, tributes were held at several of the eight games played Sunday.

Denver Nuggets fans began chants of “Kobe, Kobe” as a minute’s silence was held before their game against the Houston Rockets.

In New York, Madison Square Garden was lit up in purple and gold alongside a giant image of Bryant captioned: “Kobe Bryant, 1978-2020.”

The crash came only hours after Bryant was passed by current Lakers star LeBron James for third on the all-time NBA scoring list in a Saturday game at Philadelphia.

Bryant’s final post on social media had been a tweet congratulating James.

“Continuing to move the game forward @KingJames,” Bryant wrote. “Much respect my brother #33644.”

Bryant was a five-time NBA champion in a career that began in 1996 straight out of a high school and lasted until his retirement in 2016.

He also was a two-time Olympic gold medalist, helping spark the US squad of NBA stars to titles in 2008 in Beijing and 2012 in London.

In 2018, he won an Oscar for his animated short film “Dear Basketball”, a love letter to the sport which brought him fame and fortune.

The youth-led protests erupted on October 1 in outrage over lack of jobs, poor services and rampant corruption before spiralling into calls for a government overhaul after they were met with violence.

More than 470 people have died, a vast majority of them demonstrators, since the rallies began.

Protesters are now demanding snap elections, the appointment of an independent premier and the prosecution of anyone implicated in corruption or recent bloodshed.

## 5,000 sued

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fearing arrest, reports our correspondent.

Contacted, Mohammad Yusuf Ali, superintendent of police in the district, said none have so far been arrested in connection with the incident.

No innocent person would be harassed, he said, adding that only criminals would be brought to book after proper investigation.

Earlier on Sunday, a deadly clash took place when the workers blocked the Panchagarh-Banglabandha highway demanding permission to extract stones from underground.

The administration banned stone extraction in the area about six months ago to prevent potential landslides.

landfill to dump them there.”

“As burning plastic is detrimental to health, we will bury the posters there,” he said.

He added that the city corporation did not have any jurisdiction to take down the posters unless the election was over.

On January 20, Mollik Anwar Hossain, additional director general of the environment department, said, “Since the polls are being held under the EC, we are not able to take actions without permission from it.”

The Daily Star yesterday could not contact any of the EC officials for comments.

Election Commissioner Rafiqul Islam had earlier said he personally did not encourage the use of plastic and polythene.

Regarding the laminated posters, he said, “There is no legal binding in the EC rules. The environment department can take action as per its law. The EC will not interfere.”

# AL man claims

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The DMCH register book and other hospital documents, however, show that Rocky was admitted there with head injury, not with any bullet wounds.

Babul’s name was not even there in the hospital’s register book.

This correspondent contacted Rocky’s father Habibur Rahman, who said his son was admitted to the hospital after the clash and that he was released yesterday afternoon.

Asked, he could not say how his son, an AL activist, was injured in the clash.

While visiting the hospital yesterday, this correspondent met a leader of a Sramik Dal, a pro-BNP organisation, who had to undergo a surgery earlier in the day to have a bullet removed from his back.

He introduced himself as Mohammad Shanto, an assistant organising secretary of Wari Ward-38 Sramik Dal, and alleged that he was shot by AL men during the clash on Sunday.

The DMCH’s admission documents also show Shanto, 35, was taken to the hospital on Sunday and that he suffered a bullet wound.

On Sunday night, Maksud filed the case with Wari Police Station over the clash between the supporters of BNP mayoral candidate for Dhaka South City Corporation Ishraque Hossain and those of an Awami League-backed councillor candidate Rokon Uddin.

The clash took place when the two groups were campaigning in Wari for Saturday’s city corporation polls.

After the incident, Ishraque alleged that police played a biased role and that they could not file a case due to non-operation from the law enforcers.

“We were attacked. Still a case has been filed against our leaders and activists,” he said at a press briefing at the Jatiya Press Club. He also said they would go to the court to file a case.

Asked, Hannaul Islam, assistant commissioner of Wari Zone, said none from the BNP went to the police to file any case.

Police have arrested five of the 50 accused named in the First Information Report. Some 100 to 150 unidentified others were also made accused in the case.

The accused were arrested after the case was filed, Shah Ifekher Ahmed, deputy commissioner (Wari division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police said yesterday.

The arrestees are Soheli, Tuhin, Faruk, Billal and Munna. They were arrested in police raids in different areas, said police.

Sunday’s clash continued for over 30 minutes, leaving 15 people, including two journalists, injured.

Blaming the ruling party men for

the incident, Ishraque said the attack was carried out to ruin the polls atmosphere.

However, supporters of the AL-backed councillor candidate alleged that BNP men were chanting provocative slogans against them, which led to the clash.

Ishraque complained that police were conducting raids to arrest BNP men to bar them from campaigning. He said such attempts would not be successful.

The BNP mayoral hopeful made the remarks while briefing the media in front of his house early yesterday and addressing a programme at the Jatiya Press Club later in the day.

He said they wrote to the DSCC returning officer about the lack of cooperation from the police.

‘EC SHOULD CONDUCT A PROBE’  
Meanwhile, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said the Election Commission should carry out a proper investigation behind Sunday’s clash and find out the truth.

The EC can direct law enforcers, who are now under the jurisdiction of the commission, to take action in this regard, he said.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, was briefing reporters on the contemporary issues at his ministry office.

He said although the BNP, while briefing foreign diplomats on Sunday, blamed the AL for the clash, video footage of the incident showed otherwise.

The footage showed a candidate kicking at the door of his opponent’s office room, the minister said without mentioning the name of the candidate.

Asked about Election Commissioner Mahbub Talukdar’s comment that there was no level playing field within the EC, Quader said he never heard such “absurd and ridiculous comments”.

The minister said an election commissioner could have a different view on an issue, but he could not “support” the way the commissioner was making public the EC’s internal issues.

The BNP and Mahbub Talukder were reacting in the same way, Quader said, adding that it seemed the election commissioner was taking a stance in favour of a particular party.

Yesterday, BNP standing committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury said there was no security for the BNP candidates.

“Awami League activists are carrying out attacks on our candidates, but no action is being taken against them. Rather, our party men are facing cases,” he told reporters after a meeting with the chief election commissioner at the latter’s office.

# Govt thinking

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Answering to another query, she said the government had set up Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) at 37 public and 58 private universities to ensure quality education and assess performance of all departments and institutes in those universities.

“Institutional Quality Assurance Cell will be set up at all universities in phases,” she said.

In reply to a query from AL MP Shamima Akhtar Khanom, Dipu Moni said there were allegations that several educational institutions, enlisted

under the government’s Monthly Payment Order (MPO), are named after controversial persons, including those who opposed the country’s birth during the 1971 Liberation War.

The government has taken measures to change the names of those institutions, she said.

Meanwhile, State Minister for Primary and Mass Education Zakir Hossen told the House that the enrolment rate at the primary level school was 97.74 percent last year.

The government is working to ensure 100 percent enrolment rate, he added.

# IS vows ‘new phase’ of attacks focused on Israel

AFP, Beirut

The Islamic State group vowed to shift its focus from the remnants of its “caliphate” towards Israel, in its first audio statement since confirming the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

In a purported audio message by its spokesman Abu Hamza al-Quraishi, the jihadist organisation called for sabotaging a so-called peace plan US President Donald Trump is due to unveil.

The spokesman said IS leader Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Quraishi encourages the group’s fighters to launch “a new phase” and vowed major operations against Israel.

“The eyes of the soldiers of the caliphate, wherever they are, are still on Jerusalem,” the spokesman said in the 37-minute message.

“And in the coming days, God willing, you will see what harms you and what will make you forget the horrors you have seen,” Abu Hamza al-Quraishi said, apparently threatening attacks of unprecedented scope.

The spokesman said IS leader Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the premier’s rival Benny Gantz in Washington ahead of unveiling his “peace plan”.

The IS spokesman made a direct reference to the “Trump plan”, which has already been rejected by the Palestinians, who ironically call it the “Deal of the Century”.