

China warns UK over basing aircraft carrier in Pacific

AFP, London

Beijing's ambassador to London has warned Britain against stationing a new aircraft carrier in the Pacific, arguing it would be a "very dangerous move" in a newspaper interview published yesterday.

Liu Xiaoming, China's top envoy in the UK, told The Times that as London cuts trading ties with the European Union later this year, it should not "gang up with the United States on the Chinese" with military deployments.

"After Brexit I think the UK still

wants to play an important role in the world," he told the paper.

"That is not the way to play an important role." The Times reported this week UK military planners have hatched plans to station the HMS Queen Elizabeth carrier in the Pacific as part of an international alliance to counter China.

The £3.1 billion (\$3.9 billion, 3.4 billion euros) vessel is due to set sail on her maiden deployment next year, on a tour that includes the region amid concerns over freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.

Lockdown likely

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NTAC member Prof Nazrul Islam said, "Based on such definition of a red-zone, it will need ten years to end all lockdowns."

The former vice chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) added, "They could not implement any of our suggestions. Corruption and lax coordination are taking us into the gutter."

The government on June 1 decided to mark areas into three colour-coded zones, based on the number of infections and deaths.

But the decision has yet to be implemented.

Meanwhile, the number of infections and deaths from Covid-19 shows no sign of falling.

As an experiment, the government imposed lockdown in East Rajabazar area in the capital and in some parts of the country. Now the government has put Wari under lockdown.

MORE TESTS IS THE PREREQUISITE

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Bangladesh will need 24,286 daily tests, considering its population.

However, there have been around 13,000 tests per day during the last two weeks.

The rate of daily new cases has risen in the last two weeks.

Positivity rate refers to the percentage of daily confirmed cases of Covid-19 against the total number of tests done.

Yesterday, the total number of

Ministry high officials played

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conduct a drive to recover the money," said the official.

Asked if they would interrogate the government officials, he said, "As they are government employees, we need some concrete evidence to interrogate them."

He even refused to disclose names of the officials in question.

About Ariful's wife Sabrina Arif Chaudhury, Abdul Baten, additional commissioner (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said she used to capitalise on her "face value".

"She had connections with many offices, including the DGHS," the DB official said.

Following her arrest, the health ministry suspended cardiac surgeon Sabrina from the post of registrar at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases for "violating rules".

Oval Group, the company owned by Sabrina's husband Ariful, won several government contracts, including some from the health ministry because of her lobbying, officers said.

JKG Health Care started its journey in 2015 as a non-profit organisation.

Investigators said that they didn't find any documents mentioning that JKG was a sister concern of Oval Group, adding that JKG had no trade licence when it got the permission to collect samples for coronavirus tests.

DGHS official Prof Nasima earlier told this newspaper that they didn't

confirmed cases surpassed 202,066.

On July 5, the positivity rate was 19.57 which rose to a record 25.23 percent on Wednesday.

"There is no alternative to increasing the daily number of tests. Otherwise, we will not be able to take the right programmes to control the outbreak," Dr Mushtaq Hussain, consultant of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research told The Daily Star recently.

According to a DGHS official involved in the laboratory coordination, the 79 Covid-19 testing laboratories have the capacity to test around 25,000 samples a day.

"But human resource shortage and people's unwillingness to be tested are the main reasons behind low number of tests," Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director general of the DGHS, told this newspaper recently.

EID RUSH MAY CAUSE TROUBLE After many people rushed to their village homes in the last Eid, the cases rose.

Recently, the government has announced that public transport will not be suspended during the Eid holidays, though the Public Health Advisory Committee of DGHS suggested imposing curfew to restrict people's movement.

"There are many opinions on lockdown. However, the problem is that nothing is implemented rightly at all. We had lessons from last Eid. It is sure the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha will intensify the trouble," Dr Mushtaq Hussain told The Daily Star yesterday.

check JKG's licence at that time since they permitted them only for voluntary services -- to set up booths and collect samples.

JKG got the approval from the DGHS on April 6 and started collecting samples for free through their 44 kiosks in Dhaka, Narayanganj and other regions.

But it has been found in police investigation that the organisation started collecting samples from homes in exchange for money despite having no approval to do so.

The scam was busted on June 24 after Tejaan police arrested several employees of the Oval Group, including its CEO Ariful, over their alleged involvement in issuing fake Covid-19 test reports.

Police said although JKG Health Care had no permission to collect Covid-19 test samples from people's homes, they would do so through their two online platforms -- Booking BD and Health Care.

For such home services, they would charge Tk 5,000 from locals and USD 100 from foreigners.

After investigation, police found all the test results of the samples collected from homes were fake.

Both Sabrina and Ariful were placed on remands for second time.

Sabrina's remand ended yesterday while Ariful's remand will end today.

Police said they would seek remand for Ariful again.

Assistant charged with murder

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and cleaning supplies found Tuesday at the crime scene, Manhattan assistant district attorney Linda Ford said at the arraignment.

Clothing the killer was seen wearing on surveillance footage from the address matched garments found in Haspil's Brooklyn home, and investigators were also able to digitally track Haspil to and from the crime scene, Ford added.

"The evidence, in this case, is overwhelming," Ford said during Haspil's remote arraignment in Manhattan Criminal Court.

"He is on video surveillance before and after the crime. He has been identified by at least two individuals from the videotape."

Prosecutors at the arraignment did not elaborate on why they believe Haspil left the scene on Tuesday.

Ford confirmed Haspil had stolen more than \$90,000 from Saleh. When the tech entrepreneur discovered the embezzlement of his funds, instead of going to the police, Haspil and Saleh agreed on a payment plan to repay the money, Ford said in the court.

Prosecutors are still determining Haspil's motive, but they believe the killing revolved around the theft, reports New York Post.

"We are awaiting records to determine whether or not [Haspil] made any payments and whether this murder was motivated by a desire to not pay that money back or a fear that

the victim would've reported him to the police," Ford said.

Police recovered text messages in which Saleh accused his former employee of stealing the money, according to an ABC News report.

Media reports also said that investigators were able to track the suspect through a credit card, believed to be paid for by Saleh.

It was used to purchase the electric saw, cleaning supplies from Home Depot on 23rd Street in Manhattan, and car services to and from the location.

On Monday, Haspil used a Taser to immobilise Saleh as he exited the elevator that opens directly into his apartment. He then stabbed him multiple times in the neck and torso.

The following day he returned to the scene and severed Saleh's head, arms and legs, using the electric saw found plugged into an outlet in the living room of the seventh floor apartment. Nearby were bags containing the body parts.

It is believed that a surprise visit by one of Saleh's cousins, who discovered the body on Tuesday and called 911, may have interrupted Haspil's attempt to dispose of the evidence and he fled out of a service entrance to the full floor unit.

Earlier in the week, a law enforcement official said that the killing looked like a professional "hit". It is now thought that the killer may have tried to make it appear that way.



People preparing an empty field to set up a cattle market in the capital's Shahjahanpur Railway Colony ahead of the Eid. The market is being set up despite experts' call not to set up any cattle markets inside the capital as it could worsen the Covid-19 situation.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Experts bemoan 'complete anarchy'

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"Doctors are still confused as to when to give plasma therapy. The government should take the initiative to formulate a guideline. We are tired of repeating ourselves on this issue."

Providing convalescent plasma therapy to a Covid-19 patient without a guideline is risky and may endanger the life of the patient, healthcare experts said.

They said a guideline, among many things, can regulate the person's eligibility to donate plasma and whether the donor has developed the necessary antibody levels in their blood. This requires several standard testing protocols. Plasma therapy is now at the clinical trial stage, not for treating coronavirus patients, they added.

"The way plasma therapy is being given in Bangladesh without proper screening and testing is completely unethical," said Prof Khan.

Experts said several factors must be addressed before the plasma is deemed safe to use and plasma therapy can be performed.

For example, on an average, 14 percent of people in the country have other viral infections in their blood, they said. Without maintaining proper procedures, indiscriminate plasma therapy can be disastrous for patients. Negative HIV and hepatitis B and C tests are required otherwise the donor is disqualified.

Most important, however, is the level of antibodies -- if not sufficient, preferably at 80 percent, then the whole exercise will be futile, experts said.

Pardoned abroad, punished here

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Criminal records of the inmates sent from Bahrain also show the same -- a mix of undocumented workers, people arrested for possessing alcohol and misusing telecom services. People with graver narcotics charges are scarce in the list.

Twenty-five-year-old Mohammad Shahin Alam is one of those who had been in prison in Bahrain because he was undocumented, and is now in jail for "tarnishing the image of the country".

His father could not fathom why his son was sent to jail.

"Last month, we got to know that Shahin has come back to the country. He said he will have to stay in quarantine for two weeks, and then he will come back home. His mother and I were waiting for him to come home when we suddenly got a phone call ... He told us he is in Kashipur jail," said Shahin's father, who lives in Chandpur's Matlab.

Shahin had gone to Bahrain four years ago to work as a pipefitter. A few weeks before he was deported, he called his family and told them his visa had expired and that he became undocumented.

"He informed us that for the past

two months he had been doing menial labour. I advised him to immediately get his visa renewed and not to remain undocumented. He had gone to the relevant office to get his visa renewed when he was arrested," described the father.

Neither the father nor the son knew that visas need to be renewed, before they expire, not after. Shahin was then sent to an immigrant detention centre.

His subsequent arrest upon arrival to Bangladesh is a double blow for his father, who himself recently lost his job at a jute mill in Narsingdi, when the government decided to shut down all public jute mills.

"I worked for 27 years at the mill, but was sent back home empty-handed. Now my son is deported and in jail. I have a Tk 4 lakh loan that I had taken out to send him abroad. What will we do now? How will we survive?" asked the father.

Mohammad Rasel was a rickshaw-puller in Chaiyakot village of Cumilla's Chandina, when he took a gamble, and left for Bahrain five years ago, to work as a construction worker. His criminal records show that he became undocumented after failing to renew his residence permit.

"He was arrested by the authorities

things which is risky."

"During a pandemic, transfusion of convalescent plasma is used as empirical treatment for severely ill and critically ill patients."

Hospitals in the country are giving plasma therapy as part of ethically practicing in a desperate situation, when patients are critically ill, he added. GLOBAL PICTURE OF PLASMA THERAPY

Many countries have endorsed clinical trials of plasma therapy. In neighbouring India, there is a specific guideline for plasma therapy -- laboratory tests including CBC [complete blood count], hepatitis B virus, hepatitis C virus, HIV, malaria, and syphilis are conducted before giving plasma therapy.

A serum Covid-19 specific immunoglobulin G antibody concentration higher than 80 is preferred, says its guideline.

Only people aged between 18 and 60 and weighing not less than 50kg are eligible for plasma donation in India. Those with comorbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, and cancer are excluded.

In the US, the Food and Drug Administration has not approved plasma therapy for Covid-19 treatment.

But the FDA issued guidance for health care providers that recommends using convalescent plasma therapy for clinical trials and for patients with serious or immediately life-threatening diseases who aren't eligible to participate in trials.

Bogura imam held under DSA for 'defaming PM'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

Police yesterday arrested an imam in Bogura's Sherpur upazila under the Digital Security Act (DSA) for "making defamatory remarks against the prime minister and spreading anti-state propaganda on Facebook."

The arrestee, Maolana Abdur Rahman Didari, 27, is the imam of Bagra Colony Jame Mosque under Kusumbi union, said Sanatan Chakraborty, additional superintendent of police in Bogura Sadar Circle.

The case was filed by Zulfikar Ali Sanju, general secretary of Kusumbi union Awami League, he said, adding the police arrested Didari from Bagra Colony area around 2:30am.

'Essential' trip

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"It is highly questionable that such a huge portion of the project budget is earmarked for foreign travel, which has become another common feature of misuse of public money and personal gain in the name of project tourism," said Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh.

"Questions can be justifiably raised about whether the planned international travels to the selected destinations that are extremely expensive will give any real value compared to the money spent. If the required commitment and drive are available, results of much higher value can be achieved through online communication," he told The Daily Star.

"The justification of such luxuries, the burden of which is ultimately borne by the people at large, deserves serious review," he said.

During a visit in 2017, local lawmaker and former Bangladesh captain Naimur Rahman said the project of constructing an international cricket stadium to be constructed at Dhutrabair near Paturia ferry terminal in Manikganj.

Naimur Rahman also said that the prime minister expressed desire to build a stadium close to the river and this area has been selected for its scenic surroundings.

According to the project documents, the government took the decision to cope with the growing popularity of cricket in the country.

There is only one stadium (for cricket) in Dhaka. So, it is important to build another stadium with the capacity of 50,000 spectators. Besides, cricketers also need a world-class academy. So, we need a high-tech stadium complex, which will be modern and spectacular, read the project document.

Since a decision has been made to build the stadium on the bank of the Padma before the appointment of a consultant and without the assessment of the project cost and the opinion of the water resource ministry was sought for that purpose.

The ministry responded by saying that it would require Tk 325 crore for river training of about three km surrounding the proposed stadium site, which is 215 meters away from river banks.

The contractor's fee of Tk. 3.98 core is the highest cost earmarked in the project seconded by the foreign trip expenditure.

The projected project cost also includes Tk 9 lakh for transport, Tk 5 lakh as honorarium, Tk 3 lakh as management expenditure, Tk 2 lakh for purchasing computers and other electronic devices, Tk 2 lakh for printing and advertisement and another Tk 3 lakh for stationary and other expenses.

Sources said that the NSC again sent a proposal to Ministry of Youth and Sports to submit a plea to the planning commission for another extension of the project.

NSC Secretary Masud Karim, in a letter to the youth and sports ministry secretary on November 25, 2019, said that the process of appointing the contractor/advisor was in progress through open GEP tender, according to the project document.

But according to the PPR-2008, the contractor/advisor should be appointed through EOI and RFP, which Masud said caused complications and delayed the appointment procedure and thus, made it impossible to complete the project on time.

About the delay, Iftekharuzzaman said, "This long delay is symptomatic of the project implementation culture in the public sector. Since availability of the allocated budget has not been mentioned as the justification of the delay, what needs to be looked at is whether it has been caused by inefficiency and lack of commitment of the relevant officials involved."

"This is important because implementation delays almost invariably accrue additional cost and thereby, opportunity for additional profiteering."

Contacted, Shah Alam Sardar, director (Planning and Development) of NSC, told this newspaper that the work on the project could not be completed due to various reasons and that they wrote to the ministry ahead of time.

"It is taking some time [for the ministry to respond] since it's a big project. But we hope that the ministry will give us a fresh extension."

About the budget for foreign trips, Shah Alam said they wanted to see good stadiums so that their experience could be used in the project.

He, however, said with an extension of the project deadline, there might be some changes in the study-tour, as foreign trips are now suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Besides, there are some instructions from the prime minister in regards to foreign trips of government officials, said Shah Alam.

commissioner of Detective Branch (DB) Uttara division, said the other agencies like the CID and ACC are investigating Shahed's money related cases. However, they are receiving various fraudulent complaints about Shahed one after another.

Shahed was arrested from bordering areas of Satkhira on Wednesday. Yesterday was the second day of 10-day remand for him.

Meanwhile, the detective branch of police came up with another such act of his fraudulence yesterday.

Shahed got the approval of a so-called organisation "Alfred Global Factory Limited" and was providing low quality PPE with sub-contract by opening a page on Facebook in the name of fake organisation.

"In reality, there is no such organisation," Abdul Baten, additional commissioner (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police told reporters yesterday.

Based on the interrogation, the DB official said that information of Shahed's various fraud activities are coming up.

"We also got more information about his fraudulence in contracting business. Shahed said that five cases have been filed in this regard with several police

stations including Uttara in the capital."

Asked how a non-existent organisation was allowed to supply PPE from the health department, the DB official said the Directorate General of Health Services could better explain it.

Shahed is facing over 50 cases, including for, money laundering and embezzlement of public money. He has already served in jail for embezzling money. Most of the cases were filed under Section 420 of the Penal Code.

Meanwhile, on Friday, Rab formed an investigating wing at its HQ to provide support to the victims, cheated by Shahed.

The victims can give information, file complaints or seek legal support regarding the Regent Hospital issue by calling 0177720211 number of the investigating wing.

Lt Col Ashique Billah, director of Rab's legal and media wing, told The Daily Star last evening that they received calls from 72 victims who claimed that they were cheated by Shahed.

Besides, Rab received 20 emails which contained complaints about Shahed.

Asked, what type of allegations were those, the Rab official said that most of the complaints were money related fraudulence.