

Chinese man held at border claims to be hotelier

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

A 35-year-old Chinese national held by India's Border Security Force, near the border with Bangladesh in West Bengal's Malda district, for illegal entry on June 10, has claimed he runs a hotel in a posh locality of Gurugram -- a satellite city in Delhi -- along with an Indian partner, police sources said.

According to the interrogators of the Indian security agencies, the man, who identified himself as Han Junwe from China's Hubei province, said he and his Indian partner PP Kumar had taken a 10-year lease of a 100-room hotel named "Star Spring" from one Jaivir Lohia in October 2019, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

Han also claimed to have set up a company in partnership with Kumar in Hyderabad.

During interrogation at Kaliachawk outpost of BSF in Malda, Han revealed that he reached Dhaka on June 2 with a business visa and stayed here with a Chinese friend.

He further claimed that he went to Sona Masjid in Chapainawabganj on June 8 and stayed in a hotel. On June 10, he was caught by the BSF troops while entering India.

He said he entered India "by mistake", as there was no sign marked in the border.

Han added he had visited India four times in the past -- Hyderabad in 2010 and Delhi and Gurugram thrice after 2019.

He said some of his colleagues in the Gurugram hotel are from China and rest are Indian.

He also said that when he was in Hubei, one of his business partners -- Sun Jiang -- sent him the numbers of 10-15 Indian mobile phone SIMs after a few days, which were received by him and his wife. Sun was arrested by the Anti-Terrorism Squad of Uttar Pradesh police recently on a number of charges, including transporting Indian SIM cards to China.

Claiming his arrest to be a big achievement, BSF in a statement said that Han had so far taken around 1,300 Indian SIM cards illegally from India to China, hiding them in undergarments.

These SIM cards were allegedly used to commit financial fraud.

Han could not get an Indian visa due to the ATS case and, hence, decided to get a Bangladeshi business visa to enter India illegally from Bangladesh.

The Indian border force seized an Apple Laptop, two iPhones, one Bangladeshi SIM card, one Indian SIM card, two Chinese SIM cards, two pen drives, three batteries, two small torchlights, five money transaction devices, two debit cards, US dollars, Bangladeshi Taka as well as Indian currency from his possession.

Man traffics wife

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At one stage, he trafficked both his wife and sister-in-law to India in exchange for a huge sum of money, the Rab official said, quoting the arrestee.

Recently the sisters managed to flee captivity in India and a case was filed against Yusuf with Sreepur Police Station on June 5.

Rab conducted a raid in Ishwarganj's Bahihata Kandabari village around 12:00 noon yesterday and arrested Yusuf.

In another drive, Rab arrested Robbil, one of the most important members of the trafficking racket from Sreepur of Gazipur around 1:30am yesterday.

The elite force members also seized gold ornaments and Tk 224,405 cash from his possession.

According to Rab, Robbil transacted a huge amount of money through different bank accounts.

The victims of the trafficking racket were kept at a safe house in India's Kolkata and would be returned to Bangladesh soon, the Rab official added.

The arrestees are being interrogated at Rab office in Mymensingh as of filing this report. They will be handed over to Sreepur Police Station later, Rab source said.

People

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intelligence, discovering that the larger the pupils, the higher the intelligence.

Differences in the baseline pupil size between those scoring highest and those scoring lowest on intelligence tests could be seen with the unaided eye.

The team say this could be due to people with larger pupils having better results regulation of brain activity in a region linked to intelligence and memory.

The pupil is the opening in the centre of the iris (the structure that gives our eyes their colour).

The function of the pupil is to allow light to enter the eye where it is then focused on the retina.

The black colour of the pupil is because light that passes through it and is then absorbed by the retina - meaning no light is reflected.



People march the 7km from a crime scene to a mosque in memory of a Muslim family that was killed in what police call a hate-motivated attack in London, Ontario, Canada, on Friday. Thousands of people marched on Friday in support of the Canadian Muslim family run over and killed by a man driving a pick-up truck last Sunday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Our victory is assured: Tajuddin

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China to cooperate in BRI projects like railways, ports, highways and other infrastructure.

Critics say Xi's plan to create a modern version of the ancient Silk Road trade route to link China with Asia, Europe and beyond is a vehicle for the expansion of Communist China. Beijing says such doubts betray the "imperial hangover" of many Western powers that humiliated China for centuries.

CHINA'S RISE

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nation determined to fulfil its destiny to freedom.

In a special word to those Muslim and Arab countries, who had not yet found it possible to condemn the mass slaughter in Bangladesh, the prime minister said, "Their silence condones colonialism and barbarism, their support to Islamabad put them on the side of dictatorship and its well-documented crimes of arson, loot, rape and murder."

Tajuddin Ahmad wound up his

speech by congratulating the people of Bangladesh on their brave struggle and asking them to make sure that no exportable merchandise could fall into the hands of the enemy, to seek out collaborators and quislings and punish them, to maintain solidarity with the freedom fighters, and finally to have faith in the justness and invincibility of their cause. "Our victory is assured," he said.

BRITISH MP'S TEAM CONFERS WITH YAHYA

The three-member British parliamentary delegation conferred with Pakistan President Yahya Khan in Rawalpindi. The delegation would also visit Bangladesh to make a study of the conditions prevailing there. It would later acquaint the British government with the situation there to chalk out the type and quantum of relief aid to be given to Bangladesh.

Shamsuddoza Sajen is a journalist and researcher. He can be contacted at sajen1986@gmail.com

G7 to counter China's BRI

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China in 1979 had an economy

that was smaller than Italy's, but after opening to foreign investment and introducing market reforms, it has become the world's second-largest economy and is a global leader in a range of new technologies.

Leaders of the G7 - the United States, Canada, Britain, Germany, Italy, France and Japan - want to use their gathering in the seaside resort of Carbis Bay to show the world that the richest democracies can offer an alternative to China's growing clout.

The US official said until now, the West had failed to offer a positive alternative to the "lack of transparency, poor environmental and labour standards, and coercive approach" of the Chinese government that had left many countries worse off.

According to a Refinitiv database,

as of mid-last year, more than 2,600 projects at a cost of \$3.7 trillion were linked to the Belt and Road Initiative, although the Chinese foreign ministry said last June that about 20% of projects had been seriously affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

As part of the G7 plan, the United States will work with the US Congress to supplement existing development financing and to "collectively catalyze hundreds of billions of dollars of infrastructure investment," the White House said.

FORCED LABOUR

The United States is pushing the other G7 leaders for "concrete action on forced labour" in China, and to include criticism of Beijing in their final communique from a three-day summit in southwest England, the US

official said.

Biden planned to press the other leaders to make clear that they believe forced labour practices are an affront to human dignity and "an egregious example of China's unfair economic competition".

"We're pushing on being specific on areas like Xinjiang where forced labour is taking place and where we have to express our values as a G7," the official said of the final communique to be issued at the end of the summit on Sunday.

China denies all accusations of abuse in the Xinjiang region.

The Chinese foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the G7 infrastructure proposal or the US official's remarks about forced labour.

Climate Trust threatens to sue Padma Bank

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on condition of anonymity as he is not authorised to speak with media.

The BCTIF still has Tk 71.6 crore tied in the form of FDRs with the bank, which was renamed Padma Bank in 2019 in an attempt to get an image makeover. Of the sum, Tk 29.1 crore became overdue after May 25.

The BCTIF provides salary and wages to its employees from the interest segments of its FDRs kept with different banks, it said in the letter to Padma Bank on May 20, which was also forwarded to the central bank and the ministries of environment, forest, and climate change.

The Daily Star has a copy of the

letter.

"The bank has not repaid any interest last year against the FDRs," Ahmed said.

Contacted, Md Ehsan Khasru, managing director of Padma Bank, said the bank officials would sit with the BCTIF today to resolve the issue.

He declined to comment further on the issue.

Established in 2013, the bank became a hotbed for financial irregularities within less than three years of operation. More than Tk 3,500 crore was siphoned out from the bank between 2013 and 2017, found a Bangladesh Bank investigation.

When allegations of corruption

against Muihuddin Khan Alamgir and Md Mahabubul Haque Chisty, the then board chairman and chairman of the audit committee respectively, became deafening, depositors, which included government agencies, started pulling out money.

The two were forced to resign in November 2017, and the government stepped in to rescue the bank in 2018.

The state-owned financial institutions Investment Corporation of Bangladesh, Sonali Bank, Janata Bank, Agrani Bank and Rupali Bank bought 60 per cent stakes in the bank for Tk 715 crore.

The bank though is yet to get back on its feet despite a raft of measures

by the government, including a ban on fresh loan disbursement for three-and-a-half years starting from January 2017.

In 2020, the bank managed to narrow down its losses to Tk 151 crore.

At the end of the first quarter of 2021, it faced a capital shortfall of Tk 382 crore, up from Tk 310 crore a quarter earlier, according to data from the central bank.

As of December last year, default loans in bank stood at Tk 3,455 crore, which is 61.6 per cent of its total outstanding loans.

A year earlier, as much as 72.3 per cent of its outstanding loans were soured ones: Tk 3,989 crore.

Positivity rate highest since April 22

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variant. Because our entire focus is now only on the bordering districts," Abu Jamil Faisal, a member of the Epidemiology and Public Health Committee at the DGHS, told The Daily Star yesterday.

With yesterday's 16,37 new cases, the total number was 15,172 in the past week till yesterday -- up from 11,928 in the previous week (May 30-June 5).

Besides, the number of deaths has also increased by 7.14 percent this week, according to a DGHS press release.

With yesterday's 39 deaths, the total number was 270 this week while it was 252 in the previous week.

HOSPITALS ALONG BORDER UNPREPARED

Covid-19 transmission has been in an upward trend in Khulna, Satkhira, Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Dinajpur, Naogaon, Natore and Thakurgaon over the past several days.

Authorities of Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) and Rajshahi Medical Hospital have had to stop admitting patients due to lack of space.

Our Correspondent from Khulna reported that the KMCH authority have been struggling due to the increasing number of Covid-19 patients since the beginning of this months.

As of yesterday afternoon, there were 131 Covid-19 patients under treatment against a 100-bed capacity. Besides, 13 patients were in ICU in the hospital.

During a visit to KMCH, our correspondent witnessed a queue of over a hundred people to give samples for Covid-19 test in front of the hospital.

Due to a shortage of beds in nearby districts, including Satkhira and Jashore, patients have continued rushing to KMCH.

Al Manum, 38, an auto rice mill manager of Satkhira's Itagacha area, was admitted to the Covid unit five days ago. However, he had tried to get admission to Satkhira Medical College. Due to lack of space, he came to KMCH.

Dr Mehedi Nawaz, vice principal of KMC and convener of the Corona Prevention Committee in Khulna district, told The Daily Star, "We are at a loss regarding how to handle the situation as patients from nearby districts are coming here every day."

He said they have sent a proposal to the health ministry to turn the Khulna Sadar Hospital into a Covid-19 unit.

In the last 24 hours, one Covid-19 positive patient and four with Covid-19 symptoms died in KMCH.

Against a total of 376 tests yesterday, the positivity rate was 34.93

percent in the division.

Among those who tested positive for Covid-19, 116 were from Khulna, 13 from Bagerhat, three from Satkhira, two from Jashore and one from Pirojpur.

To check transmission, Khulna district administration has imposed a fresh one-week long restriction on public transport movement from last night.

In Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, four people died of Covid-19 -- the lowest single-day death toll in a week - in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, reports our correspondent from Rajshahi.

Of them, one was Covid positive, while the rest had symptoms of the infection, RMCH Deputy Director Dr Saiful Ferdous told The Daily Star.

The doctor said the person who died of the virus was a resident of Chapainawabganj, while the three others were from Rajshahi.

A total of 366 samples were tested at the hospital yesterday. Of them, 143 tested positive.

The positivity rate was 39.07 percent.

In total, 289 patients are undergoing treatment at the RMCH's coronavirus unit at the moment.

The ongoing restriction on movement in Rajshahi district has stepped into its second day yesterday.

Meanwhile, the district administration in Kushtia has enforced restriction on movement from Friday midnight, as three Covid-19 patients died. The positivity was 29.75 percent yesterday, reports our Kushtia correspondent.

The restriction will continue till June 18 mid-night, said a circular signed by Mohammad Saidul Islam, the deputy commissioner of Kushtia.

Meanwhile, 22 stranded Bangladeshis in India have returned to the country via Darshana immigration check post, raising the number of returnees to 778 in the last 25 days.

All of them were sent to a 14-day mandatory institutional quarantine.

Our correspondent from Natore reported that the district authorities have been struggling with the backlog of Covid-19 samples sent to the Rajshahi Medical College rt-PCR lab.

"We sent 400 samples to RMCH last time. But we have not received the test results yet," Dr Kazi Mizanur Rahman, civil surgeon of Natore district, told The Daily Star.

Our Correspondent from Thakurgaon also reported that four Covid-19 patients have died and 21 people tested positive in the district yesterday.

In Chapainawabganj, the positivity rate has come down to 11.26 percent, while two people died yesterday.

TIB report

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of good governance in Covid testing, healthcare, enforcement of health safety guidelines, infection prevention, planning and procurement of vaccines, and implementation of the vaccination campaign.

It said the country was at high risk of another surge in Covid-19 infections due to the emergence of new Covid-19 variants, incapacity to prevent infections, and stalemate in the vaccination campaign.

Besides, the study said that legal procedures were not duly followed in procuring the vaccine doses, which "benefited a third party".

Coming down heavily on the TIB report, the health minister said, "They [TIB] has criticised the health sector [health ministry] grossly like rote learning by sitting inside the air-conditioned room."

In the report, the TIB said the Covid-19 testing and the treatment facility have not increased notably.

About it, the minister said, "But the number of Covid-19 testing lab has been increased to 510 from a single one while the number of beds is now more than 15,000 now."

He said, "There was only 200 ICU beds before [Covid-19]; now it has increased to more than 1,000."

The minister also dismissed the TIB's claim of "transparency lacking" on the Covid-19 vaccine procurement procedure.

"TIB mentioned that there was a lack of transparency in the vaccine procurement deal with India. It is not true at all. Everything of the deal with India was as clear as crystal and open. People know what was in the agreement and why India could not be able to give the rest of the vaccine," Zahid Maleque said.

He also termed the TIB criticism over Bashundhara Isolation Center, a priority list of vaccine campaign and service to the outbound passengers as "false from first to the last and ill-motivated."

"Meanwhile, they [TIB] has no role in tackling corona [outbreak] in the country. The health sector [staffers] worked in the ground."

He said only one hospital had a central oxygen supply system [before Covid-19] outbreak which now has been set up in 134 hospitals.

"People received treatment sitting at home through telemedicine service. There had been no shortage of medicine; there is sufficient stock of oxygen. However, misconception among people is being created through a gross presentation of false information."

Claiming that the acts of corruption found anywhere have been brought to book fast, the minister said, "Criticising the health sector has become a fashion. However, none can show the corruption of the health sector other than a testing scam of a private hospital, corruption of a driver or lower grade employee, or any individual official."

"Is there anybody who can show the corruption of taka hundreds of thousands crore? None can. Rather, crore of taka from other sectors has gone [been laundered] to Canada," the minister added.

He termed the TIB report as "fictional" and "unacceptable".

Presided over by Dr Mir Jamal Uddin, director of National Institute of Cardiovascular Disease and Hospital, secretary of health services division Lokman Hossain Mian and Director General of health directorate Prof ABM Khurshid Alam participated in the event among others.

India cuts

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During the second wave of the virus many people resorted to costly private treatment in what is still a low-income country.

Others paid twenty times the usual price for oxygen cylinders on the black market and huge sums to secure ambulances and hearses.

Experts have said millions of people remain vulnerable to new surges of infections, particularly in the countryside where two-thirds of the population lives.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said the government would take over the inoculation programme from Indian states and offer free doses to everyone over the age of 18.

The government would allow private hospitals to have 25% of all vaccine supplies, but not to charge more than 150 rupees (\$2.06) over the cost of the dose, he said.

New Air Force

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paid homage to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by placing a wreath at his portrait in front of the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in the capital.

He also laid wreaths at Shikha Anirban to pay homage to the Armed Forces members who were martyred during the Liberation War in 1971.

3 bodies found

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law enforcers about the bodies after they saw them floating. He said the victims could be Rohingya and they might have drowned while crossing the river.

The bodies were sent to Cox's Bazar District Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy, Alim added.