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Defence Secretary Mattis says of Nato as he seeks to reassure allies
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'FALSE STORIES' ON PADMA GRAFT CLAIM HC for probe to find falsifiers

Issues rule on govt to explain why it should not be directed to form enquiry commission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday ordered the government to explain in two weeks why it should not be directed to form an enquiry commission to identify the "culprits who made up false stories" about a corruption conspiracy involving the Padma bridge project.

In a suo moto ruling, the court also asked the authorities to explain why they should not be ordered to bring those behind such stories to justice.

The HC bench of Justice Quazi Reza-Ul Hoque and Justice Mohammad Ullah gave the order following media reports, citing a Canadian court's decision to acquit all the three accused of corruption conspiracy.

The World Bank, the main financier of the project, raised the allegation in 2011 and eventually withdrew from the project. Later, Canadian police sued some top officials of SNC-Lavalin, a Canadian construction firm.

The cabinet secretary, secretaries to the home and communications ministries, the Anti-Corruption Commission chairman and the Inspector General of Police are respondents to the HC rule.

The court ordered the cabinet secretary to submit a report to it within 30 days on the steps taken in line with the rule, Deputy Attorney General Tapas Kumar Biswas told The Daily Star.

Separately, the Customs Intelligence and Investigation Directorate (CIID) yesterday requested the WB to provide details of 16 duty-free vehicles imported by its officials.

In a letter to the WB Dhaka office, the CIID said the information was vital for completing its investigation into "misuse of vehicles" by privileged persons (such as diplomats and foreign aid workers).

The CIID in its primary investigation found many foreigners, who had

CIID asks for documents on WB Dhaka office's duty-free cars for alleged misuse

14-party demands \$1b from WB in compensation for cancellation of Padma bridge funding

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A minibus -- with no visible number plate or indicators, a bumper tied with a rope, and a windscreen that has six pieces -- runs on a street in the capital's Rayerbazar. The authorities will launch a crackdown on such vehicles next month.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Wants to earn trust of all

CEC pledges neutrality, working without being influenced

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission will discharge its duties neutrally without being influenced by any quarter, including the government, and work to gain the confidence of all political parties, newly appointed Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda said yesterday.

"We will be firm and uncompromising in discharging duties on the basis of the constitution and the laws and rules outlined in it," he told reporters at his first official press conference at the EC secretariat after the swearing-in ceremony yesterday.

Earlier, Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha administered the oath of the new CEC and the four election commissioners at the Supreme Court Judges' Lounge around 3:00pm.

Replying to a question, Nurul Huda said there was no scope for the government to exert its influence. "We will perform our constitutional duties impartially. We will not be influenced by anyone."

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TOP QUOTE

"Our main challenge is to hold a fair election. We will plan and work in that regard."

NEWLY APPOINTED CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER
KM NURUL HUDA
AT HIS FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE YESTERDAY

No old, unfit buses after next month

Authorities to get rid of 20-year-old vehicles in city; drive to catch unlicensed, underage drivers

HELEMUL ALAM and PANKAG KARMAKAR

The authorities concerned will launch a joint drive against over 20-year-old buses, unfit vehicles, and illegal drivers in the capital from March 1 to reduce congestion and the number of accidents on streets.

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Mayor Sayeed Khokon told The Daily Star yesterday that they made the decision at a meeting with Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) and Dhaka deputy commissioner's office at the Nagar Bhaban.

"There is indiscipline in the city streets, which is one of the main causes of traffic congestion... To bring discipline in the city bus service, we have made the decision," he said.

Mobile courts run by the DSCC, BRTA, BRTC and Dhaka deputy commissioner's

office would be enforcing the law, the mayor said.

"We will form a working group in this regard and this group will start working this month...," he said.

According to BRTA rules, a person has to have a minimum educational qualification of class-VIII-pass, to be eligible for getting a driving licence, but this rule is not followed in many cases, said the mayor.

Transport workers said there are many drivers who do not have any educational qualifications and that they have become drivers by learning from other drivers.

With no institutional driving lessons learnt or knowledge about traffic rules, underage drivers of public transport, mostly human hauliers, are exposing city dwellers to accident risks.

Some young drivers manage fake driving

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PM, Merkel to talk fighting terrorism

Dhaka-Berlin joint declaration during Hasina's Germany visit

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka and Berlin are expected to sign a joint declaration on fighting terrorism and violent extremism at the summit meeting of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Munich on Saturday.

The PM, who is scheduled to fly off to Germany tonight to attend the Munich Security Conference (MSC), will discuss with Merkel a host of bilateral, regional and international issues.

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali yesterday said the PM and the German chancellor, on the sidelines of the 53rd MSC, would exchange views on development cooperation, trade and investment, mutual cooperation to achieve Sustainable Development Goals, reduction of climate change risk, refugee and migration crisis in Europe, global terrorism and violent extremism.

The two leaders are also expected to discuss the sudden rise of extreme nationalism and right-wing political forces

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Ex-JSD leader killed in 'gunbattle'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

An outlawed party operative was killed in a "gunfight" with police in Bera upazila of Pabna early yesterday, said police.

The dead, Nizam Uddin alias Nistar, 40, of Kathulia village in Sadar upazila, was a leader of outlawed Sarbahara Party, said Tazul Huda, officer-in-charge of Aminpur Police Station.

Nizam used to run "Nistar Bahini" which was involved in various criminal activities, including robbery. He stood accused in 13 cases, including three for murder, the police official said.

Nizam was the secretary of recently dissolved committee of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Inu) of Sadar upazila unit, said Kanu Shannal, vice-president of the district unit JSD.

Amirul Islam Ranga, president of the JSD unit,

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With his right arm and leg cut off in a train accident, Robin in his DMCH bed. Even though he has been released, no one from his family and village in Kishoreganj wants to take him home.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Lost in the maze of misfortunes

12-yr-old boy loses limbs falling from train roof; now stays abandoned at hospital

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and AKRAM HOSEN

Wanting relief from torture of his stepfather and freedom, the pre-teen boy left his village in Kishoreganj and came to Dhaka six months ago. That freedom was short-lived as he lost his right limbs in a train accident and is now confined to hospital for having no one to take him home.

The 12-year-old, Robin probably had his

best days in the city playing with other street children and enjoying food and classes arranged by an NGO at Kamalapur Railway Station before the accident swept away all that from him.

On the fateful day nearly three months back, he was going to Gendaria from Kamalapur by train to meet his friends.

"Since I didn't have any ticket or money,

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