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## Dhaka, Moscow sign military tech cooperation agreement

Bangladesh and Russia signed an agreement on Military Technical Cooperation here yesterday, reports UNB.

The visiting Russian Deputy Minister of Trade, VA Pakhomov and Defence Secretary Syed Yusuf Hossain signed the agreement on behalf of their respective governments at the Ministry of Defence at Ganobhaban.

The agreement provides for identification, initiation and expansion of possible areas of collaboration between the two countries in the field of technical cooperation.

Russian Ambassador to Bangladesh YP Ivanov and officials concerned were present on the occasion.

Earlier, the Russian Deputy Minister called on the Defence Secretary at his office and discussed matters of mutual interest and bilateral cooperation.

Welcoming the Russian delegation, Yusuf recalled with gratitude the important role of Russia in the war of liberation in 1971 and said the existing bond of friendship should continue to grow.

Pakhomov and his delegation visited the Army Headquarters and called on Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Muhammad Mustafizur Rahman and discussed matters of common interest and mutual cooperation.

The Russian Deputy Minister also visited Shikha Anirban (the Eternal Flame) at the Dhaka Cantonment and placed wreaths.



### Mother's grief

Twenty-five-year-old Sajal Chowdhury (inset), a student of Dr Malika Science College in the city, was killed by a bullet fired by anti-hartal demonstrators near the Science Laboratory crossing (see our story). The grief stricken mother waited all day for son's body, which was kept at BIRDEM mortuary by relatives awaiting his father's arrival from Sylhet. This lady is the latest addition to a long list of such mothers who have despaired on hartal days. But politicians still refuse to stop using the deadly political weapon.

— Star photo

## One killed, 200 hurt on first day of hartal

By Staff Correspondent

At least one person was killed in Dhaka city and more than 200 others, including 10 policemen, one of them critically, were injured on the first day of the opposition-sponsored nationwide 60-hour hartal yesterday which widely disrupted normal life.

Police arrested 240 people in the capital on charges of picketing and hurling of bombs, setting fire on vehicles and rioting.

Clashes took place in different parts of the city involving pro- and anti-hartal elements and police who used batons, teargas and rubber bullets.

Reports from Star correspondents in Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna said the strike was mostly peaceful in these cities barring some clashes in Rajshahi where 20 people were injured.

In Chittagong city, the hartal passed off peacefully. However, cargo handling and delivery of goods to and from the port remained suspended.

In Khulna, the strike was peaceful. But 10 people were injured at Pabna in clashes between police and pro-hartal activists.

Life in the capital and elsewhere in the country were interrupted during the hartal, with small number of pedal rickshaws, some buses and tempos operating in the city, where schools remained closed and attendance was thin at offices.

Paramilitary BDR, riot police, armed cops and Ansars guarded shuttered street junctions. Banks and stock exchanges did not transact any business. But inter-bank trading on foreign exchange was carried out on wire by some banks. Long distance buses remained in their garages.

Railway officials said trains ran on schedule. But motor launches mostly remained suspended, only a few leaving Sadarghat terminal in the evening.

Bangladesh Biman said it had to cancel three domestic flights and rescheduled one international flight.

### The capital

A young degree examinee, Sajal Chowdhury, 25, was killed at Science Laboratory and Green Road junction when anti-hartal elements including some gunmen swooped on pro-hartal pickets. (See another story for details).

Police constable Tajuddin was fighting for his life last night at Combined Military Hospital's intensive care unit where he was admitted with severe injuries.

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## Hartal extended till 6pm tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP-led opposition extended its hartal upto 6 pm Thursday protesting death of a JCD worker and the ruling party terrorism yesterday.

Earlier a 48-hour shutdown was called to press their demands including resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner and rescheduling of the February 23-25 municipal elections.

Extension of the general strike by 12 hours was announced at a press briefing of the alliance of BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote at the Minto Road official residence of the Leader of the Opposition yesterday evening.

Addressing the newsmen, BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, MP warned that they would launch an out-governance agitation if their demands were not met immediately.

"If we're forced to go in that direction, we'll not leave the streets until the fall of the government," he said.

Bhuiyan termed hartal as the "most innocent" form of agitation which "means we'll not work and will stay at home". "But the opposition workers are being subjected to government repression during such an agitation," he said.

"Since the British rule," he said, "Hartal has been playing a significant role in the democratic movement in the Subcontinent. AL enforced hartal for 173 days but those were never obstructed," he said and accused the ruling party of using the armed goons and the police against hartal supporters.

"Our hartal is observed more

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## Mob sets Daily Star vehicle ablaze

By Staff Correspondent

At about 11-15 am some 200 BNP pickets sat on the road opposite the police box at the intersection of Elephant Road and Mirpur Road. Police requested the pickets to clear the thoroughfare.

When the pickets refused to comply, the police moved in to disperse them. Chased by the stick wielding riot police, the protesters, comprised mostly of young boys and men, scattered in different directions.

A group of about 20 of these pickets fled into Rd-3 nearby. Upon reaching The Daily Star office, a few of them started kicking and pouncing on the on-duty autorickshaw which was stationed in front of the gate. Urged on by other fleeing mob members, some started to push the autorickshaw away from its initial position. The driver and the security guards stood inside the boundary of the

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## BCL drives JCD activists out of DU campus

By DU Correspondent

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), the student wing of opposition BNP could not observe hartal programme on the Dhaka University campus yesterday as they were ousted from the campus by the BCL activists.

Witnesses said police intercepted the JCD activists from entering the Madhu's Canteen when they came to observe the hartal on the campus at about 7 am.

The JCD, however, entered the canteen where the activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) were staying to foil the hartal programme.

Tension gripped the Madhu's canteen area as both the groups chased each other.

At about 10 am, a group of JCD activists brought out a procession on the campus under police surveillance. But the BCL activists started hurling of brick-bats on the JCD men when their procession came in front of the DUCSU building.

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## Sajal's killers came from the ruling party convoy

By Staff Correspondent

In an obvious show of strength yesterday Haji Moqbul MP from city's Mohammadpur-Dhanmondi constituency led a motorcade of more than 10 cars and a couple of minibuses at around 11-30 am. As his convoy reached the intersection of Mirpur Road and Green Road, it confronted a group of BNP activists on the run after being chased by police from Elephant Road and Mirpur Road intersection.

From the rear of the convoy, some armed men descended from private cars and minibuses and started to chase the BNP activists through the petrol pump in the corner, witnesses said. The armed men caught two young men and started to drag them towards the motorcade that waited on the Mirpur Road. At one point the men hit one of the captives in his head with a revolver and shot another in the chest point blank, witnesses said. A police officer who was leading a dozen policemen in riot gear stood silently nearby.

Few minutes later, the motorcade made a U-turn and stopped at the top of Road-3 facing towards Mirpur. Haji Moqbul Hossain sat in the front

seat of a white Pajero in which others were seen carrying guns. Other cars of the convoy were packed with activists many of whom openly brandished weapons in their hands, witnesses said. The motorcade then slowly drove off towards Mirpur.

The dead was identified as Sajal Chowdhury, 25, son of Shahidur Rahman Chowdhury, a resident of city's West Dhanmondi area, police and hospital sources said. He was an activist of JCD, his friends and brother-in-law told reporters at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Police witnessed the brutal killing from Science Laboratory crossing. Fatally injured Sajal was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where attending doctors declared him dead.

The body was handed over to relatives of the dead about 3:30 pm after autopsy at the DMCH morgue. According to Niaz Ahmed, Sajal's brother-in-law, relatives kept the body at BIRDEM morgue.

"The body will be kept at the morgue until his father, a lawyer who has been at Sylhet, return Dhaka," said Niaz.

## BNP has no faith in democracy: Zillur

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League general secretary Zillur Rahman has urged all democratic forces and people at large to maintain peace and stability in the country and make the coming municipal polls a success.

The AL leader in a statement issued yesterday said that elections to 140 pourashavas would be held from February 23 to 25 in a free and peaceful manner to fulfill the constitutional obligation.

He warned 'the reactionary forces' led by Begum Khaleda Zia against any attempt of grabbing power through unconstitutional means.

Zillur Rahman lambasted the opposition movement on a four-point demand saying that those parties were engaged in activities against the nation and the country.

Referring to Begum Zia's threat of resigning from the parliament, the AL leader said that Begum Zia and her party had no faith in parliamentary democracy and democratic norms.

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## Makbul denies involvement

Makbul Hossain MP of ruling Awami League has denied his involvement in the killing of Sajal Chowdhury in Science Laboratory area during hartal hours yesterday.

"I have no connection with the incident. I did not know him," he told UNB by telephone last night and blamed opposition's destructive politics for such street tragedy that claimed a young man's life.

Makbul said: "Possibly Sajal died in crossfire by BNP men from two sides on police when a BNP procession attacked two passenger buses in the area at that time."

"I brought out a peaceful procession with almost 100 vehicles. I was in the first car of the procession. When I was crossing Science Laboratory area, I saw a procession led by BNP leader Abdullah al-Noman and Fazlur Rahman Patal. Another procession was in Kalabagan, led by BNP leader Mostafa Jamal Hero.

"Later, I came to know that the BNP processionists attacked two passenger buses with bombs and brickbats which were behind our procession," he said.

"Following the attack, panic spread in the area and possibly at that time a man was killed and I came to know about it at around."

He said a procession of BNP came from Road Number 3 of Dhanmondi that set fire to an auto-rickshaw and another

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## 23 Mymensingh BNP men expelled for participating in poura polls

From Our Correspondent

MYMENSINGH, Feb 9: The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has expelled 23 leaders and workers of the district for their participation in the coming municipal election.

Party central committee took the action against them on the basis of the report of BNP south district convening committee.

District BNP sources said 23 partymen are contesting the polls in Sadar Muktagachha, Trishal and Bhaluka municipalities.

The expelled leaders and workers are Kamrul Islam, Md Walid, Kazi Altaf Uddin, Sajjad, Firoz Uddin Ahmed, Md Abu Sayed, Suja Uddin Suja, Dulal Uddin, Harun-or Rashid, Md Sher Khan, Shahida Noor, Gias Uddin, Helena Begum and Shamsuddin of Sadar pourasava; Abdul Mannan, Abdul Jail, Akram Ali Bhuiyan, Matiar Rahman Moti and Md Abdul Jail of Muktagachha pourasava; Wahidul Aline, Md Ali, Mafizul Islam, Suroj Ali of Trishal pourasava and Dr Jamsad Ali and Abul Kashem of Bhaluka pourasava.

## Babul murder

Petition by informant rejected

By Court Correspondent

The *narazi* petition, moved on Monday by the informant in Obedul Huq Babul murder case, was rejected by the CMM's Court yesterday.

A gang of assailants gunned down Obedul Huq alias Babul, 45, a politician and industrialist from Bhola in front of Anik Plaza under Pallabi thana in the city on October 10, 1996.

The informant moved the *narazi* petition in the CMM's Court Monday seeking further investigation into the murder case as the name of 19 leader Nazir Rahman Manju was not mentioned in the chargesheet.

Metropolitan Magistrate Samsur Rahman rejected the petition yesterday.

## Oscar

'Shakespeare in Love' gets 13 nominations

BEVERLY HILLS (California), Feb 9: "Shakespeare in Love" and "Saving Private Ryan" dominated Academy Award nominations announced today, reports AP.

"Shakespeare in Love" had 13 nominations, including best picture, director, supporting actor for Geoffrey Rush, supporting actress Judi Dench and original screenplay for Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard.

"Saving Private Ryan" had 11 nominations, including best picture, director Steven Spielberg, leading actor Tom Hanks and original screenplay by Robert Rodat.

Other best picture nominees were "Elizabeth", "Life Is Beautiful" and "The Thin Red Line". In a surprise, "The Thin Red Line" picked up seven nominations, a triumphant return to the movies for director Terrence Malick who hadn't made a movie in two decades.

Also getting a big boost was "Elizabeth", which received seven nominations, and the Miramax studio, which had two best picture nominees in "Life Is Beautiful" and "Shakespeare in Love".

## Growers fear drastic fall in potato production

By Reaz Ahmad back from Munshiganj

Growers fear a drastic fall in potato production this year due to late sowing and other reasons in Munshiganj that grows half of the total requirement in Bangladesh.

The farmers missed the early November deadline for sowing potato seeds thanks to water-logged lands after the worst flood of the century last year and an unkind shower right after.

A careful look down the potato fields in Munshirhat area under Munshiganj Sadar would certainly catch the growers' misfortune written clearly on every single plant. The plants looked fragile and too short to bear many fruits. People from Novartis, a leading life science company, who accompanied a media team in the

area, observed that the farmers would definitely get a hard time this year.

Some potato growers feared that the production might be 30 per cent less than normal. A promising potato prospect in Chandpur district and in the northern belt of the country including Bogra may offset the possibility of a production shortage in the country but no redress is seen for the Munshiganj farmers who blamed many other things for their plight.

In Munshiganj, 300 maunds of potato grow per acre on an average and the central district is endowed with 66,000 acres of potato lands. In case of a bumper crop, like the one in 1997, per acre yield is up to 500 maunds.

lani, a grower from village Ranchara Howlapara of Sadar thana, complained that low-quality potato seeds were being sold using the name of BADC (Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation).

"We don't get BADC seeds from the dealers in just price. They sold seeds to blackmarketeers and we had to buy those at exorbitant price," he said.

AKM Ahsan Kabir Khan, a potato grower and an elected member of Kantadia-Shimulia Union Parishad under Tongbari thana in the district, came up with a similar complaint. He said BADC dealers often sell TSP (triple super phosphate) to informal sub-agents who push the fertiliser price way up the actual price. A good

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The joy bred by yesteryears' potato harvest (shown above) will not bear fruit this year. Plants have suffered marked decrease in productivity due to late sowing caused by flood and unexpected rains.

—Star photo by AKM Mohsin

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### Prayer Timings

February 10		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:24	5:28
Zohr	12:45	1:15
Asr	4:10	4:20
Maghrib	5:55	5:58
Esha	7:10	7:20

Source: Islamic Foundation