

# Dhaka, Moscow sign deal on trade, technical cooperation

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

In a move to further strengthen bilateral relations, Dhaka and Moscow yesterday signed a deal to establish an intergovernmental commission on trade, economic, scientific and technical cooperation.

Diplomatic source here said this agreement will broaden the horizon of Bangladesh's ties with the Russian Federation and facilitate diversification of bilateral trade.

Apart from trade, cooperation in defence was another area for collaboration between Dhaka and Moscow since Bangladesh inked its biggest arms contract worth \$1 billion with Russia in January 2013.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahrir Alam and visiting Deputy Minister for Economic Development of Russia Alexey Gruzdev signed the agreement on behalf of their respective governments at the foreign ministry yesterday.

According to foreign ministry, the latest agreement is aimed to promote the development of broad-based cooperation in a variety of areas, including trade, economy, science and technology.

The deal will assist the organisations and business communities of the two countries in the development and diversification of mutual bilateral relations, said a foreign ministry press release.

It will also analyse the status of trade, economic, scientific and technical cooperation, defines its most prospective directions, particularly in areas of agriculture, energy and power, education.

Both parties will appoint co-chairs, with deputies and executive secretaries to carry out the Commission's work. Permanent or ad-hoc working groups on specific areas of cooperation may be established within the framework of the Commission by a joint decision of the co-chairs.

Foreign Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali and the Russian Ambassador to Bangladesh Alexander I Ignatov, among others, were present.



# Those bone-chilling moments

FIROZ A MUZAHID

On way to his tutor's house the other day, my third-grader son Aukhor pulled my elbow and dragged me towards an unused gate of a house. A couple of fluffy little playful puppies were gnawing and nibbling at each other next to the gate. My son wanted to pet one of them, but I convinced him it was not a good idea, as he has allergic asthma.

In my own childhood though, I had no such problem and my siblings and I had not just one, but an entire family of five dogs. My fond memories with them and the ones I befriended at my friends' made me realise why they are called man's best friend.

Then all these years later there was this bone-chilling experience a few nights back. I was coming home after work around 3:30 in the morning. The main road to my neighbourhood was closed off for maintenance work, so I had to

get off my office transport about 200 feet away from my house.

As I walked with all sorts of scary thoughts of imaginative danger lurking ahead, I found myself face-to-face against a

pack of eight to ten stray dogs. Growling and barking fiercely, most of them were standing on a roadside boundary wall and on top of a single-storey house.

The rest were following me. My instinct told me to run away, but I stood my ground. I looked them in the eye, picked up a piece of broken concrete slab from the road, just in case, and walked on with shivers down my spine.

Just as I managed to shake them off, another pack of canines challenged me near my house. They seemed way more aggressive than the previous herd and stopped only a few feet away from me. I eventually survived again.

Many of my colleagues and friends in the city have similar experience, especially at night when the roads are empty.

This makes me wonder if there is any organisation that works to rehabilitate and shelter stray dogs. If they are kept at shelter centres, dog lovers can go there and pick one or two to adopt them as pet. This would spare the city dwellers of much trouble.



# Neo-JMB leader

FROM PAGE 1  
bordering Shibganj upazila unit of "Neo JMB" in a bus near Kakoli crossing in the capital around 10:00pm on Tuesday.

"We intercepted a bus following information that Boro Mizan was coming to Dhaka and arrested him," said CTTC Assistant Commissioner Ahmedul Islam who led the raid.

He added the syndicate headed by Boro Mizan and Chhoto Mizan alias Tara, another "Neo JMB" leader of the region, was the only gang that smuggled in grenade-making materials like detonators and power gel for the outfit.

Apart from Gulshan attack, the gang ensured ingredients for improvised grenades that were used in all attacks perpetrated by "Neo JMB" in recent years, counterterrorism officials said.

The syndicate also used to supply small firearms along with some other smuggling gangs, they added.

AC Ahmedul said Boro Mizan was the military commander of another militant group "Jund At-Tawheed Wal Khilafah". Later, he joined "Neo JMB" after meeting with its chief coordinator Tamim Chowdhury, who asked Mizan to supply arms and ammunition to the outfit.

Investigators first learned about activities of "Jund At-Tawheed Wal Khilafah" on May 31, 2015 following arrest of Abdullah Al-Galib, 27, in the capital's Baridhara area. Son of an ex-army official, Galib reportedly launched activities of the outfit in Bangladesh.

At that time, detectives also claimed the outfit used to follow the strategy of

Islamic State.

Asked how many members of the syndicate were still on the run, AC Ahmedul said they were still hunting Chhoto Mizan alias Tara and three to four other members of the syndicate.

On November 2 last year, the CTTC unit arrested four suspected "Neo JMB" operatives, also members of the syndicate, in the capital's Darus Salam area. They were Abu Taher, Mizanur Rahman, Selim Mia and Toufiqul Islam alias Doctor Toufiq.

Police then claimed the arrestees had admitted that Chhoto Mizan delivered raw materials and firearms, including pistols, to Tamim Ahmed Chowdhury and Nurul Islam Marzan, the key planners of the July 1 attack on the Gulshan eatery.

Tara had collected the arms and explosive-making materials from Chapainawabganj border through the four, they added.

Officials say the arms and other materials came to Dhaka in baskets of mangoes and other seasonal fruits.

Police also seized a 9mm pistol and 787 detonators, the main ingredient of handmade grenades, from the possession of the four.

On the night of July 1, militants seized the Gulshan café and killed 20 hostages, including nine Italian, seven Japanese and one Indian citizen.

The over-12-hour siege ended after the launch of a commando operation in which five terrorists and a café chef were killed.

The authorities maintain that "Neo JMB", an offshoot of the banned militant outfit Jama'at ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), carried out the attack.

# Stolen baby rescued

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Alepuddin, of Rab-11.

The Rab members conducted the drive after a complaint was filed by victim's mother Setu Begum, a resident of Mirpur, with Shah Ali Police Station on February 22.

The Rab official was briefing journalists about the drive at Rab-11 headquarters in Narayanganj's Adamjee yesterday.

Two other members of the gang -- Al Amin, 28, and his wife Salma, 22 -- were absconding, he added.

Al Amin and Salma stole Marium on February 19 from Setu's house and sold the baby to a childless couple for Tk 15,000, the Rab official said.

Meanwhile, Setu also told Rab that her husband Billal Hossain, 36, is a drug addict, who had sold two of their children earlier.

Her third child, Sharmin, was also stolen allegedly by one Sultana when she was just 11 months old.

Sultana later killed the infant and dumped her body into a dustbin in Shahbagh area, Setu said in her complaint.

Shahbagh police arrested Sultana later, she said.

Setu divorced her husband after her fourth child, Marium, was born.

The Rab official also said they were trying to arrest the other gang members

# People suffer

FROM PAGE 1

Like him, thousands of people endured untold sufferings yesterday as transport workers kept buses and trucks off the road across the country for two days.

The workers yesterday even obstructed plying of private vehicles in different areas of the capital and a number of districts, including Chittagong. They also intercepted an ambulance in the capital's Gabtoli Bus Terminal area.

On Sunday, transport workers went on strike in 10 southern districts under Khulna division, protesting a verdict that gave life sentence to a bus driver over the deaths of filmmaker Tareque Masud, media personality Ashfaque Munier Mishuk and three others in a road accident in 2011.

Without any formal announcement, the workers later extended their strike to other parts of the country after a Dhaka court awarded capital punishment to a trucker on Monday over the death of a woman in Savar in 2003.

They, however, resumed transport operation yesterday afternoon following Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan's "request".

But in the meantime, people were made to suffer and businesses had to incur heavy losses for something they had nothing to do with.

Yesterday, no long-haul buses arrived or left the capital's bus terminals. Only BRTC buses plied the city roads. People had to walk miles with their belongings to go to their destinations. Many were seen boarding rickshaws vans.

"What was our fault? Why people had to suffer for the unlawful demands of the transport workers?" asked Maksudur Rahman, a private service holder in Mirpur area.

He had to go to his office in Gulshan area by changing modes of transport several times.

Shuvo, a resident of the city's Rampura area, started for his village home in Dhamrai with his wife and two children around 11:30am.

He had to change human haulers thrice to reach Technical Intersection near Gabtoli.

Carrying a large travel bag on one shoulder and his four-year-old daughter on the other, Shuvo started walking towards Amin Bazar to catch a vehicle. His wife Shaila was trailing him with their two-year-old son.

"There was no vehicle that would take us to Amin Bazar from Kalyanpur," he said.

Transport workers stopped vehicular movement from Technical Intersection to Amin Bazar following sporadic

clashes between them and police. One worker was killed in the clashes in the morning.

The strike compelled Mollah Sheikh, 48, a physically challenged man, to walk from Shah Ali shrine to Gabtoli on Tuesday night as he needed to go to Pabna to see his ailing daughter.

"I had to stay at Gabtoli last night [Tuesday night] as I could not afford to pay the rickshaw fare to get back to Shah Ali shrine area. I have only Tk 150," he told this correspondent yesterday afternoon.

Md Anwar, a mason, and his co-worker Md Jewel, started for the capital from Comilla Cantonment area around 8:30am. They were not aware of the transport strike but faced the reality after boarding a bus.

They had to pay Tk 50 more than the actual fare. As they reached Kanchpur, transport workers forced them to get down from the bus.

Carrying two huge bags, they walked to Chittagong road, and hired a rickshaw for Tk 100 to reach Jatrabari in the capital. From there, they took another rickshaw to go to Shahbagh.

Failing to get any vehicle to go to their destination in the city's Kazipara area, they started walking again.

"We suffered a lot to due to the transport strike," Anwar told this correspondent.

In Chittagong city, Mohammed Imtiaz, owner of a stationery shop at Golam Rasul Market, said, "As there was no public transport, I had to spend Tk 200, ten times the usual fare, to go to New Market from Katgar by rickshaw."

The situation was almost the same in many districts, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Feni, transport workers put barricades on the bypass road of the Dhaka-Chittagong highway.

## Man dies

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of a road on a piece of land.

Around noon yesterday, the two had an altercation over the matter near Raju's home. At one stage, Shamsu, also a joint convener of Atharabari Jubo League, allegedly assaulted Raju, the SI said.

Khorshed, who saw the incident, fainted immediately.

The man, who had high blood pressure, died on his way to Ishwarganj Upazila Health Complex, said the SI.

Raju alleged that the UP member slapped and punched him several times.

Contacted, Shamsu denied beating Raju. "I just pushed him."



Pineapple growers wait on their boats at Banarupa Samataghat in Rangamati for traders who were reluctant to buy the fruit fearing they would not be able to ship during the transport strike yesterday morning. The price of pineapple plummeted there.

PHOTO: ANVIL CHAKMA

# Why should they not face action?

FROM PAGE 1  
compliance with the directive in two weeks.

Secretaries to the Road Transport and Highways Division and home ministry, chairmen of Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation and Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, inspector general of police, deputy inspectors general of police of Dhaka, Rajshahi, Barisal, Khulna, Rangpur, Chittagong, Sylhet and Mymensingh ranges, director general of the Rapid Action Battalion, presidents and general secretaries of Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federations of Dhaka and Khulna and Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Malik Samity have been made respondents to the rule.

A bench of Justice Syed Muhammad Dastagir Husain and Justice Md Ataur Rahman Khan passed the rule and order after hearing a writ petition filed as public interest litigation by a rights organisation, Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh.

The rights body in the petition challenged the legality of the transport strike enforced in protest at two court verdicts that gave life sentence to a bus

driver over the deaths of filmmaker Tareque Masud, media personality Ashfaque Munier Mishuk and three others in a 2011 accident and sentenced a truck driver to death over the death of a woman in a 2003 accident in Savar.

HRPB also said enforcing a strike or hartal against a court verdict is tantamount to contempt of court and obstruction to the dispensation of justice. The strike has caused public suffering and obstructed regular life.

The transportation of goods was hindered, and raw materials rotted away, thereby affecting the revenue generation, the petitioner said.

The rights body's lawyer, Manzill Murshid told the court the decision of enforcing the strike had reportedly been taken at a minister's residence. Due to the "illegal" strike, the transport workers were encouraged to act at their will, which led to the setting fire to many establishments across the country.

Advocate Murshid prayed to the court to pass an order against the people responsible for the strike.

Deputy Attorney General Amit

Talukder cited an earlier observation of the Supreme Court that enforcing hartal like programmes is a democratic right.

To that, Murshid said political hartal is legal, but the transport strike was not a political one but against a court judgment.

Meanwhile, an SC lawyer yesterday urged the president and the prime minister to take steps to terminate Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan for "supporting the strike".

Eunus Ali Akond sent copies of a memorandum to the offices of President Abdul Hamid and PM Sheikh Hasina, claiming that the minister had provoked the transport workers to enforce the strike, which was tantamount to contempt of court and a breach of minister's oath.

The minister's action was also "unconstitutional" and "seditious" as defined in article-7A of the constitution, Akond said in the memorandum.

Besides, holding positions as a minister and executive president of Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Association at the same time by Shajahan is illegal, he added.

# Barack

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Michelle Obama's memoir is likely to be just as eagerly anticipated.

A descendant of slaves, she became the first African American first lady and garnered high approval ratings -- to the point where she was arguably one of the country's most respected and popular women.

Penguin Random House said in a statement it has "acquired world publication rights for two books, to be written by president and Mrs Obama respectively."

The terms of the deal were not disclosed, but bidding for the high-profile double book deal topped \$60 million, a record sum for US presidential memoirs, according to the Financial Times.

Until now, the record for a US presidential memoir was \$15 million paid for Bill Clinton's "My Life," released in 2004. George W Bush received \$11 million for "Decision Points" in 2010.

Hillary Clinton reportedly received a \$14 million advance for "Hard Choices," her account of her time as secretary of state under Obama.

The Obama deal was negotiated by Washington super-lawyer Robert Barnett, who represented both the Clintons and Bush.

As part of the agreement, the company will donate one million books in the Obama family's name to First Book, a charity, Penguins said.

"We are very much looking forward to working together with President and Mrs Obama to make each of their books global publishing events of unprecedented scope and significance," said Penguin Random House CEO Markus Dohle.

The Obamas took a long vacation after Donald Trump was sworn in as president on January 20, and the former president has stuck by a pledge to keep a low public profile unless events threatening what he called America's "core values" warranted that he speak out.

He did just that in January, just days after Trump enacted his ban on travellers from seven mostly Muslim countries, and on all refugees. Obama expressed support for protests that sprang up nationwide against the now-suspended Trump travel ban.

Whereas US presidents tend to leave town after leaving the White House, the Obamas are settling into a rented mansion in Washington's posh Kalorama district until their younger daughter Sasha finishes high school. Their eldest daughter Malia will be attending Harvard in the fall.

Another new neighbour in Kalorama is Trump's daughter Ivanka, who has rented a house along with her husband Jared Kushner and their three children, near the Obamas.