

Dhaka, Minsk ink 7 deals

FROM PAGE 1
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Belarus counterpart Mikhail V Myasnikovich witnessed the signing ceremony.

During the official talks, both the countries agreed to boost bilateral cooperation on agriculture, trade and commerce as well as to deepen economic relations.

After the talks, both the premiers spoke at a joint press briefing.

Hasina said the landmark visit of Myasnikovich to Bangladesh in November last was highlighted by signing of 12 agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs).

"Today, our bilateral meeting took stock of the progress we made since then and discussed the areas of future collaboration," she told newsmen.

The two high-level visits, within such a short period of time, had produced a positive atmosphere in both the countries and opened up the scope for trade, investment and cooperation in various fields, Hasina said.

"I have also requested Prime Minister Myasnikovich for technology transfer and massive investment in Bangladesh, taking into consideration our strategic location in South and Southeast Asia," she added.

Hasina said the two countries have agreed on deepening economic relations to explore and exploit all the avenues of economic cooperation.

"I am happy to note that already private sector groups have signed an instrument for establishing a dairy plant in Bangladesh with Belarus' assistance. This should inspire others to make similar beneficial arrangements," she said.

"The signing of the two MoUs on cultural cooperation and on education cooperation between universities will prove to be very beneficial in this regard," Hasina said.

The premier also said they had discussed cooperation in sports as well.

"We also signed an MoU on peaceful cooperation on nuclear energy... We have agreed to establish a committee on joint military cooperation," she said.

Hasina continued: "I have requested Prime Minister Myasnikovich to support Bangladesh in getting privileges in the customs union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation."

SEVEN DEALS
At the signing ceremony, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni and Belarus Minister for Taxes and Duties Vladimir Poluyan inked an agreement on avoidance of double taxation.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Belarus SM Saiful Huq and

Belarus Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Roumas signed a framework agreement on commodity export credit.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) on cooperation in peaceful uses of nuclear energy was signed by Dipu Moni and Belarus Minister for Energy Vladimir Potupchik.

Dipu Moni and Belarus Minister for Culture Boris Svetlov signed an MoU on cultural cooperation between the two countries.

On cooperation between diplomatic training academies of the two countries, an MoU was inked by Foreign Secretary Shahidul Huq and Rector of Belarus University Dr Anatol Marazevich.

An MoU between Shahjalal University and Belarus University was signed by Vice Chancellor of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology Dr Elias Uddin Biswas and Vice Rector of Belarus University Dr Andrei Coronovsky.

A joint declaration of intent on preferential export loan was signed by Ambassador SM Saiful Huq and Vladimir Amarin, first deputy minister of finance of Belarus.

Hasina also invited Myasnikovich to visit Bangladesh again to give further momentum to the relations between the two countries.

FROM PAGE 1
Rab DG admits Limon was a victim of a "shootout"

April 24
Police submit charge sheet in arms case against Limon

May 5
Limon gets bail from High Court

government's failure to protect the innocent college boy.

His ordeal began on March 23, 2011, just yards away from his home at Shaturia village in Jhalakathi. As Limon, then 16, went to fetch his family cattle from a nearby field, a Rab team shot him point-blank in his left leg, taking him for a notorious criminal it was looking for.

The elite force then picked him up and sent him to a hospital. On the same day, Rab filed two cases against him -- one for possessing arms and another for obstructing law enforcers. As evidence against the poor, meritorious boy, Rab produced a worn out revolver and a used bullet cap.

Four days after the shooting, Limon's leg had to be amputated. He now walks on an artificial leg.

Over the last two years, national and international rights bodies described the whole episode as injustice and an utter violation of human rights and urged the

government in vain to right this wrong.

Yesterday, Home Minister Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir said: "We have decided to withdraw the cases against Limon."

Asked if the Rab personnel who shot Limon would be brought to book, the minister said he saw no need for that.

"We should consider one thing: the way Limon was caught from the spot indicates resistance from him and others against Rab," he told reporters at his secretariat office.

For Limon, who is now in Dhaka for treatment of his ear that was injured during his arrest in 2011, the day started with his usual worries over being accused in two cases that could send him to jail, if convicted, for 24 years.

But the news changed his day.

"I got a call around 2:00pm from the human rights commission chairman," said a delighted Limon. "I could not believe what he said. I think it's a

government in vain to right this wrong.

Asked if his family would consider withdrawing the case against six Rab officials for shooting and maiming him, Limon said he was always for justice.

"The cases filed against me are false but my mother's case against the Rab men is true. So I shall always seek justice," he added.

Limon's shooting and everything that followed drew a barrage of criticism from the public, the media and rights bodies.

In a press release, the National Human Rights Commission yesterday said it had been vocal about protecting Limon's human rights from the very beginning.

Commission chief Mizanur Rahman had urged the government several times in writing and also verbally to withdraw the cases against Limon, it added.

The home minister called the NHRC chairman in the

August 29
Limon gets artificial leg

July 1, 2012
Police submit charge sheet in second case -- for obstructing law enforcers -- against Limon

August 14
Police inquiry finds Rab innocent

August 20
Rab source Ibrahim Howlader assaults Limon and his family. Three days later, he files a murder case against Limon's family

February 13, 2013
Court rejects Limon's mother's no-confidence petition against police probe report in her case against Rab

June 23
NHRC chief Mizanur Rahman asks Limon to withdraw case against Rab

June 30
Mizanur tells media that he had sent three letters to home ministry, requesting it to withdraw cases against Limon

July 1
Limon indicted in arms case

July 9
Home ministry decides to withdraw both cases against Limon

morning to inform him of the government decision, the release said.

Talking to The Daily Star, Mizanur Rahman said he saw the withdrawal of the cases as "a victory for humanity".

"Our responsibility towards Limon is not over yet. The state has more to do for the young man who lost a leg," he noted.

Even in his miserable condition, Limon took his HSC exam this year from Kathalia PGS Bilateral Technical School and College. He is now waiting for his results.

In his hometown, people from all walks of life expressed satisfaction over the government decision, reports our Jhalakathi correspondent.

"We are really happy that the government has at long last realised that Limon has always been innocent," said Zakir Hossain, a Union Parishad member of Shaturia.

REACTION IN DHAKA
Asked to comment on the development, eminent lawyer Shahdeen Malik said:

"Now, there needs to be a neutral and thorough investigation to find whether those who opened fire abused their powers. It also needs to be investigated if they had proper training in handling such incidents and all other issues."

He noted that some members of a force might act wrongly and criminally. In such a situation, it is mandatory for the force to investigate the matter to learn from the mistake so that such things do not recur.

Nur Khan, director of the rights body Ain o Salish Kendra that gave legal support to Limon, said: "We are happy at the government's move to withdraw the cases against Limon."

He added: "We think that the government through this move has cleared the way for trying the Rab personnel concerned. But we are shocked at the home minister's comment that he does not see any need for taking punitive action against the Rab personnel."

Political parties, cops most corrupt

FROM PAGE 1
Transparency International, Bangladesh (TIB) released the survey report on Bangladesh yesterday at a press conference at Brac Centre Inn in the capital.

The survey, which comes out every two years, was also released simultaneously in other countries.

Transparency International, a Berlin-based global civil society group campaigning against corruption, initiated the survey in 2003.

Bangladesh was included in the survey in 2010. This time, the survey was conducted on more than 114,000 people in 107 countries between September 2012 and March 2013.

Sixty percent of Bangladeshi respondents think the level of corruption has increased in the last two years, according to the survey of 1,822 Bangladeshis between February 10 and March 15.

Twenty-six percent of the respondents consider effective government initiatives in curbing corruption, while 32 percent deem those ineffective.

"In comparison with 2010, people's confidence in government initiatives in fighting corruption has declined, and we have seen its reflection on the recent city corporation elections," said TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman.

In the past few years, especially the last two, issues of the Padma bridge, Hall-Mark, share market and corruption in railway recruitments had been widely discussed in the public domain and they influenced people's perceptions, he said.

The TIB executive director said the survey shows corruption is a problem not only for Bangladesh but also for all countries across the globe.

He said there was a back-

ground to the public perception of political parties becoming the most corrupt institution in Bangladesh.

"When the survey was conducted, there was political unrest in the country. Many questions were raised about the role of the government and leaders of political parties at that time. This may have reflected on people's opinion," he said.

The survey makes an interesting point. According to the final consideration of Bangladeshi respondents, it is the government that holds the authority to curb corruption.

Local public representatives are the first choice of the respondents for informing about any corruption incident with more than 31 percent of them subscribing to this view.

The survey also comes up with an optimistic finding that all Bangladeshi respondents want to be involved in any form of activities to fight

corruption, while 92 percent of them believe that ordinary people can make a difference in combating corruption.

It says military and religious organisations in Bangladesh are the least corrupt institutions. Thirty-two percent of the respondents chose these institutions.

Ninety-three percent of the respondents believe political parties and police are the most corrupt public service institutions followed by the judiciary, parliament, and government administration.

Queried as to what types of corruption political parties indulge in, Iftekhar said the survey didn't cover it, but people thought there was corruption in political parties.

The definition of corruption is not confined to only the exchange of bribes. Misuse of power is also corruption and people's expectations remain unfulfilled because of it, he said.

Replying to a reporter's query whether the survey was aimed at encouraging depoliticisation, he said the survey's aim was to make the political arena more effective, powerful, pro-people and corruption-free.

"It is the political leaders who are behind all democratic achievements and socio-economic progress of the country. We only want political parties to take people's perception into consideration and bring reform to their parties," he said.

When a journalist wanted to know who in the judiciary were involved in

giving bribes is the only way to get services while 33 percent of them do that for speeding up things.

TIB recommended finding out immediately the sectors where the graft level is high and taking urgent measures to curb corruption. Besides, it suggested ensuring transparency and accountability of these institutions with an increased participation of general people.

It also stressed the need for making the Anti-Corruption Commission effective and implementing the Right to Information 2009 Act in all government and non-government institutions.

Rafiqul Hasan, director of research and policy department of TIB, and Shahnur Rahman, programme manager, presented the findings.

TIB Deputy Executive Director Sumaiya Khayer was present at the press conference.

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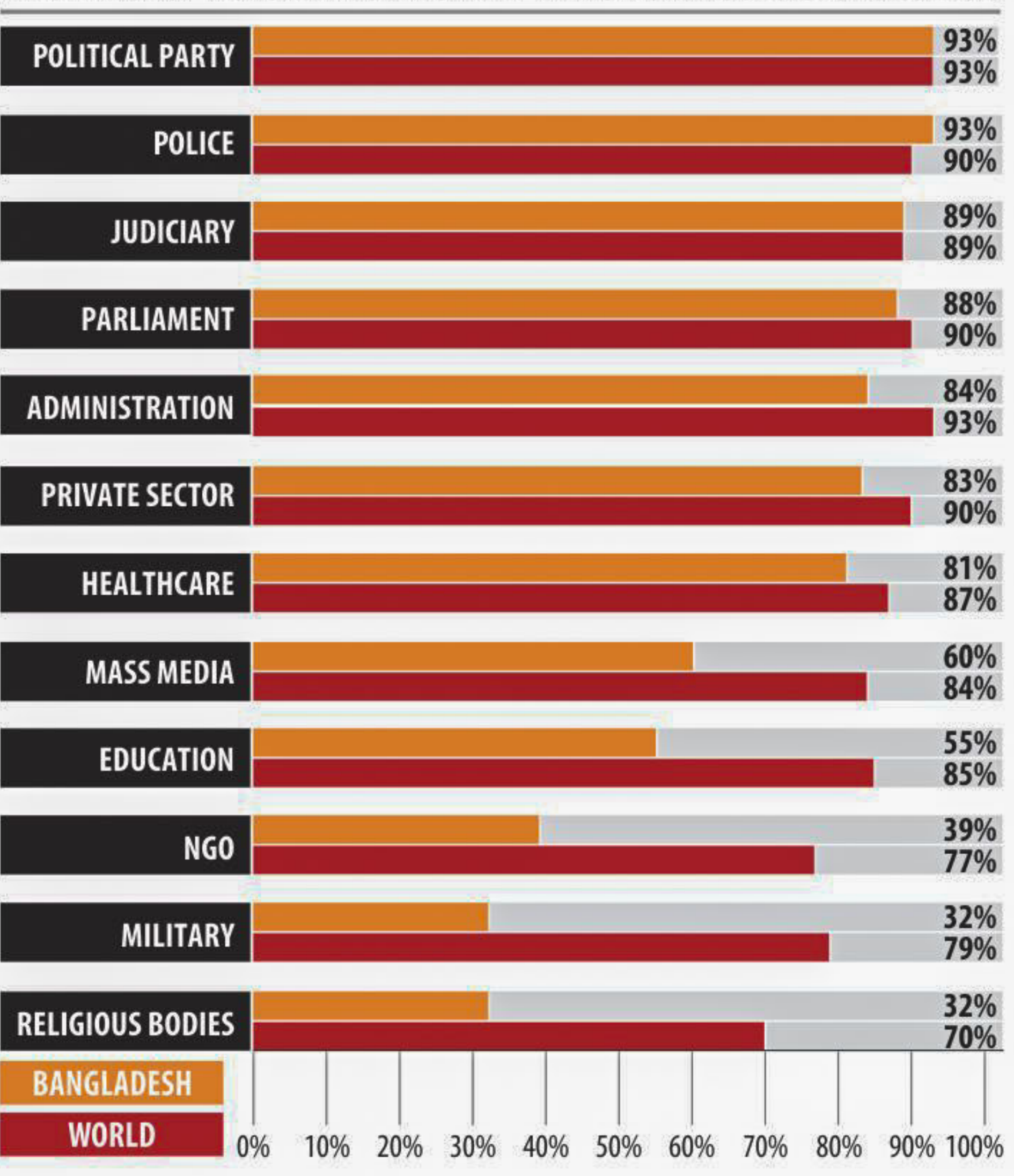
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PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO VIEW THE FOLLOWING SECTORS AS CORRUPT



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