the physical force she can de-

ploy both from the official ma-

chinery of law and order and

through party mastaans on the

streets. Such a dependence on

force as a source of authority

has been the time honoured

resort of an autocratic regime.

. It cannot sustain a democrati-

cally inspired political party

for long in office, since it will

further delegitimise such a

regime in the eyes of demo-

cratic opinion. In a democratic

polity a government's authority

to govern, including the use of

force, largely derives from a

delicate moral compact with

its citizens, who recognise

their right to govern, because

it is derived from the freely

exercised choice of voters.

Once this choice is not exer-

cised, the compact breaks

down and only the law of the

jungle applies. No administra-

tion can rule without the re-

spect of those whom it rules.

Within a regime shorn of its

moral authority, every act of

oppression reinforces the po-

litical authority of the opposi-

tion. In a regime whose every

act of authority is potentially

challengeable, we may be

opening up the floodgates of

anarchy where, progressively,

all forms of authority will come

quences of such a development

will be no more comfortable

for the opposition than it will

for the government, whilst

ordinary citizens may be left to

contemplate an uncertain lu-

ture. Khaleda Zia would thus be

well advised to treat these re-

cent arrests as political aberra-

tions, release those arrested

without delay and ensure that

no further such favours are of-

fered to the opposition if her

party is to retain minimal

credibility to see us through

under challenge. The conse-

Can Statesmanship Triumph over Folly?

by Rehman Sobhan

Whilst it may be argued by many that constitutional continuity must be maintained, it is surely making a

mockery of the constitutional process to do so by putting in place a parliament whose representative status is

itself legally questionable. What confidence can a government basing its authority on such a parliament

Sad Days for Democracy

Many today may remember the celebratory atmosphere which greeted the conclusion of one of this region's freest and fairest elections at the end of February 1991. These polls. held under the interim nonparty government of President Shahabuddin, brought Begum Khaleda Zia and her party to power. The nation's faith in a system of democratic elections was renewed at a time when we had almost forgotten what was a free and fair election. For all those of us who shared that moment of renewal in our democratic experience, the spectacle of the same Khaleda Zia, a symbol of our democratic renaissance, almost five years. later appearing before the national and global media, to defend the bonafides of the election of 15 February, was an occasion for sadness rather than anger. Her claim that a large number of people came to vote in the election, that the high vote counts declared by the Election Commission (EC) were accurate and that unusually high vote counts could be attributed to ballot stuffing by the opposition to discredit the election, appeared both self-

the same time. The attempt by a party. which came to power five years ago with an unchallenged mandate, earned through an evenly contested, free and fair election, to seek a renewal of its mandate through an uncontested, largely unattended and manifestly fraudulent voting process, puts Bangladesh's pohtical clock even further back than the electoral farces staged in the Ershad era. After all Ershad, came to power through force, stayed in power through fraud and went when his mandate of force was withdrawn. Nobody really expected any better from Ershad. The same cannot be said for a leader and a party whose entire political credibility today depends on the nature of their ascent to power. Perhaps unfairly, much higher standards are expected of such a party who are expected to renew their mandate through a no less categorical process than that which brought them to power or to surrender it through a similar process which can then set similar standards from their successor

contradictory and incredible at

The Source of Power?

In my article, the March of Folly: Can it be Averted, which appeared in this paper just before the elections, I had warned of the consequences arising out of the abdication of political legitimacy which threatened Khaleda Zia if she went through with an uncontested election on 15 February She regrettably went through with the elections, perhaps in the expectation that if enough voters came out to reaffirm their support to the election process, this would establish some credibility for the election. In fact, very few people did vote on 15 February. whether out of fear of violence or because the election was devoid of a real choice remain

hypothetical questions. The objective facts relating to the election, witnessed by the national press, whose correspondents are located around the country, and not just in Dhaka, as well as the voters themselves, is that few people actually came out that day to vote. Whether these voters constituted 1 per cent or 5 per cent or even 15 per cent of the voting population, does not matter too much. The fact remains that the democratic mandate of Khaleda Zia and her party, which up to 15 February was unchallenged. has now become virtually nonexistent. Lack of a democratic mandate was largely a matter of indifference to autocrats such as Ershad but to Khaleda Zia it provides the lifeblood for the political vitality of her

ated legitimacy of Khaleda Zia's authority to exercise power, is the possible illegality which now underlies even the tenuous claim to power provided by an unrepresentative election. Lack of opponents and even lack of voters raise questions of political legitimacy. Faked election results, derived from ballot boxes feloniously stuffed with wrongfully stamped votes by party henchman, is plainly llegal. All those aiding and abetting this process of ballot tampering are, under the law of the land, liable to terms of imprisonment. In any civilised democratic society such polls would thus have been the subject of criminal investigation and would probably have been annulled by an Election Commissioner with any sense of responsibility to the public whose rights he is there to protect. Whilst it may be argued by many that constitutional continuity must be maintained, it is surely making a mockery of the constitutional process to do so by putting in place a parliament whose representative status is itself legally questionable. What confidence can a government basing its authority on such a parliament expect to enjoy not just with the people but in the exercise of its external relations?

The Impotence of the Election Commission

The fact that the Chief

Election Commissioner and his Commission, have not actually declared, without prompting this election as null and void. merely confirms, the impotence and/or the pusillanimity of the EC. For all those, from the ruling party, to our naive diplomats and indeed many ordinary citizens, who believed that all that we needed to ensure a free and fair election was a strong EC, the arguments of the Opposition have now been fully vindicated by the behaviour of such an EC. Had the Chief Election Commissioner not made such a spectacle of himself before the press and TV cameras, in the period just before the elections, displaying the full-power of the armed services and forces of law and order lined up behind him to enforce a

tion, any result sent to them by However of even more serious concern than the deprecithe Polling Officer in each polling station! This position now taken up by the Chief Election Commissioner contradicts assurances given to us by the same Chief Election Commissioner, when we called on him as members of the Group of 5. We were then assured that the Commission had assumed powers of direct intervention to challenge returns from any polling centre which indicated questionable results. We are now to understand that such an intervention can only originate either from a complaint by a concerned candidate or by the Polling Officers themselves. Since in most of the polling

expect to enjoy not just with the people but in the exercise of its external relations? sequent confessions of impowithin call from each station. tence to act against vote fraud. suggests that either the would have been greeted with administrative authority of the Election Commission over the more sympathy. We are now left to understand that the EC forces of law and order was had not even the power to question the credibility of any ballot in any voting centre. however, inflated its vote count may appear. It now appears that the EC has to accept any result sent to them by the Returning Officers, in charge of a constituency who in turn have to accept, without ques-

largely mythological or it was never used because its officials at the polling station were too intimidated to seek the assistance of the law enforcing agencies. But then what of the law enforcing agencies themselves? Could they not assert themselves, given the fire power at their disposal, to prevent assorted hoodlums from invading the polling centres, when under law they had no business to be there? Was the job of the law enforcing agencies limited to protecting the ballots from assault by opponents of the election and did this not extend to protecting the ballot boxes from capture by the proponents of the election? All this reaffirms. what many took to be self-evident. The machinery of law and order acts only at the behest of the administration and the EC is powerless to get these agencies to act contrary to the wishes of the administration of the day. In the prevailing circumstances; the powers of the Chief Election

in the name of such a government could now be made individually answerable, if they act in the name of a government whose authority is open to question. This is no way for any country to function, least of all one which constantly lives on the threshold of survival. In such an environment we cannot expect much development. or domestic, let alone foreign investment. In this situation hardly any improvement in the governance and hence the state of our economy is feasible, with the spectre of anarchy hovering around every corner, where authority will always be challenged and only force may prevail.

In these circumstance Begum Khaleda Zia, above all, must rectify the consequence of the 15 February election and its implications not just for her political future but for the future of democracy. It is her regime which holds the reins of state power or what little remains of it today. It is better for her to come to terms with her precarious situation and to act expeditiously to resolve the impasse by accepting the need for a new election within the

representative status. As a political leader who depends for her political mandate to rule, on the freely given support of the electorate it is against her prestige to exercise power without a popular mandate and damaging to the future electability of her party to retain power without such a mandate. Once the election is annulled Khaleda Zia should submit her resignation to the President and advise him to constitute an Advisory Council of neutral, non-partisan persons acceptable to both sides. to constitute an interim government which will hold fresh elections within the next two to three months. If there is any uncertainty over the legality of these actions the President should seek the opinion of the Appellate Division. Such a statesmanlike gesture by Khaleda Zia would raise her stature in the eyes of the public by at least one foot. Since she has lost about 9 inches in her stature by being trapped in an uncontested election, a net gain of 3 inches would be clearly to her political advantage in any forthcoming elec-

should be appointed by the President within the next 3/4 days and requested to draft a constitutional amendment within 7/10 days to permit the setting up of a caretaker government. In this task our most respected jurists would consult all the major parties as well as other eminent jurists to ensure both the political acceptability and justifiability of the amendment. This amendment approved by both political sides would be tabled for amendment during the one day life of the Sixth Jatiya Sangsad. Since this amendment would in fact then have to be ratified by a referendum,

tices of the Appellate Division

Sheikh Hasina could justify its legitimacy by claiming that it derives its authority from a public referendum and not just a parliament of questionable authority. She can however earn the undying gratitude of the public by sparing them days of turmoil leading to a dark and uncertain future, by tolerating this clearly blemished parliament long enough to perform its historic task of amending the Constitution. This act of statesmanship would provide for a peaceful and expeditious solution to this crisis of democracy. At the same time. Sheikh Hasina would hold Khaleda Zia in her political debt by getting her out of an embarrassing situation and in the process establish that she is willing to place the national interest above partisan gain. This mature gesture would add many inches to Hasina's stature and serve her party well in a closely contested election.

> Guaranteeing a Settlement

So deep is the sense of mistrust dividing both parties that either of the two initiatives indicated above will need to be guaranteed by third parties. We suggest the guarantors for this may, for a change, come from a broad coalition assembled from within civil society. This will include leading functional bodies such as the business community, the professions, the NGOs, even bodies representing the bureaucracy. They would all commit themselves to come out in public demonstrations in support of the agreement and to participate in an ongoing movement against either party who dishonours the agreement. The possibility of seeking some judicial guarantee for such an agreement may also be explored by our

Moves in the Wrong

Direction Khaleda Zia's recent move to enforce the fragile authority of her unrepresentative government by arresting opposition leaders appears totally counter-productive to her own interest. Such a futile demonstration of coercive power can serve little purpose but to further enhance the political credit of the opposition and discredit her own regime. By

The Hour for Statesmanship

this critical period.

In this moment of crisis it is no less mandatory on Sheikh Hasina, and the political opposition to exercise restraint and avoid the language of the victor. There are no victors from the melancholy experience of the last two years. Indeed the entire tribe of politicians and in the process, the parliamentary process itself, has reached its nadir, in the esteem of the population. Thus the opposition may well find themselves in the same position tomorrow as that of the incumbent regime. It is therefore important for Sheikh Hasina to reach out the hand of cooperation to Khaleda Zia to collectively seek an early solution to a crisis which leaves the nation poised on the brink of anarchy and puts our democratic institutions under the double jeopardy of violence and extrademocratic usurpation. The nation now looks to both its leaders to rise above themselves and demonstrate some statesmanship, some charity and some compassion not just to each other but to the longsuffering people of Bangladesh inothis, the silver-jubilee year of our independence, our people would like to rediscover those very blessings of

It seems that in an uncontested election, there was none to register any complaint with the Election Commission against such political vandalism. This means that a multi-party contested election remains a functional precondition for an Election Commission to do its job since the presence of the polling agents of the various contesting parties is the only guarantee that polling malpractices can be brought to the notice of the Commission.

centres there was no opposition party agent, the BNP had a free run of all the polling centres. However, in many such centres polling agents who are legally entitled to be in the booths, were joined by assorted riff-raff who, either with the connivance of the Polling Officer, or though intimidation of these officers. took over the centre and stuffed the ballot boxes to their hearts content. It seems that in an uncontested election. there was none to register any complaint with the Election Commission against such political vandalism. This means that a multi-party contested election remains a functional precondition for an Election Commission to do its job since the presence of the polling agents of the various contesting parties is the only guaran tee that polling malpractices can be brought to the notice of the Commission. On this assumption, the Election Commission should not have permitted an election to take place in the first place, if there was no credible contestants engaged in the poll, since by his own argument such a poll

could not be free of fair. A situation where polling centres were occupied by party hoodiums, even though they were under guard by the police. BDR. Ansars and the armed forces were on patrol or

Commissioner were either a figment of his imagination or he was helpless to manage the election in the face of a determined ruling party. In either case, a person with minimal self-respect for his own dignity and, more important concern for the integrity of his institution, should explain to the world why he was powerless to provide the nation with a minimally credible election. in contrast to the heroic performance of his predecessor in 1991.

Re-establishing the Right to Govern

Given the melancholy back ground of this recent election where do we go from here? There is no point in rehashing history to establish blame or to smugly proclaim 'I told you so

The nation now faces a much more critical situation where in the near future, the nation may be exposed to governance by a regime which is neither legitimate within the terms of reference of the democratic process or even legal within the provisions of the Constitution. Each act of such a government will now be open to challenge in courts of law in open challenges to their administrative authority and on the streets. All public officials

who discharges their authority

ernment. After the fiasco of 15 February, there can be hardly anyone left in Bangladesh who doubts that a free election can be possible without a non-party government in place. The precise route to a fresh election must obviously be negotiated by both sides.

next few months under a neu-

tral, non-party caretaker gov-

Some Possible Solutions to

the Crisis As of now there are essentially two feasible solutions to the crisis of legitimacy within the framework of democracy Either of the respective solutions are more weighted to the interest of one or the other party. The issue is do the two sides know what is in their own best interest. Let us therefore, look at the two positions as viewed from either

In the interest of Khaleda

It is in the immediate inher eroded credibility with the demands that she approach the Chief Election Commissioner and request him to declare the 15 February election as null and void because there

terest of Khaleda Zia to restore people as well as the prestige of her party by an act of exceptional statesmanship. This act are serious doubts about its

vide for holding elections under a non-party, neutral caretaker government. Since the dividing line between statesmanship and damnfoolery is very narrow, such a gesture by Hasina must be backed by solid guarantees of specific performance that the amendment will voted upon on the very first day that the Parliament sits and that this same parliament will, after the passage of the amendment, stand automatically dissolved on the passage of the amendment. The President may, then under the provisions of the amended Constitution, commission a caretaker government, to assume office and hold fresh elections, under a newly-constituted EC, set up this time through mutual agreement of

In the interest of Sheikh

In contrast to the interests

of Khaleda Zia it is paradoxi-

cally in the interest of Sheikh

rasina to surprise everyone by

an act of visionary statesman-

ship. This can be achieved if

she takes the bold decision to

let the Sixth Parliament, in-

spite of its flawed representa-

tion, be convened to amend

the Constitution so as to pro-

For the above time bound, self-executing and guaranteed constitutional solution to work, a constitutional advisory body made up of retired Chief Jus-

such an act Khaleda Zia is prodemocracy, whose denial inclaiming to the world that the spired our struggle for only basis of her power will be liberation. The 15 February Election and the Aftermath

Political Crisis in Bangladesh: An Overview

free and fair election, his sub-

HE 15 February elections in Bangladesh was held without resolving the stagnant political crisis. The political crisis and, especially. the recent elections have thrown politics almost in a blind alley reducing further the limited leeway available to the major political parties. Now, the ruling party has declared that it was entitled to form the government as it had bagged majority seats of the parliament. Mainstream opposition political parties say that as the election was farcial. the government so formed would be illegal. According to the civil society, pacification and normalisation of agitation are prérequisites to reverse the dangerously downward trend in the politics of Bangladesh. Otherwise, the society itself may degenerate triggering a more dangerous

Political climate was turbulent during the pre-poll period also. The Chief Election Commissioner said that elections should be held for constitutional continuity. Here he apparently became the selfproclaimed guardian of the Constitution. According to Article 7 of the constitution, "all powers in the Republic belong to the people", and therefore. he should not have put "the people" in an atmosphere of steadly increasing violence and insecurity in the name of elections. Some eminent legal experts said that holding of elec-

HE holding of election for election's sake on February 15, 1996, at least has made one thing clear that election under sitting government, at least in Bangladesh, can hardly be free and fair, since it was not done so according to impartial observers' views both from inside and outside the country. Besides the lowest turn-out, the possibility of massive rigging. since alleged, could also not be ruled out. There is apparent proof of this. The firsthand report on the election day by foreign observers, was a 2 per cent turn-out of voters. Later. the German radio estimated the turn out figure to be attend to per cent while the Indian radio said it to be 10 per cent. The mean average of the votes really cast thus stands at around 9 per cent.

by M A Mutaleb

tions within 90 days from the dissolution of the parliament was merely "directory" and not "mandatory". Supreme Court is the final interpreter of the Constitution and other laws. The President of Bangladesh could have referred the matter to the Supreme Court under Article 106 of the Constitution for its opinion. The Chief Election Commissioner of Bangladesh could have followed a recent Indian precedent. A few months ago, the Prime Minister of India said that election would be hold in Kashmir very soon. The Chief Election Commissioner of India, Mr T N Sesan with his two colleagues travelled throughout Kashmir for assessment of the actual situation. On return to New Delhi he declared in a press conference, "Holding of elections in Kashmir is not possible as extreme violence provails there." On account of the extreme political crisis. country-wide violence, and insecurity it was perhaps the duty of the Chief Election Commissioner not to hold the elections. The question of Constitutional continuity could have been considered by the government, the political par-

when referred to it. Political crisis can never be solved by force. In West Bengal, political murders reached a figure of 1,200 in 1970.

ties and the Supreme Court

Troops were called in to help the civil authorities in holding 'peaceful' elections. Despite extensive patrolling by the troops, 120 deaths occurred and thousands were injured during the election campaigning. Of course, the political crisis of West Bengal was quite different from that of Bangladesh. Yet that can be at least a distant example.

The Chief Election Commissioner was the most powerful man in Bangladesh as it appeared from his pre-poll pronouncements. Army was called to recover illegal arms and to hold peaceful elections. Arms recovery drive was not successful as it appeared from subsequent reports and incidents. Report from different sources said that on the election day voter turnout was extremely low, lowest in the history of elections in Bangladesh. There was allegation of ballot stuffing and other gross irregularities including absence of presiding officers or polling agents. So election was neither genuine nor meaningful being not reflective of the opinion of the major segments of the population. Meaningful elections could not be held in a peaceful manner in an atmosphere surcharged with violence, fear and insecurity inspite of deployment of huge number of members of law enforcing agencies includ-

ing the Army, unprecedented in Bangladesh elections. The whole electoral process did not comport with international standerd for a truly electoral exercise, because "genuine elections" envisaged in Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights cannot be held without participation of the major segments of population and major political par-

In the light of experience gathered from the 1988 par liamentary elections, the psy chological effect of an idea that induced people to feel that except BNP other parties taking part in the elections are not known in the political field while the mainstream opposition parties boycotted the elections, that BNP candidates including were elected uncontested from 48 constituencies and would be elected as well from others even with lowest voter turnout and that violence shall prevail resulting in chaos made people pessimistic about and kept them away from participating in the elec-

A definitive choice between genuine elections" promoting democracy and merely cosmetic change which will not affect the stagnant position of status quo, remains to be all made by the major political parties for the good of the country and the people.

The writer is a practising

saved and used for a meaning-

N the backdrop of the failure by BNP government and the mainstream oppositions to settle the issue of holding the national election under a caretaker government. the Government of Begum Khaleda Zia decided to hold the election (on the pretext of constitutional continuity) without the participation of all the leading opposition parties including the Awami League. It is really painful to believe that a party (BNP elected through a neutral caretaker government

The 15 February election has been held without any true challenger of BNP deploying 400,000 BDR. poliee and Ansar personnel throughout the country to ensure free and fair election. The credibility of the election has largely been tarnished due to very low turnout of voters (only 5-10 per cent), widespread rigging of votes by the supporters of BNP and many other gross irregularities. The above facts got wide publicity through differ-

to the Supreme Court or broadly agreeing on the point that any party or parties (coalition) forming the government following national poration of CTG system in the constitution. This would have saved time and money and paved way for institutionalisation of democracy and government. But, regrettably reverse is the position now

Now, possibly, the ball is in the court of the Hon'ble President. How he responds, the people here, and even abroad. perhaps are very keenly observing. Now the future course of action would naturally depend mainly on the decision of the head of the state. Let's

by Muhd M Huseyn ence on 18.2.96. She declared that she was given a mandate through the election. She accused the oppositions for creating anarchy during the elec-

tion time. She further asserted that her party workers were not involved with the rigging at all. Very lew have accepted her continuation as the allegations have been proved false by different sources. should oppose the same idea after assuming power, and could hold a one-party election following the same line pursued by the autocratic regime of General Ershad!

ent national and international media.

The Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia expressed her satisfaction at the outcome of the election in her press confer-

Theoretically the words regarding Begum Zia's claim for a MANDATE in her favour through the election may be relevant. As per Webster's School Dictionary, the word MANDATE means 1. a formal order from a superior court or official to an inferior one: 2. a an authoritative command, instruction or direction, b: authorisation or approval given to a representative, etc. If we judge the mandate as claimed by Begum Zia in the

light of the above meaning it e 2:b), can it be said that 5-10 per cent of the total number of voters can give a mandate? If it is accepted then what is the status of the 90 per cent of voters who did not turn up to cast their votes or abstained from voting for its being nonrepresentative? If such a claim is accepted and established. will it not be a threat to freedom and democracy? In such a case, any evil power will also validate itself by arranging an election and ensuring merely some per cent of votes. Hence it will be difficult for any freedom-loving citizen to accept Begum Zia's claim of a mandate on the basis of a controversial election of the 15th February: The BBC pointed,out earlier

that a one-party election can hardly be called proper. At best it can be called a referendum. If the election is considered from that angle, it is a negative referendum for the government. Under such a situation, the legitimacy of the 6th parliament is in question and the claim of its validity to amend the Constitution will lead the country to a deeper crisis. As we see, difference between the government and the opposition has widened further after the election. The situation has further aggravated with the arrest of opposition leaders and workers by the government. The Prime

Minister earlier gave such an indication during her election campaign at Rajshahi and Siraiganj. Mr Oli Ahmed, the Communications Minister, in a recent interview with BBC expressed that the oppositions movement was aimed at destroying the nationalist force. which they would not allow. It signifies that BNP is determined to suppress the opposition by force. But the confrontation against the opposition by BNP government through the use of force can hardly be conducive to the solution of the long political im-

Conciliation rather than confrontation by both the government and the oppositions can only lead towards an amicable solution of the issue. For this, both the government and the opposition must put the interest of the people and the country above their party interest and personal ego. The government is to make the first move to bring back a favourable environment for discussion and dialogue and immediately forgo the path of repression. Both the sides should also refrain from making such statements which may create misunderstanding between them.

Since opposition's aim is to restore democracy through functioning of the democratic institutions properly, they should pursue the line of nonviolent movement to realise their demand. Non-violent movement will strengthen the opposition's acceptability among the people solidly and weaken that of the government if it continues to be repressive and undemocratic to the opposition.

For the BNP government it is adviseable to seek a solution before it is too late. Whatever may be their strength, they are sure to lose people's support, if they continue to pursue the policy of suppression. BNP may also recollect that no oppressive government could stay in power on the soil of Bangladesh for long against the

people's will. Finally, it is suggested for the acceptance of the formula

that has already been advised by some experts. A caretaker government through amendment of the constitution has now become disputable as the controversial election has taken place. The Sixth Parliament may be constitutionally valid, but it will enjoy no acceptence to the people.

Hence, the government may consider to initiate dialogue with the oppositions to form a caretaker government under Article 93(1) of the Constitution which reads as follows:

"93(1). At any time when Parliament stands dissolved or is not in session, if the President is satisfied that circumstances exist which render immediate action necessary. he may make and promulgate such Ordinances as the circumstances appear to him to require, and any ordinance so made shall, as from its promulgation have the like force of law as an Act of Parlia-

(2) An Ordinance made under clause (1) shall be laid before Parliament at its first meeting following the promulgation of the Ordinance and shall, unless it is earlier repealed, cease to have effect at the expiration of thirty days after it is so laid or if a resolution disapproving of the ordinance is passed by Parliament before such expiration, upon the passing of the resolution

In the context of grave national crisis, this method may be a very easy course to bail the nation out from the impasse. If wide range amendment of the Constitution including the Preamble during the Martial Law regimes could be done through ratification of the Constitution, the suggested course can also be taken, only if there is sincere will in both the sides.

We may take some lessons from the heritage of Islam. In the famous Treaty of Hudaybia, the Prophet of Allah agreed to delete the words 'Muhammad the Prophet of Allah' in the face of strong opposition of his associates. He did it as a measure of expediency and also to establish peace.

Feb 15 Polls: An Analysis by Abu Imran

Locally, even FEMA (Fair Election Monitoring Alliance) has said that the election was not free and fair. In brief, as apprehended and voiced by the mainstream opposition, perhaps the Magura-2 by-election situation had been replicated to make a land-slide victory for

the BNP. Whether this is a victory or a defeat of greatest dimension depends on how the rulers and the ruled take it. The rulers no doubt subscribe to the former view (victory) as manifested by their jubilation, celebration. street march etc etc. The ruled, i.e. the mainstream opposition, and of course, the

people, generally, term this as defeat since they did not want to accept this stage managed election. This was already boycotted by the opposition who have further put forward noncooperation programme after the Eid holidays. That being so, destabilisation of political system, unrest, chaos, economic unstability can't be helped. And if these things are to continue, then what for the so-called election was held and what good would this exercise

Already around Taka 300 crore has been spent for the farcical election, which if this election was not held, could be

ful election participated by all parties and people as was done in 1991. Now the PM says that after constitutional amendment has been made inserting the concept of CTG (caretaker govt), then maybe next election would be held according to people's will. Now if the Prime Minister was aware that nothing short of CTG system was acceptable to the people. then why she went for such an extensive exercise causing loss of money. life and further political impasse? She could have earlier agreed to hold election under caretaker government. even by referring the matter

election would arrange incorcredibility to the BNP after election.

hope, he takes correct deci-