When will things start

Once Khaleda is appointed the prime minister for a second term since parliamentary democracy was restored in 1990, she is supposed to pick other members of the council of ministers she will head. As per Article 56 of the constitution, the prime minister will determine the number of ministers, ministers of state and deputy ministers to be appointed by the president. Also, it is the prime minister who will allocate portfolios among the ministers.

However, the constitution has made it mandatory for the prime minister to choose not less than nine-tenths of the ministers from among the members of parliament. The head of the government may opt for one-tenth of such ministers from among persons qualified for election as members of parliament.

Article 58C(12) provides: "The non-party caretaker government shall stand dissolved on the date on which the prime minister enters upon his office after the constitution of new parliament."

The outgoing caretaker government took over on July 15, two days after the last parliament expired.

As provided by Article 72(3), the president must summon the new parliament to meet within 30 days after the declaration of results of the October 1 general election. Now, since the results were officially declared through a gazette notification last night, the deadline for the new parliament to sit is November 3.

According to Article 74(1), the parliament at the first sitting will elect a speaker and a deputy speaker from among its members.

Outgoing Speaker Abdul Hamid is supposed to chair the opening sitting of the new parliament to conduct the election of his successor and the successor of the outgo-

speaker and deputy speaker to continue until their successors enter office. Which means Speaker Abdul Hamid and Deputy Speaker Prof. Ali Ashraf of the previous seventh parliament are still in office.

The eighth parliament will also elect a new president for a five-year term. The tenure of the outgoing president expires on October 8, but the constitution allows him to continue until his successor takes over.

says, a person shall not be qualified for election as president if he, (a) is less than thirty-five years of age; or (b) is not qualified for election as a member of parliament; or (c) has been removed from the office of president by impeachment.

If a member of parliament is elected as president he shall vacate his seat in parliament on the day on which he enters upon his office as president, according to Article 50(4).

Outgoing President Shahabuddin Ahmad is supposed to address the maiden sitting of the new parliament as per Article 73(2) that reads: "At the commencement to the first session after a general election of members of parliament and at the commencement of the first session of each year the president shall address parliament

Taskforce to explore

The World Bank and the Unicef are actually mounting a lot of pressures on the government to use deeper aquifers as a safer option.

The taskforce already sat thrice and decided to drill for hydrogeological investigations in six 'provincial' regions in the country. Based on the data, the taskforce will recommend further investigations, if necessary, in other areas of the country within three months.

The six areas are Debhata in Satkhira, Raipur in Laxmipur, Bera in Pabna, Sarail in Brahmanbaria. Daudkandi in Comilla and Kachua in Chandour

Besides, the purpose of having so many agencies is coordination among themselves and exchange of information about geological studies already done by them.

"From our experience, we know that the shallow aquifers in most of the districts are more or less affected by arsenic. The use of surface water is not very feasible thanks to bacteriological contamination. So, the only option now is to explore deeper aquifers," said a

The taskforce members also met partner agencies like DFID DANIDA, CIDA and the World Bank on September 22 for possible financial commitments to research

"Deep tubewells are potentially one of the best options in certain arsenic-contaminated areas. So, we are considering funding in the hydro-geological investigation process which could possibly involve anything from one million to ten million dollars." said Paul J Martin, the task manager dealing with environmental aspects in the World Bank here.

The taskforce consists of the representatives of the Department of Public Health Engineering, Bangladesh Water Development Board, Geological Survey of Bangladesh, BAPEX, Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation, WARPO and Bangladesh Arsenic Mitigation

Ershad's votes has gone to the

results in terms of numbers and the

country's recent political history is

alliance in January 6, 1999 with the

expectation that it would be able to

defeat the AL by garnering all anti-

AL votes. On the other hand, the AL

realised the purpose of this alliance

and made many attempts in the last

attempts had failed, it struck a deal

with Ershad to break away from the

alliance with its faction. However,

the former president's attempts only

ended in fragmentation of the JP as

one group led by Naziur Rahman

votes, the AL made Ershad's JP

form an alliance of small Islamic

parties. However, this alliance being

very new and small made no signifi-

cant impact against the four-party

(Note: The figures are prelimi-

nary and as such not final. There

might be very marginal difference in

To fragment the pro-Islamic

Monzur stayed back

the final outcome)

In the end, when all other

one year to break the alliance.

The BNP formed the four-party

Water Supply Project. AL gets more votes

also very clear.

The AL contested in the fifth JS election of 1991 with five likeminded parties and secured 33.67 per cent of the votes cast using the boat symbol. It got 88 seats and the like-minded parties 12.

On the contrary, the BNP contested alone but struck a secret deal with the Jamaat in 78 constituencies. While the BNP came out winners in 140 seats with 30.81 per cent votes, the Jamaat secured 18 of the 222 it had contested with 12.13 per cent vote.

Put together, the two parties mustered 42.94 per cent of the total In the seventh parliamentary

polls of 1996, while the AL's share of popular vote increased by four per cent and the BNP's by 3.5 per cent, the Jamaat's fortune dwindled by four per cent. Incidentally, the Jamaat had contested alone.

The AL got 37.44 per cent votes and won 146 seats while the BNP got 33.6 per cent and won 116. The Jamaat got 8.61 per cent vote and three seats. The IOJ got 1.09 per

cent votes and one seat. This year, the BNP's votes have Jamaat, the IOJ and the JP (N-F). To

been reinforced by those of the add spice to the alliance arithmetic figures show that the pro-Ershad JP faction has got only 7.3 per cent votes this time around. In 1996, the unified JP secured 16.40 per cent vote. In other words, a chunk of

Russian plane

FROM PAGE 1 Putin his condolences, the presi-

dential press service said. Russian President Vladimir Putin convened an emergency Kremlin meeting following the crash and named the head of the Security Council, Vladimir Rushailo, to head the investigation into the causes of the crash.

The head of Russia's civil aviation authority also said "the circumstances of the Tu-154 crash lead one to believe that a terrorist act took place.

In Washington, the US official told AFP on condition of anonymity that "It's possible that this was a tragic accident and not terror-

An official at the Russian emergencies ministry told AFP that he had received information from eve witnesses on board an Armenian airliner flying in the same vicinity that an explosion occurred on board the Russian iet.

Russian security sources said a terrorist attack could not be ruled out, a possibility also evoked by Israeli authorities

ing deputy speaker.

The constitution allows the

Article 48(1) of the constitution

Losing an election is not the end RECOUNTING? If it goes for

also as the head of one of our largest political parties. But is she above the law, above our Constitution and above the people in general? The "General Will" has been expressed and it must be obeyed. If we believe in the sovereignty of the people, as we must if we believe in democracy. then Sheikh Hasina will have to accept the results of the elections. Her call for non-co-operation is in effect non-co-operation with 'democracy, public will and the people who have voted on the first of October this year.

It cost the nation hundreds of crores of taka to hold an election with at least a yearlong preparation, if not more. Conservatively speaking, all the parties and candidates combined spent at least another Tk 500 crore to run their campaign and contest in the polls, not to mention the cost to the economy in lost production time. So, we are to spend all this money again simply because the Awami League lost.

Let us turn to the more fundamental question of the Constitution and Law. First of all, nobody has the right to turn over the verdict of the people. As somebody who never tires of proclaiming that it is she, and she alone, who brought democracy to Bangladesh, how can she ask anybody to cancel the results of an election where more than five crore people voted (turnout this time was nearly 75 per cent)? Should anybody in a democracy ever have such a power? As is the case in every democracy our Constitution DOES NOT EMPOWER ANYBODY to cancel the election results, neither the Chief Election Commissioner, nor the President, not anybody. The procedure is that

while the election is taking place any

candidate can file a complaint with

the returning officer of his or her

JCD to continue

Meanwhile, JCD leaders at a

rally in front of the Aparajeo Bagla

yesterday reiterated their one- point

demand and threatened to try the

VC in a 'student-mass stage' if he

partisan administrator and he has

no moral right to hold the highest

post of the university any more",

president of the DU unit of JCD, the

rally was among others addressed

Mostafizul Islam Mamun, Sultan Salauddin Ahmed Tuku and

' Prof. AK Azad Chowdhury is a

Presided over by Monir Hossain,

ABM Mosharraf Hossain,

Meanwhile, JCD activists have

Campus sources said JCD

ransacked several rooms of four

dormitories belonging to BCL work-

activists ransacked 15 rooms of

Salimullah Hall, 8 rooms of Mohsin

Hall five rooms of Surivasen Hall

and one room of AF Rahman Hall

Hossain accused that some activ-

ists of Bangladesh Chhatra League

(BCL) are liable for the damage as

they are trying to join the JCD

any one engaged in terrorist activi-

ties on the campus even he is a

FROM PAGE 1
Her decision, however, took the

grassroots party leaders, who

attended yesterday's meeting at the

Institute of Engineers, by surprise.

The AL leaders representing differ-

ent district units differed with the

dict its own stance if it now went for

the repolling in the suspended centres when it has already

demanded scrapping of the entire

election and decided not to join the

repolling will take place are

Bagerhat-5, Barisal-6, Mymensingh-5 and 6, Kishoreganj-

1 and 4, Shariatpur-1, Moulvibazar-

1 and 2, Brahmanbaria-3 and 6,

Comilla-8 and 9, Chandpur-2,

Munshiganj-4 and Laxmipur-4.

The constituencies where

They said the party would contra-

party chief on the issue.

AL: Repolling

He said JCD would not accept

through their misdeeds.

Talking to The Daily Star, Monir

does not resign immediately

FROM PAGE 12

thev claimed.

yesterday.

party activist.

Asaduzzaman Asad.

ers who left the hall earlier.

constituency and demand that the election be stopped due to some irregularity. Afterwards only the Election Tribunal - this time it is the High Court - can take such a decision. For that procedure to operate each candidate must file a separate case at the constituency level and prove separately that sufficient irregularities took place, necessitating cancellation of the result. So far no complaints have been filed with the Election Tribunal, or earlier with the returning officers.

Election results are contested all the time all over the world. There are legal procedures for it. If the AL feels cheated out of its victory it can go to the Election Tribunal whose work can be held in an expeditious manner to respond to its concerns. The former ruling party can file a writ in the High Court challenging the results. But under no circumstances can it take the law in its own hands. If it does it only proves their lack of respect for law, for the Constitution and for democracy.

We have a recent example of how the courts were used to sort out the verdict of the people. Al Gore and George W Bush both took the help of the courts to sort things out. State. Federal and even the Supreme Court came into the picture in regularising the results of the last US Presidential elections. Why not take the same route here. If Bangladesh is to be a country of supremacy of law then the AL must seek legal redress to their perceived grievances and not take the law into its own hands.

Sheikh Hasina in her postelection press conference said that polling has been "free but not fair". It means, as we can understand, that people voted freely but manipulation was done in the counting process. Then why is she demanding re-polling and NOT

from Sylhet, Mohsin Ali from

Moulvibazar, Akhtaruzzaman Babu

from Chittagong, ASM Feroj from

Patuakhali, Mohiuddin Ahmed from

Munshiganj, Tajul Islam Faruq from

Rajshahi, Abdul Latif Siddiqi and

Shamshur Rahman Khan

Sultan from Jessore and Advocate

Presidents and general secretar-

Besides rigging, the party's

organisational weakness, factional

feuds, its wrong policy of "going

alone" and central leadership's

failure to guide the party chief in the

right direction were some of the

main reasons for its polls debacle,

Saifur Rahman in Sylhet-1 constitu-

ency, said the party failed to check

'rigging' in the polls due to its organi-

sational weakness. He said "I've

reservation about going for a move-

ment right at the moment when the

party's strength is weak in Sylhet

Only 200 people attended a protest

ship the "acceptability" of the

October 1 election to the interna-

Moulvibazar district unit presi-

dent of Mohsin Ali criticised "wrong

politics" of the party. Because of

flattery, the party chief was not

informed of truths timely by many of

that the central leaders were told

about a "formidable challenge" from

the four-party alliance, but they did

AL Presidium members, a central

leader intercepted him. He then

said, "There would not have been

such a bashing in the polls, if we

could forge an alliance with Jatiya

to judge public sentiment before

going for any movement. He

expressed the fear that boycott of

parliament session might alienate

AL leader from Chittagong

the party from people.

Ali said AL should make a survey

Party and the 11-party left front."

As he mentioned names of some

He expressed deep resentment

the senior leaders, he said.

tional community'.

not care much

He also reminded the AL leader-

rally which we organised in Sylhet."

AMA Muhit, who lost to BNP's M

ies of 69 district units attended the

Shahjahan from Tangail, Khan Tipu

Fazle Rabbi from Gaibandha.

meeting.

they said.

recounting the AL will have to specify where exactly the recounting is needed and why? We all know that counting took place in each of nearly 30,000 polling centres in the presence of polling agents of all the candidates, especially those of the AL and the BNP. Signed copies of these results were handed out to each candidate's agent at the centre itself. If any manipulation did take place then the AL can take the signed copies of these results and tabulate them separately and show. constituency by constituency, where the discrepancy lies between the actual votes cast and the EC counting. If there has been any manipulation at any subsequent level then such tabulation is sure to

reveal it. Finally, the AL must show some respect for public opinion. Till now it has not submitted a single shred of evidence to either the public or the mass media as to why it is rejecting the results. Just to claim that "crude rigging" has taken place and as such we need to hold a general election once again is hardly showing any respect for the public that have walked kilometres and stood in line for hours to cast their vote. Till now the AL has given no document. no figure and no logical argument as to why WE, THE PEOPLE, who have just cast our votes, should now reject its outcome.

We are making all these arguments simply because we are trying, in spite of our better judgement, to examine as seriously as possible the position of the Awami League. As it stands now the AL position is neither borne out by facts nor by common sense and far less by logic

Election debacle is nothing new for political parties. In 1993 elections the Canadian ruling

AL stalwarts face criticism

Akhtaruzzaman Babu blamed the

party leadership for "not doing

enough" to resist the "blue print

ment and said, "Party workers

telephoned me to convey this senti-

alleged that minority community

people could not exercise their

franchise because of threats and

fears. AL has two options -- either to

go for movement immediately or to

join parliament and agitate slowly,

Secretary of Rajshahi district AL,

alleged that all the polling officials

were pro-BNP and pro-Jamaat and

they were taken from Islami Bank.

None was taken from schools and

get public support if go for move-

ment now. Anything is better than

Tangail said, "For whose benefit

it for the benefit of the leaders those

are sitting on both sides of your (AL

chief) seat? When we achieve

victory, they (the leaders) no longer

pull down the 'BNP-government' (to

He said it will not be possible to

In response, party chief Sheikh

Hasina assured the party rank and

file that she would undertake a

countrywide tour programme soon

who contested the polls to go back

to their respective constituencies

and to boost the morale of party

workers at grassroots level. She

asked them to convene extended

meetings of party's district and

and file to "hit back" if they face

attack. "I don't like to hear any

complaint from you about being

attacked. If you don't retaliate, they

(vote thieves) would continue to

allow a "vote thief government" to

stay in power as the people had

1971; they constituted of one-fifth of

the electorate. These voters were

more enthusiastic than the elderly

voters. They have seen these two

Sheikh Hasina said AL will not

attack vou."

Hasina instructed the party rank

She directed all party candidates

He opted for movement. "We'll

But Abdul Latif Siddiqi from

ould we go for movement now? Is

colleges for election duty.

living under BNP rule

remember us.

be formed) in two years.

to reorganise the party.

Tajul Islam Faruq, General

ment to the high-command."

Babu however opted for move-

Former AL lawmaker ASM Feroj

against AL"

party's173-seat majority in the parliament came down to two. After 18 years in power the ruling Conservative Party suffered a humiliating defeat in the hands of Tony Blair's 'New Labour' in 1997, a humiliation repeated just a few months ago. Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party was wiped out when Newaz Sharif's Muslim League got two-thirds majority in 1997. Jayawardena's party suffered a humiliating defeat at Kumaratunga's hands in Sri Lanka

in the early 1990s. In fact, the seed of today's success of the BNP was sown in its defeat of 1996. History of political parties in parliamentary democracy is full of ups and downs Remember how Winston Churchill was humiliatingly voted out in 1946 though he led the Great Britain to victory in the Second World War Losing an election is not the end of the world. In fact, as our lead story today clearly shows that AL may have lost parliamentary seats but it has actually gained in popular vote. It has just lost out in the electoral arithmetic where the alliance bloc vote outdid the AL's lone vote. What the AL has lost can easily be gained in the next five years through constructive politics. We conclude with the dire predic-

tion that if Sheikh Hasina continues with her proposed negative politics. she will lose much of the public support that she still has. At this moment of her party's electoral debacle she must act wisely, calmly, humbly and with foresight, and not with haste, anger or resentment. What she has lost today, she may gain ten times more, with the right policies. The Awami League still has a big place in the hearts and minds of our people. This can easily be expanded to big electoral victories

already "rejected the vote thieves"

She feared that the BNP-led four-

party alliance would protect the

make success its demonstration

and road barricade programmes till

October 10. Fresh agitation

polls results by that time, she said.

said, "You must protest all wrongdo-

a seal on the 'boat' symbol and said,

"You see, instead of putting this

She alleged that the caretaker

government and the Election

Commission failed to play impartial

roles. Regarding the armed forces.

police and civil administration, she

said, "They all had to carry out

orders of the caretaker government

"It was ballot terrorism, media

Hasina mentioned that AL got

coup and manipulation of the results

154 seats in the last parliament and

said her party did nothing so wrong

that would pull down the number to

option other than going for move-

the four-party alliance for "unleash-

ing terror" in the country. "Even

before formation of government,

they have started forcibly capturing

university dormitories and bus and

student front attacked the Dhaka

Dental College and army personnel

disrupted a protest rally in

Chittagong yesterday. She alleged

that "BNP terrorists" fired shots at

the vehicle carrying her aunt and

cousin on Dhaka-Maowa road on

She alleged that the pro-BNP

launch terminals."

She concluded that AL had no

Hasina came down heavily on

ballot paper inside the ballot box, it

was thrown away."

So. I don't blame them.

at the Election Commission"

todav's level (63 seats so far).

ment to "uphold people's right".

She displayed a ballot paper with

She asked the party men to

killers of the Father of the Nation.

Post-polls violence

Police recovered the body and sent it to Feni hospital for autopsy. Awami League blamed the local

BNP for the murder. In separate incidents, AL activists Mohammad Shafi, 35, and

Mosarraf Hossain Nasim were

abducted from their houses at gunpoint yesterday morning. Shafi was abducted from village Nawabpur while Nasim from Chandpur village under Feni Sadar

UNB adds: Deputy Commissioner AFM Solaiman Chowdhury and Superintendent of Police Helaluddin Badri visited the

spot vesterday. Reports from various areas said BNP supporters were looking for AL men in Fazilpur, Chhanua, Lemua, Nababpur and Bhorbazar.

Residents said AL supporters at Gunak, Baduria, Arkaim, Barhalia, Mandari, Durgapur villages of Bagadana union are virtually conined in their homes.

When contacted, DC Solaiman Chowdhury admitted the murder of UP member in Sonagazi. But he ruled out the reports of confining Awami League supporters in many

Our Natore correspondent eports: One person was killed and 10 others were injured in postelection clash between Awami League and BNP in Sadar upazila vesterday. The victim, Afsar Ali, 18, an AL activist, was shot dead allegedly by BNP activists during the clash at village Halti at around 10

A tense situation is prevailing in Natore town following the killing of Afsar. Police and army personnel were patrolling streets. In Kushtia. an Awami League

activist was gunned down by terrorists at Allardargah Bazar in Doulatour upazila vesterday. Police said the miscreants called

AL activist Mahir, 40, also a night guard of the bazar, out of his house at about 6.30 am and shot him point blank. He died on the spot. Doulatpur upazila Awami

eague general secretary Afaz Uddin Ahmed blamed local BNP or the killing. BNP denied the allega-In Chittagong, ten people were injured and 20 houses ransacked in

post-polls violence in Mirersarai and

programme will be announced if the other areas of the district in the last 24 hours ending at 6 pm yesterday. government does not cancel the Sources said, the houses belonging to AL and BCL men were Hasina reminded AL workers ransacked in Bangla Bazar area that the party fought a guerrilla war

under Mirersarai thana in the early to liberate the country in 1971 and hours of vesterday. One village security guard was also injured in the attack, reportedly by JCD activists

> In another incident, two JCD activists were injured when a bomb was hurled at them reportedly by BCL activists at Julankul under the same than a vesterday morning. The injured JCD activists, identified as Kamal Uddin and Md Yusuf, were

admitted to local health complex.

In Siraigani, post-election clash left at least 20 people injured, three seriously, at Gopal Bazar unde Shahjadpur upazila yesterday.

The seriously injured people were admitted to local hospital They are Ashraf, Abdul Sheikh and Abdul Jalil.

Police also picked up six persons from the spot.

In Munshiganj, a number of houses, party offices and shops and business establishments were ransacked in post-election violence in the district in last two days.

At least 40 people were injured in the violence took place after BNP's massive victory in the national

Agitated and jubilant BNP supporters removed the portraits of Bangabandhu from Srinagar branch of Agrani, Krishi and Sonali Banks on Wednesday.

The BNP men ransacked and looted Satgaon Awami League office and residences of Al Jeaders Sukumar Ranian Ghosh and Belavet Dali, Fifteen other AL workers were injured in Tongibari. Many houses were ransacked

and a large number of people were forced to leave the houses in Adara. Charkewar, Mollakandi, Siloi and Bangla Bazar unions of sadar upazila In Panchagarh, post-election

clashes between Awami League and BNP supporters in Tetulia upazila left 10 people injured. Police and villagers said the

clashes occurred at Debnagar and Bhajanpur unions of the upazila as an AL activist assaulted a BNF supporter. The injured were admitted to Tetulia and Sadar hospitals where

Abdul Zabber, 40, Fazlul Haque, 50, and Tafijul Islam, 45, were stated to be critical. Police and BDR were deployed

the condition of Shahidul Islam, 25,

in the areas to fend off further trou-In Mymensingh, BNP supporters allegedly attacked the house of MP-

elect Altaf Hossain Golondaz of

Awami League in Gafargaon and set fire to it yesterday. Police said over 200 BNP supporters attacked his house at . Baghua at about 9 am and torched

On information, police and army personnel rushed to the spot and dispersed the mob

Earlier on Wednesday, over a hundred armed BNP activists reportedly attacked the house of Awami League leader and UP chairman Giasuddin Bhuiyan at Nagpur village, leaving 35 people

His family members alleged that the BNP men opened fire on the house and looted valuables worth about Tk 2 lakh.

President

injured, 10 with bullets.

had considered several names These included Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury, former Chief Justice

Mustafa Kamal and elderly lawyer Khondoker Mahbubuddin besides a v others. Sources indicated that veteran party leader Prof Badruddoza nowdhury is most likely to be nominated to to the position of the

President. The designated nominee will have to be elected in the new Parliament, The outgoing President will continue in office till his successor is elected. 72-year old Dr Badruddoza Chowdhury was the founder Secretary General of the

Bangladesh Nationalist Party and served as Deputy leader of the ruling party in the 5th Parliament while the BNP was in government and Deputy the BNP was in the opposition.

The President has a five-year tenure

EU monitors

FROM PAGE 1

out, and saw for ourselves, it can be said there is no truth in those (accu-

the elections, but on the election day, people were extremely orderly and exercised their franchise in a generally peaceful manner. Fairness was observed"

party rejected the results because of "crude rigging", the team leader said. "We did not find anything even near it. We believe it is a political observation." Some other team

When reminded that a political

Prof. Serajul Islam Chowdhury: People opt for change

tion of first-time and women voters

alliance.

was also appreciable. This election has been a better election those in the past, widely participated by voters. Tendency to intimidate voters was also less this time. Some stray incidents of violence occurred but not to the extent we had feared

would take place. Given all these positive signs we should think that the awareness of the electorate has increased than that observed in the last two elections. The eagerness to participate in the elections is also gradually increasing. The caretaker government has also worked in a neutral manner. Its decision to deploy army was very correct. The armed forces on their part, have shouldered their duties very effectively. Therefore, I will also give credit to the administration for what they have been able

DS: What are the elements that helped the Bangladesh Nationalist Party or the Four-Party Alliance to win a landslide victory? Would it be justified to say that voters opted for a change?

SIC: Yes, I agree with that; people really opted for a change. If you call it a judgement, it was more of a negative judgement. What the voters did was that they demonstrated their disapproval of what the previous government has done. People had felt that the government failed particularly in respect of law and order: that is what people have been more concerned with. There was corruption, nepotism, lack of transparency -- these things were there but the people were upset really by the law and order situation which they thought was affecting their security. Security was very important in this election, and there were two types of insecurity involved here: one is economic insecurity and the other is physical insecurity. Apart from the extortionists, take the performance of the police, for example. People thought that the police was a hostile force and it lost credibility. Then, despite all advancement that has happened, ours is a bureaucratic state. Bureaucrats control the state power from top to the low, and there is no justice that people can expect from the bureau-So, there was a growing sense of insecurity which people were fed up with. What the people showed there was that they wanted a

change and they didn't want a gov-

ernment to continue which couldn't

control hooliganism and terrorism.

So they negated them. But on the

other hand, people also had rejected BNP in the past. They had

voted in favour of Awami League. So people are not really in love with the BNP as the BNP had not done much when they got a chance to govern. To win the confidence of the people, it has not brought to the fore the issue of economic development, people's security, law and order etc. And people got the impression that BNP and AL are different only in names; they have the same economic policies; they have the same polices approaches to our resources particularly oil, gas and the Chittagong port. These resources people think are very important. And the two parties are inclined to bring in multinationals in these sectors which people think would be unpatriotic. The BNP has not established themselves as a responsible opposition. People had expected BNP to function within the parliament and also to take up real issues that affect their lives. As far as the AL is concerned, let

us remind ourselves here that most of the ministers of the AL government have failed to be re-elected this year. This shows there was an arrogance of power and that the people have rejected the highhanded ministerial activities of people who were in power. I want to add two more elements

parties and they thought between the two BNP was less feudal and more advanced. And AL's performance during the past five years had a direct impact on these young voters of the country. Then, the women came out to vote more eagerly, more freely than they did in the past. The last government had also created problems for women women were less secure than men: they became victims of acid throw ing and rape. So, women did not also want the last government to DS: Now the AL has alleged rig aina in the elections: how far do you think they are justified?

tified. Rigging has always been there in our elections and allegations are not always unfounded. But this time I should think that rigging was not phenomenally present Even after the elections the AL has admitted that the election was more or less fair. Rigging is also connected with violence, and you can see and feel it happening. And as far as the allegations of "gross" or "planned" rigging, I don't think AL will go very far with it, because of which Lcite. One is the first-time vottwo reasons. One, people have ers, most of whom were born after

SIC: No I don't think they are jus-

voted and they know who they have voted for. Two. I have no reason to believe that the caretaker government acted in that manner DS: It now appears that with two-thirds majority BNP-led alli-

ance will be even in a position to amend the constitution and do whatever they deem right. With this there will be a lack of balance of power and the voice of the opposition might be feeble, even and ineffectual. Do you think that would be good for our nascent democracy? SIC: Not at all. I should hope

that BNP doesn't think of amending the constitution in an ideological way. Separation between the Judiciary and the Executive is an important issue. That is acceptable, but beyond this any other amendment should not be

DS: Will Bangladesh be under any sort of threat as far as the spirit of the War of Independence is concerned, because the Four-Party Alliance is a conglomeration of rightist and also religious rightist forces?

SIC: I hope this will not happen. Let me make it clear. This state is based on a War of Liberation and the State principles that were enunciated in the original Constitution reflected those articles of faith. It is

unfortunate that there have been changes as far as secularism socialism are concerned which is backwardness. It has been a painful thing for the thinking section of the country. We have always expected that these principles would be restored to the Constitution. If BNP brings back these lost principles, that will be welcomed, but to go any further to what they had done in the past would be totally unacceptable. I should think that they have

enough problems to think of enough problems to solve; the economy is in a shambles and they have to engage themselves in ameliorating the condition of the people rather than tinkering with the founding principles of the state. That would be a foolish thing for them to do and that would make them still more unpopular. I am very optimistic that they will not attempt to do such a thing. This election was fought not on

ideological question; so far as the common man is concerned, they have no knowledge of the election manifestos of the political parties The spirit of independence is inherent in everyone; and I also didn't approve of the AL fighting an election on this question, because this is not a question which is debatable.

members also made similar state ments. Team leader Joaquaim said they were impressed by the way the

election was conducted and the

fairness of the polls. He hoped that

the political parties would respect

the will of the people and accept the

Several EU observers said, the

comments. From what we found "I had a negative feeling before

turnout of women voters was very high and a lot of minority community rience in their areas.

results.

eople were seen participating in the election with enthusiasm. Five of the observers were asked separately about their expe-

"There was no rigging in Sylhet where I visited different centres. said Matthew Cooke. "In Feni, right close to Jainal

Hazari's house and elsewhere I visited, there was no rigging. commented Paul Harrington.

"We did not see any rigging in Comilla and Brahmanbaria although there were some state ments by local politicians", said Rosevelds

"In Barisal, we did not notice any riggingno stuffing of ballot boxes", said Valerie Solomon.

"In Jaipurhat, Bogra and Gaibandha there was absolutely no rigging," said Carl Granfield.

The LTOs included, among

others, Valerie Solomon, a Briton based in Barisal, Marian, Kelliher from Ireland based in Narayangani. RAF Rosevelds from Belgium based in Comilla, Chandpur, Brahmanbaria, Zeina Ghandour from UK based in Comilla, Chandpur and Brahmanbaria, M Dos Ramos Alves from Portugal based in Cox's Bazar and Bandarban, Matthew Cooke from Britain based in Sylhet, Paul Harrington from Britain based in Feni, Carl Granfield from the Netheralnds based in Bogra and

The EU Team will start leaving Dhaka from today. On return home, they will present their reports to members of the European Union.

Gaibandha.