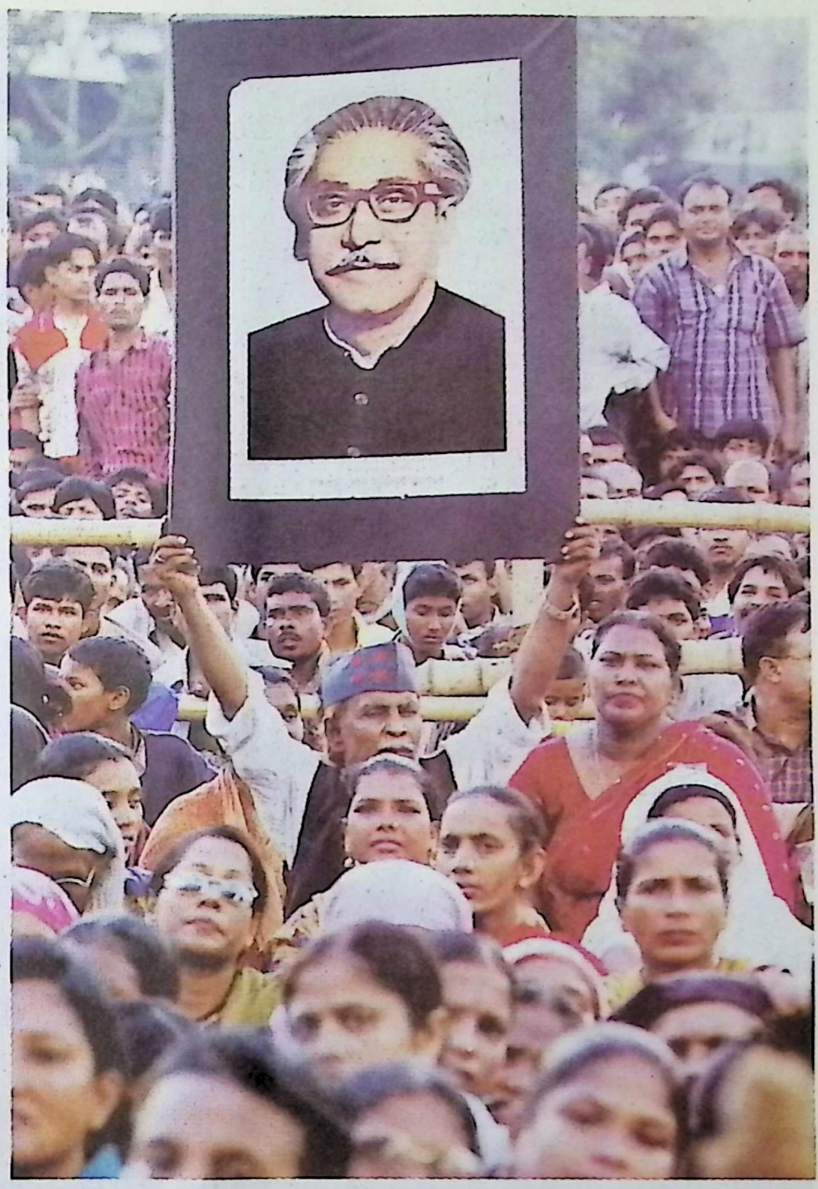
reduce the government expenditure. It will take longer this way, but it will be far better for the workers who are currently employed in the state owned enterprises. The BNP had no such vision. They simply threw everyone out of work.

As the private sector grows it will be able to provide more jobs, usually with better pay than the government sector. This in turn will encourage more new entrants to the workforce to go to the private sector. In the long term we will be able to reduce the size of the government. This will have several positive effects. It will reduce bureaucracy and red tape making life easier for everyone. It will also allow the government to increase salaries for the smaller public sector work force. As government employee pay increases, they will have less need and incentive to be corrupt. This is how corruption can be reduced.

As the past two years and our previous military interventions have shown, you cannot reduce corruption by suspending democracy and arresting everyone in sight. Absolute power corrupts absolutely and in the past two years we have seen an increase in corruption in our law enforcement, judiciary, and military. This is according to Transparency International, the much ballyhooed anti-corruption watchdog.

For all the criticism of the protests of October 2006, let us not forget that if the Awami League had not done so, what would have been the consequences for Bangladesh? Today, you would have had a ruthless, corrupt BNP-Jamaat government back in power. Our economy would be in even worse shape. It would be guaranteed that five years later we would see another rigged election.

In equating both parties, people forget that the only peaceful transfer of power our country has ever witnessed was at the end of the Awami League's term in 2001. The BNP has chosen to rig elections each time. This is a fundamental difference in character between the two parties. The BNP is willing to violate our laws, the constitution, indeed do anything just to stay in power and make money. They have done so each time.



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Only the Awami League has the integrity and vision to take Bangladesh forward. Only the Awami League has safeguarded the fundamental rights and needs of our people. I do not support the Awami League simply because of my family. I chose to do so because I believe in it. It is the only large, truly democratic party in Bangladesh. It is precisely because of its internal democracy that it sometimes makes mistakes. The decision of the majority is not always the best one. However, as a professor of mine at Harvard told me, a democracy is the only form of government that has the ability to correct itself. The Awami League has the ability to correct itself. BNP and Jamaat do not.

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