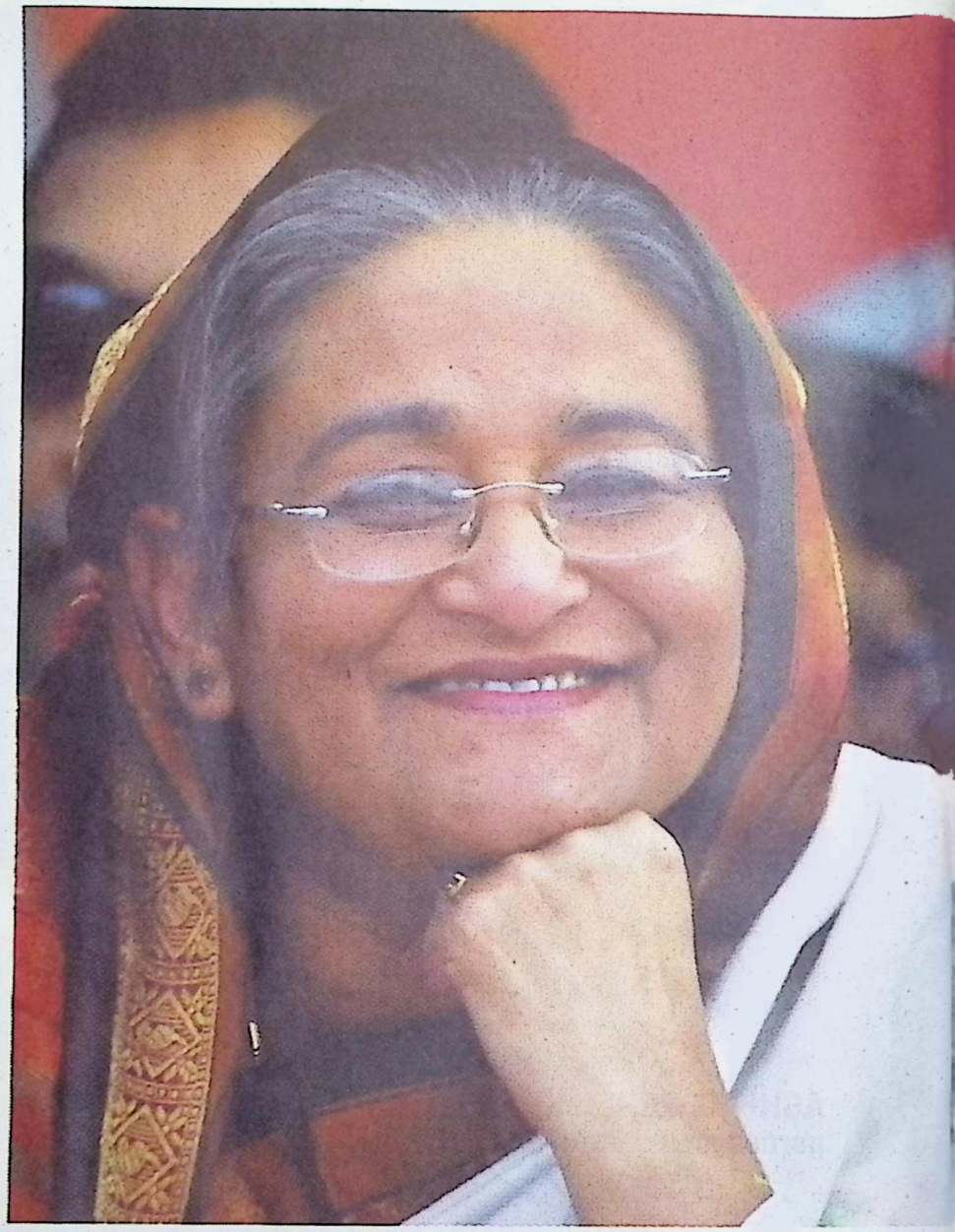
Islami, threatened to run in the elections alone. Fears of a boycott waned as it became increasingly clear that BNP's opposition stemmed from unmet demands rather than a principled objection to elections under the current administration.

What has emerged is an election matrix that resembles the traditional tight race between two political foes, rather than a new political landscape. New political players, such as the Progressive Democratic Party, barely rate a mention. Despite protests by the big two that the government will continue to undercut their campaigns and the media's willingness to entertain the farcical circus surrounding their insignificant demands, the fundamentals of Bangladesh politics remain the same.

Hence, the most significant question is how much would revelations about the last BNP-led alliance government affect their chances on December 29. In effect, it is more of a referendum on their last term than the last two years of caretaker government rule.

The downfall of the BNP after 1/11 was a horror story watched the world over. Seldom has so much political capital been destroyed so quickly. Seldom have the political tables turned so dramatically. The media reports detailing the extravagant, outlandish and often farcical corruption scandals, regardless of the dubious sourcing, destroyed the party's main pillars of its public support.

It's not that the AL is immune from such a perception; most surveys indicate the public has a low opinion of both the parties. But, it is more a case of relativity. November's Daily Star/Nielsen poll revealed that far more people associate BNP with corruption than the AL. This larger effect of a popular backlash against the last BNP-led coalition term is a far more potent threat to the coalition on December 29 than any other variable.



Luckily for the BNP, the voters are unlikely to react to the BNP-led coalition's association with the rise of militant attacks. Largely due to a lack of media attention to the topic, the BNP is likely to escape any sort of punishment for the number of high-profile assassination of AL leaders, August 21 (2004) grenade attack, and August 17 (2005) bombings.

But, our collective attention has been drawn to a number of objections deemed significant by the political parties, and by extension, the media. What we do know, is that even if these issues, such as the amended RPO and absence of convicted candidates, affect the election result, they would not be significant enough to constitute an election game-changing issue.

Although both AL and BNP have vehemently objected to the bar on leaders convicted over the last two years, BNP is likely to suffer more because of a higher number of convictions. With 103 (and counting) politicians and business-