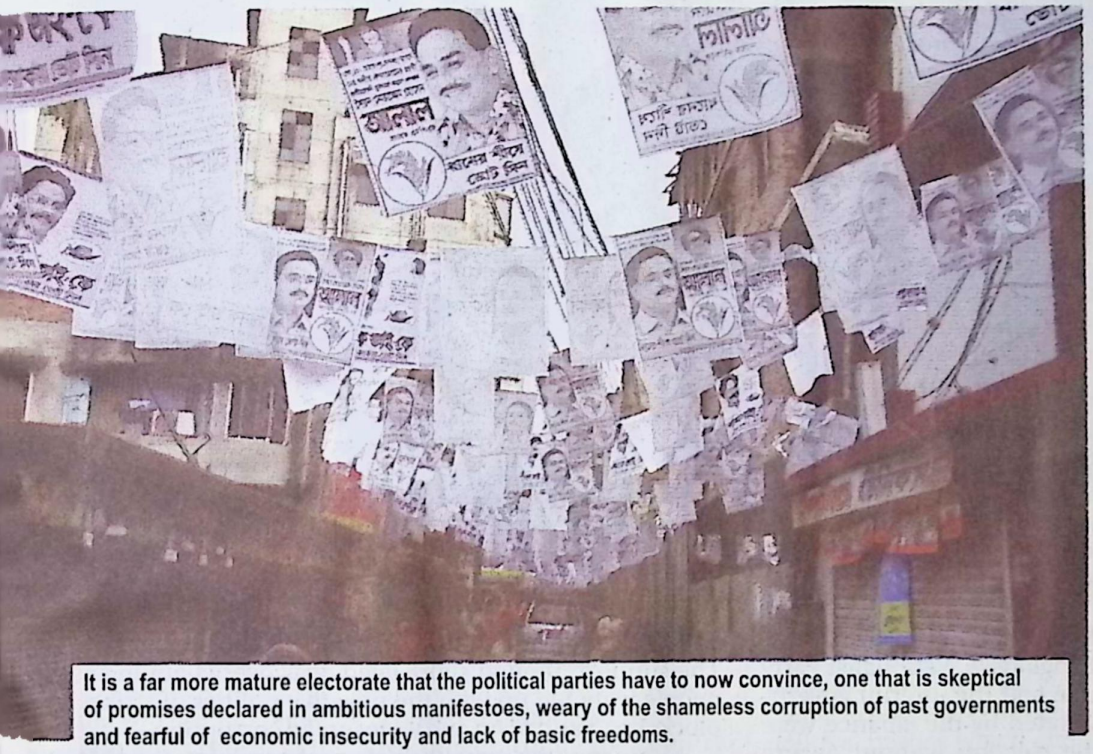
Department and police force are kept outside political influence and can work effectively and independently.

The use of terror no matter how desirable the results, have to be shunned. The culture of extra-judicial killings is unacceptable in a civilised society and has to be abolished forever.

The newly-formed Human Rights Commission has to be strengthened and allowed to function independently. Unresolved political murders and terrorist attacks have to be probed into, to bring the perpetrators to book.



It is a far more mature electorate that the political parties have to now convince, one that is skeptical of promises declared in ambitious manifestoes, weary of the shameless corruption of past governments and fearful of economic insecurity and lack of basic freedoms.

Although many of its endeavours backfired or proved to be ineffectual, the good work of the caretaker government has to be endorsed and continued. This includes the ratification of the Right to Information ordinance so that it can be used by the public effectively and easily. This act has the potential to give people the power to question anomalies in state organisations and make government officials more accountable. The anti-corruption drive must be continued with an initiative from the next government to tackle corruption within its administration. The judiciary should continue to be allowed to operate freely and without political influence.

The political culture outside the parliament needs a drastic change. The opposition has to avoid the use of long drawn out hartals at all costs as the suffering caused to the ordinary citizen weighs far heavy than any apparent benefit to the party. Hartals are hurtful to everyone, whether it is the garments factory owner or the day labourer or school student. It is not farfetched to deduce that if the parliament works properly there will be no need for hartals.

The ruling party meanwhile must exercise restraint and tolerance when dealing with the opposition. Using cadres and goons as well as the police to squash the opposition through brute force is an abhorrent strategy that must be completely shunned.

The politicisation of every state machinery and organisation has been a major thorn in the path to democracy. The new government must ensure the autonomy of institutions such as the Anti-corruption Commission and allow it to continue its work independently and without intimidation. State-owned Bangladesh television and Bangladesh Radio have to be made autonomous.

Political appointments have reached the most sacred corners including the universities defiling the sanctity of the image of teachers. Student politics as has been practiced for the last few decades, has to be abolished. The student politics of the past that gave rise to several political movements cannot be equated with the thuggery practiced by political cadres in the name of student politics. Today student politics means terrorising the rival party cadres with guns and bombs, taking over residential halls and depriving legitimate students from accommodation and grabbing tenders for building infrastructure on campus. There is nothing noble or glorious about such practices and all they have accomplished is cripple these educational institutions morally and academically.

It is clear that the clean up process initiated by this government, is far from over. The decriminalisation of politics will be a long and often painful process. Political parties must grow up to the fact that the days of mafioso-style competition are over and learn to use intelligent strategising and sincerity rather than gun-wielding gangsters to gain power. Politicians have to exorcise the monsters of greed from within and become the honest, capable leaders we want to look up to. People will no longer buy empty promises of good governance and prosperity unless they are accompanied by true political will and action. It is high time that the next elected government does what it is supposed to do: deliver. ■