Post-polls violence

Monday night.

connection.

upazilas yesterday.

General Hospital

Terokhada police arrested

In Noakhali, at least 30 peo-

two Jamaat activists in this

ple were injured in two separate

incidents of violence at

Noakhali Sadar and Sonaimuri

Of them, 20 people were

injured when followers of local

BNP leader Enam Mollah and

AL leader Hafiz of Vatirtek Char

Shulukia village of Noakhali

Sadar upazila clashed over

election results. Of them, 16

were admitted to Noakhali

Sonaimuri upazila, 10 people

were injured in a clash between

Benapole reports: Seven BNP

activists were injured when AL

activists at Jhikorgachha,

Chowgachha, Sharsa and

Manirampur upazilas of Jessore

with just two deliveries left

before the lunch, the latter

unnecessarily fell victim to a

Tamim to repair the damage

but Tamim ended his promis-

ing 53-ball 47 by playing a rash

shot against pacer Dhammika

Prasad. The opener hit eight

was the first victim of Muttiah

Muralidaran, who also picked

up the wickets of Rokibul

Hasan and Mehrab Hossain,

both failing to carry on after

the day on 291-4 and rode on

Jayawardene's highest score

against Bangladesh to take the

match away from the home

ninth 150-plus knock steering

the ball to third man but got a

little too cheeky against the

left-arm spin of Mehrab

Hossain, top-edging a reverse

sweep to first slip. His 269-ball

stay was laced with 19 fours

Sri Lanka declared shortly

afterwards, giving Bangladesh

eight overs to negotiate before

belongs more to the people

alliance. The immediate factors

that contributed to helping

people take the decision

include (i) lack of remorse and

direction in the utterances of

the candidates of the 4-party

alliance; (ii) over-enthusiasm of

the leaders and activists of

religion-based parties to sell

Islam to entice (intimidate)

voters; (iii) rejection of war

criminals by the young voters;

(iv) women voters trusting AL

more; and lastly (v) TV talk show

specialists trying their best with

clever semantics to cover up for

the misdeeds of the 4-party

Only time will tell how judi-

ciously elected politicians who

will form the next government

will work for the overall devel-

opment of the country. If they

fail, people will exercise their

THELASTWORD

Rahim on 47.

Trial in people's court

returning home from work. than to any political party or

Left-arm spinner Shakib

Jayawardene reached his

Earlier, Sri Lanka resumed

getting good starts.

Zunaed, who scored 37,

Zunaed Siddiqui joined

A correspondent in

the AL and BNP activists.

allegedly attacked them.

FROM PAGE 16

run out for 13.

boundaries.

Uphill task

At Bargaon village under

under Pabna Sadar upazila was

hacked to death by rivals. Union Parishad member (UP) member Tokai Member, 40, died of heart attack at the sight of his elder brother Abul Kalam Azad being assaulted allegedly by some AL activists at Udaypur in Sujanagar upazila of Pabna in the morning. Azad is a local BNP leader.

Our staff correspondent in Chittagong reports: Police recovered the body of Rahim Badsha near his house yesterday morning.

Sources said a few men called Rahim, who was a polling agent of an AL candidate in Sitakunda area, out of his house early vesterday and stabbed him. Rahim died instantly.

Locals said Rahim might have been killed by his rivals following a brawl with them at a polling centre during Monday's

parliamentary elections. Our correspondent in Pabna reports: Shaheb Ali was hacked to death allegedly by his rivals over a feud relating to the parlia-

mentary polls. At least 25 people were injured in separate postelection clashes between Awami League and BNP activists at different places in the capital yesterday, our staff

correspondent reports. Of the injured, over 15 were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) while the others were taken to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) and a few other city hospitals.

Ten people were wounded in a clash between activists of AL and BNP at Gabtoli Sweepers' Colony around 8:00pm. They clashed following a feud over the control of the colony.

In Banga Bazar, at least five people were wounded in a clash between two groups of Juba League activists around 8:30pm over dominance over a humanhaulier stop.

Six flower vendors in Shahbagh were injured when allegedly AL activists attacked them. The victims said the attackers swooped on them following a feud over flower

Around four people were injured when Chhatra League activists attacked students of a took the other wicket when he madrasa at Tejgaon Railway had Tillakaratne Dilshan Station area in the afternoon. caught behind by Mushfiqur

Our Khulna correspondent reports: At least seven supporters of Awami League were wounded as activists of BNP-Jamaat attacked them in Terokhada upazila of Khulna lunch.

They have not forgotten the

premeditated murder of Shah

A.M.S. Kibria, Ahsanullah

Master, a number of university

teachers and journalists and

especially the monstrous

grenade attack on an Awami

League meeting on 21 August

in 2004 that killed 23 people.

They have not forgotten also

that the government had shown

all signs of reluctance to try the

known culprits in a court of

people's umbrage at naked

corruption that was allowed to

flourish in every department of

administration during the 4-

party alliance rule and the

remorseless denial of the rulers

till the election day. The election

pledges of the 4-party alliance

this time sounded hollow and

the people, the ultimate decid-

ers, rejected it with contempt.

The result is a reflection of

justice.

Women cruise

FROM PAGE 16 the women candidates for their performance and expressed hopes that they will be able to play an active role in politics in the days to come.

Other women who have won the Monday's election apart from the two former premiers are AL leaders Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury in Faridpur-2, Matia Chowdhury in Sherpur-2, advocate Shahara Khatun in Dhaka-18, Sanjida Khanam in Dhaka-4, Dr Dipu Moni in Chandpur-3, Nilufar Zafar Ullah in Faridpur-4, Sara Begum Kobori in Narayanganj-4. Meher Afroz Chumki in Gazipur-5, Sagufta Yasmin in Munshiganj-2, Rebeka Momin in Netrakona-4, Begum Monnujan Sufian in Khulna-3, Habibun Nahar in Bagerhat-3, Sultana Tarun in Kushtia-4 and Mahbub Ara Begum Gini in Gaibandha-4, and BNP candidates Rumana Mahmud in Sirajganj-2 and Hasina Ahmed

in Cox's Bazar-1. In the October 2001 parliamentary polls, 41 female candidates contested in 50 constituencies with Hasina and Khaleda in five each. They won in 13 seats with Khaleda in five and Hasina in four. It means, apart from the two top leaders, only four female candidates were

able to win in the polls. In the June 12, 1996 parliamentary election, only five candidates won in 11 seats. Khaleda won in five seats while Hasina in three. Three other fortunate women elected in that election are AL's Matia Chowdhury, BNP's Khurshid Jahan Haque and JP's Rowshan Ershad. In that election 36 female candidates contested in

48 seats. A total of 46 women candidates took part in the fifth parliamentary polls held in February 1991. Of them, only four came out victorious. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia won in five seats while AL President Sheikh Hasina, ALleaders Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury and Matia Chowdhury won in one seats

Pakistan urges FROM PAGE 16

forward air bases and relocate ground forces to "peacetime positions" as a sign that it

wants to restore calm in the region "Pakistan wants to make two specific proposals to India to reduce tensions and create

a congenial atmosphere," he "India should de-activate its forward air bases and relocate its ground forces to peacetime positions," Qureshi said. "This will send a positive

signal and reduce tensions in the region." India flatly denied Tuesday Pakistani assertions of aggressive troop deployments along their common border, saying it had carried out no military movements beyond a "normal

winter exercise" Reacting to his Pakistani counterpart's charge that India had deployed ground forces to forward positions and activated forward airbases near the border, Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee said no such action had been taken.

"We have not created any tension," Mukherjee told the Press Trust of India.

"First there should be escalation from the Indian side, then the question of deescalation will come. We have not escalated anything," the minister said.

Any troop movement on the Indian side was part of a "normal winter exercise" Mukherjee told PTI.

Officials said here last week that Pakistani troops had been shifted from the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan to the eastern border with India, but an Indian army spokesman told AFP that no troops had

been moved on the other side. India has blamed the banned Pakistan-based militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) for the attacks on its financial centre Mumbai, which left a total of 172 people dead, including nine of the 10

New Delhi says Pakistan has not done enough to crack down on LeT in response to the attacks, but Qureshi reiterated that Islamabad would cooperate with India if it provided concrete evidence that Pakistani nationals were

involved. On Monday, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani and the country's powerful army chief General Ashfaq Kayani called for calm with India.

"Pakistan and India need to engage in dialogue to address their differences," Zardari told visiting Chinese vice foreign minister He Yafei.

Kayani also "highlighted the need to de-escalate and avoid conflict in the interest of peace and security" during his

India and Pakistan have fought three wars since independence from Britain in 1947, two of them over Kashmir.

AL-led alliance

FROM PAGE 1 Commissioner M Sohul Hussain said the gazette will be

published tomorrow. After the new members of parliament are sworn in, the ALled alliance is to convene a meeting of its parliamentary caucus where the memberselect will elect their leader of the

President Iajuddin Ahmed will then invite the winning alliance to a meeting where he will administer the oath of the new government's cabinet members, who are supposed to be designated by then.

"It should not take more than 7 to 10 days to handover power," LGRD Adviser to the Caretaker Government Anwarul Iqbal told reporters in Bangladesh Secretariat yester-

An official of the parliament secretariat said the new parliament must be in its first session within a month of the publication of the gazette of election results, according to the law.

Asked to comment on the fairness of the election and its results, Anwarul Iqbal said, "A their campaigns on January fair and neutral election took place and the people made their choices. This is a good sign.'

Welcoming the people's verdict yesterday, another adviser to the interim government Maj Gen (retd) MA Matin said the voters rejected corruptionists and voted for

"The people had never made mistakes in taking decisions in the past, and this time around too they did the same," said the

Speaking to reporters in his secretariat office, he hoped that the winners will fulfill their election pledges.

Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman said the caretaker government will have fresh parleys with the two top politicos of the country, Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia, for smooth handover of power.

the interim period, Election Commissioner Sohul Hussain said the polls will be held on schedule.

Replying to a question, he said the candidates participating in the upcoming upzila elections will be allowed to start after publication of official results of the national election in the government gazette.

People want to see

vents its party-men from 'capturing' market places, educational institutions, tender processes and other places from where they could make money through extortion and intimi-

Awami League knows it secured such a landslide victory because most people believed in the party's commitment," said businessman S Chowdhury. He strongly advocates form-

ing a cabinet with new blood that would help materialise the visions laid out in the AL mani-"It should also be open to the

sion," he said, stressing the need for curbing the price of essentials and prioritising the energy

victory is a severe blow to the rule of corruption, nepotism, incompetence and militancy and also a verdict in favour of change. We have said no to corruption and yes to honesty and we want to see the reflection of our verdict in the activities of the winning party immediately," said Jahanara Islam, a 65-year-old housewife at Mirpur.

for boat to send a clear message to the four-party alliance which, according to her, undermined most of the moral values during its five-year rule.

of a group of foreign companies, said, "Ihope that Awami League would learn from the country's history and avoid the mistakes of all the previous govern-

should focus on a few important issues that include keeping the port free of political influence. encouraging foreign direct investment, creation of jobs and adoption of necessary measures to strengthen the coun-

previous Awami League government from 1996 to 2001.

"We also expect that the prime minister will have a dynamic, young, smart, highly educated and well-connected spokesperson, who can respond to the people and the media on all occasions. This will make the premier more accountable," Ahmed said.

Physician Reaz Feda said, of power to an elected govern-"We do not want to see incompetent ministers or a bunch of people as cabinet members like those of the previous four-party alliance government. The new prime minister should not appoint anyone a minister as a reward rather she should give the responsibility to a person who would be able to perform it

"We also want to see that the newgovernmenttakeinitiatives to try and punish the war criminals, responding to the people's sentiment," he added.

whether Awami League repeats the violent acts that we witnessed after the 2001 elections," the physician said, adding that tries. the party must not protect or rehabilitate any political godfathers like Joynal Hazari or

Requesting anonymity, an

Shamim Osman.

democracy.

home adviser.

Earlier on December 23,

About the upazila polls scheduled for January 22 during

energy expert said he is eagerly

waiting to see who gets the

portfolio of the energy ministry

as it will be one of the key minis-

be under the prime minister

and there should be one state

minister to oversee both the

energy and the power minis-

tries. We do not want to see

former bureaucrats or acade-

micians in that position. But a

fresh and honest face, who

might be an economist or a

person having good knowledge

about the dynamics of econ-

work strongly to eliminate

corruption and try the war

criminals," said Dr

Nezamuddin of Bangabandhu

Sheikh Mujib Medica

. University, adding that at the

same time it should take notice-

able actions immediately to

check the price hike of essen-

politicisation and nepotism.

"The post of the deputy

speaker should be left for the

opposition, making it clear that

the government has taken the

opposition seriously and with

due respect," Dr Nezamuddin

said, adding that the provision

of cancelling membership, i

one crosses the floor, could be

amended so that one can take

his or her stance individually on

Shahnaz Sumi stressed the need

for restoring the constitution of

1972, trial of war criminals and

implementation of the Women

expects that the AL would be

considerate in the parliament as

'it seems that running the par-

liament would be a big chal-

Yunus greets

Huda for holding a free, fair

Prof Yunus said, "I congratu-

late you and the AL on getting

an absolute majority in the

and new voters did not hesi-

tate to give full support to you

and your party by participat-

ing in a fair election which set

an example across the world,'

absolute majority will give you

a chance to bring about a real

change in the country and to

march towards good gover-

nance and a bright future. The

whole nation will be with you

in bringing the change which

the nation signalled through

Fakhruddin Ahmed, the Nobel

laureate congratulated him on

carrying out immense work in

last two years towards transfer

The Nobel laureate, in

In another letter to

Prof Yunus said, "This

In a letter to the AL chief.

and credible election.

Advocate Abu Hanif also

Women rights worker

culture, he said.

various issues.

Development Policy.

lenge for the party.'

FROM PAGE 1

elections.

ballots.

"Awami League should now

omy and investment."

"I think the ministry should

tries of the new government.

political reward.

Another early vital indication would be how the AL pre-

Besides, common expectations from the next government include bringing down the price of essentials, keeping the ports or economic facilities free from politicisation and improvement of the existing power supply. "We want to believe that

opinions of the opposition before making any major deci-

"Awami League's landslide

Jahanara feels that she is part of AL's landslide victory as she motivated other people to vote

"We do not want any government to replicate the misrule of the four-party alliance in the country," she said.

Sikder Ahmed, an executive

He said the new government try's energy security.

He said, "The people are closely watching who would be made the cabinet members. We do not want the old faces that ruined the reputation of the

ment. He also said, "The effort made by you and your government to create a moral, institutional and congenial background for changes towards political reforms, good governance and development was exceptional and indispensable for the country." properly," he said. your good initiatives through

He said, "We want to see

another letter to Shamsul Huda, said the elections in which a large number of voters participated was an example for not only Bangladesh but also for the developing coun-He said the voter list with photographs prepared with

Yunus hoped.

the help of Bangladesh Army has already earned well appreciation of all.

reporters that the AL chief wants cooperation from the opposition parties in efforts to

The UN mission chief said they would convey the AL president's message to the opposi-

take the nation forward.

The visiting polls observers said they hope the ruling and the opposition parties will work together in the interests of the nation. Imam, also a former cabinet

secretary, added that the UN

team expressed satisfaction at

the free and fair conduct of the

general election. Meanwhile, AL might form government on January 10, the homecoming day of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, said party sources.

It yesterday urged the Election Commission (EC) to take immediate measures to publish gazette of the election results. It also requested extension of the time limit for withdrawal of candidacy in the upazila election set for January 22. Today is the closing date for withdrawing from the local polls.

Awami League Parliamentary Board will meet to elect the leader of parliament soon after its lawmakers-elect take oath," Imam said at a press briefing at Sudha Sadan.

The 11-member parliamentary board is comprised of party chief Sheikh Hasina, General Secretary Abdul Jalil, presidium members Zillur Rahman, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak Tofail Ahmed and Suranjit Sengupta, acting general secretary Syed Ashraful Islam, Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader and Dr Alauddin

PRESSMEET

Hasina will address a press conference today at 11:00am at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the capi It will be her first after the

election in which the AL-led grand alliance swept to power by a landslide. Her scheduled meet with journalists at the Jatiya Press

Club yesterday was postponed for reasons unexplained. SONIA GREETS HASINA President of the Indian National Congress Sonia Gandhi yesterday congratulated Sheikh Hasina on the grand alliance's

winning a whopping 262 seats

in the ninth parliamentary It is time to bring an end to 以人 人名古奇的安全要多 In a telephone conversation The AL should listen to the with the AL chief in the evening, opposition irrespective of its the Congress leader said she strength in the parliament to hopes the relations between the pave the way for a new political two countries will grow even

stronger in the days to come. She also wished Hasina good health as well as success in her next role, Mahbubul Haque Shakil, deputy press secretary to AL president, told the reporters. Hasina, poised to become the leader of the house and

prime minister for the second

time, thanked the Congress chieffor the call.

LAWMAKERS-ELECT

MEETHASINA Hasina spent most of her time yesterday talking to party colleagues and a cross section of people who went to greet her at Sudha Sadan.

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon who won from Dhaka-8 constituency, Tanjim Ahmed Sohe! Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, Meher Afroz Chumki, Rahmat Ali, AKM Rahmatullah and Mukul Bose, among others exchanged greetings with her.

Khaleda

FROM PAGE 1

detailed observations about the election results later.

Before the standing com "A large number of young mittee meeting, the BNP chairperson came out on the balcony of her first-floor office at around 6:45pm and waved at a few hundred supporters on the road in front.

Looking sad and pensive, she stood there in silence for about five minutes as the party faithful chanted slogans against members of the BNP election conduct committee.

Party Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain, Saifur Rahman, Khandker Mosharraf Hossain, RA Ghani, Chowdhury Tanbir Ahmed Siddiky, Khandker Mahbub Uddin Ahmad and M Shamsul Islam attended the meeting.

AL, allies

FROM PAGE 1 young and first-time voters,

were hungry for a change that the BNP-led alliance was simply incapable of deliver-"We will get the benefit of the elected government," Prof.

The four-party offered few new ideas to the voters and appeared to have learnt nothing from its two years on the sidelines during which many of its senior leaders were incarcerated on corruption charges.

can be seen as the majesty of | election results. the public verdict against the unprecedented corruption and tyranny that marked its five-year rule.

Hasina wants Jets pound Hamas

FROM PAGE 16

resumed nearly two months ago, toward the end of a recently expired truce.

Over 363 Palestinians have been killed, most of them members of Hamas security forces but at least 64 of them civilians, according to the United Nations. The toll includes two sisters, aged 4 and 11, who perished in an airstrike on a rocket squad in northern Gaza on Tuesday.

Militants, battered but unbowed, have pressed on with their rocket and mortan assaults, killing three Israeli civilians and a soldier and bringing a widening circle of targets into their sights with an arsenal of longer-range missiles.

"Zionists, wait for more from the resistance," Hamas spokesman Ismail Radwan said in a text message to reporters, referring to militants' armed struggle against Israel. The military estimated

that nearly 10 percent of Israel's population of 7 million people is now within rocket range, shifting the battles closer to Israel's heartland. Of the four Israelis killed since the operation began Saturday, all but one were in areas that had not suffered fatalities before.

Fires blazed across the Gaza Strip's main city, Gaza City, where five government buildings were badly damaged in air attacks Tuesday. Rescue workers said 40 people were injured when warplanes dropped more than a dozen bombs on the government compound. It wasn't clear whether anyone was buried under the debris.

The campaign began Saturday when the air force hammered security facilities, then broadened to weapons-making and storage facilities, the homes of militant field operatives and government buildings that are the symbols of Hamas' power,

The initial wave of airstrikes took Gaza by surprise, targeting militants and Hamas security forces at key installations, often located in the midst of tiny Gaza's densely populated towns and cities.

But the government buildings targeted later were empty, as Gazans became fearful of venturing out into the streets. For Ziad Koraz, whose nearby home was government compound Tuesday, that violence gratuitously put Gaza civilians at

were directed at an empty stop in Ashdod, 37 kilogovernment compound, metres from Gaza and only without regard for civilians 40 kilometres from Israel's who lived nearby," Koraz heartland in Tel Aviv. said. "We are people who live in peace and want to live in largest in southern Israel.

peace. If someone committed a crime, they should go after him, not after an entire nation.

The offensive began eight days after a six-month truce between Israel and the militants expired amid a barrage of Palestinian rocket fire. The offensive comes on top of an Israeli blockade of Gaza that has largely kept all but essential goods from entering the coastal territory since Hamas violently seized control June 2007.

Israel agreed to allow 100 trucks of humanitarian aid into Gaza on Tuesday, as well as five ambulances from Turkey, defense officials said. A Jordanian diplomat said 21 Jordanian army doctors and four field hospitals would be allowed to enter on Wednesday, though Israeli officials could not immediately confirm that.

Israel's navy on Tuesday turned back a boat of pro-Palestinian protesters who had hoped to enter Gaza to demonstrate against the Israeli blockade.

So far, warplanes and unmanned drones have dominated Israel's military operation. But the military has moved up thousands of infantry soldiers, dozens of tanks and artillery pieces. With the air force knocking off target after target, the big question looming over the operation is whether it will expand to include ground forces. The border area was declared a closed military zone on Monday, drawing a thick fog over operations in

Olmert spokesman Mark Regev wouldn't comment on the prospects for a ground operation but said Israel would "continue keeping the pressure up on the Hamas military machine."

"This operation will continue until a new security reality can be created in the south, and those hundreds of thousands of Israelis who live in fear of Hamas rockets no longer have to live in that fear," Regev said.

Short of reoccupying Gaza, however, it was unlikely any amount of Israeli firepower could permanently stop rocket attacks. Past operations all

failed to do so. The militants have fired even while under the barrage of Israeli bombs and misdamaged in the attack on the siles, demonstrating with deadly effect the widening threat that is making larger cities farther inside Israel vulnerable. On Monday, a "More than 17 missiles missile crashed into a bus

The city of 200,000 is the

Soul-searching

FROM PAGE 16

interrupted by it, and was still going on at the time filing this report at 10:30pm.

Party standing committee members Saifur Rahman, Chowdhury Tanbir Ahmed Siddiqui, Dr R A Ghani, Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, M Shamsul Islam, and Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain were also in the meeting.

The party office yesterday was rather quiet with only a few leaders and activists milling around there wearing despondent looks.

Party insiders said although misrule and corruption of BNP-led fourparty alliance government had an impact on the poll results, it was the inclusion of war criminals in the alliance that worked as the most detrimental factor.

"Voters could not accept our alliance with antiliberation Jamaat," said a senior leader of BNP, adding that BNP developed deep ties with Jamaat and other radical Islamist parties, which discouraged voters, especially the young generation of first time voters, to vote for four-party alliance.

He said the campaign against Jamaat and war criminals ahead of the election also affected the outcome of the election. Jamaat, which won only

two seats, is also assessing its near ouster from the parliament. The two parties however was sure to bag 200 seats.

have yet to hold an official

were rousing voices for trials advisers.

of war criminals. Amid such a situation, a coalition with Jamaat was a wrong policy decision," said a standing committee member of BNP yesterday.

Some BNP leaders and activists were not even shy to express their anger at the decision of having an electoral alliance with Jamaat in the party office, as the poll results started coming in since late Monday night. The standing committee

member termed the result as 'unbelievable' saying, "We sensed a defeat, but not such a humiliating one." The advisers to Khaleda. who were closely involved in forming BNP's election strategy and gave her sugges-

tions from time to time, also

misled the party chief about

the possible outcome of the

election, many party leaders They said the chairperson's advisers are also responsible for the party's defeat by such a large mar-

"The advisers who are former bureaucrats and journalists, misled the chairperson about possible outcomes of the poll," an unhappy BNP leader told The Daily Star, seeking anonymity.

He said the advisers conducted several surveys on possible poll results before the election and assured Khaleda Zia that the party

Sources close to Khaleda The defeat of the alliance | meeting or discussion on the said she was initially against BNP's participation in the "There were widespread ninth parliamentary elecpublicity against anti- tion, but she changed her liberation forces and there mind being persuaded by her

Public once again

The victory therefore rightsonceagain.

The arrogance of the last fourparty alliance government translated into an attitude of zero accountability for it actions and zero respect for public opinion.

This was not all. While

violence has always been a

regrettable feature of

Bangladeshi politics, it rose to

unprecedented levels under BNP-led rule, and the climate of fear inculcated during their reign of terror over the country undoubtedly contributed to the alliance's unpopularity. From assassinations of major opposition figures, including one attack aimed at wiping out the entire opposition leadership, that occurred and went uninvestigated on the alliance's watch, to the firebombing of factories and burning down of houses of political opponents, to attacking peace-

ful opposition rallies and pro-

cessions, to petty extortion, toll

collection, land grabbing -- the

voters could be forgiven for

thinking that they were being ruled by a mafia outfit rather than a democratically elected government. The fear was that the two years of caretaker government rule would have dimmed public and out of sympathy for the thematyour peril.

excesses committed against it over the past two years. But whatever public sentiment on the performance of the caretaker government, it is clear that the voters were able to see that the current government was not on the ballot and were able to render a resounding judgment on the performance

of the last elected government.

The second point to note is that the BNP ran an extraordinarily negative campaign in which they tried to frighten the electorate and appeal to its worst prejudices. It is heartening to note that the voters have totally rejected the tired old rhetoric of "save Islam" and "save the nation" fearmongering.

Finally, the BNP-led alliance acted as though it had learned nothing from the events of the past two years. The alliance leaders refused even to acknowledge their misdeeds, let alone show contrition for them, instead suggesting that everything was a conspiracy against The truth is that the BNP

didn't deserve to return to power. They are a party bereft of ideas at this stage and totally in thrall to their worst elements. memory of their misdeeds or The BNP needs to clean house indeed that the electorate and begin the rebuilding prowould now be sympathetic to cess from the ground up. The the alliance due to its stand voters understood this peragainst the interim government fectly. Underestimate or ignore

talks with the Chinese envoy.