

Power plant in Gopalganj. PHOTO: SHUBRO DAS

Tit for Tat

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The way Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on July 13 reacted to the verdict the people had given in the recently held city corporation elections has brought out her annoyance with the people. In her view people should have voted for her ruling Awami League backed mayoral candidates in the city polls, considering, as she said, her government's massive development activities, which she pointed out.

But people in the city corporations of Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet and Gazipur did not buy prime minister's views. They voted for Hasina's rival Khaleda Zia-led BNP supported mayoral contenders in the polls, causing a humiliating defeat to all the AL favourites. After the election, it was widely discussed that AL-backed mayoral candidates were defeated due to negative vote. Some critical national issues and failures of the AL-led government overshadowed its successes over the past few years, ultimately leading people to cast the negative votes that paved the way to the AL's debacle in the city polls.

Local leaders of the AL in all the five city corporation areas and many central leaders also held the government's failure responsible for the defeat. The government has miserably failed to take the necessary actions following stock market crash, Hall-Mark-Sonali Bank loan scam and Padma bridge scandal. The opposition has carried out a massive campaign against the AL-backed mayoral candidates on the nationally burning issues, portraying the government's failure. But the AL did not have any substantial arguments to counter the criticism. In their campaign, the AL had tried to highlight the development activities in the city areas and other places. But the government is bound to carry out development activities. Even an autocratic government also needs to carry out some development activities to keep its administration functional and to satisfy people. A democratically elected government needs to do something more. It needs to ensure rule of law and good governance in addition to carrying out development activities.

Hasina however did not agree with this reality. On July 13, at a programme at her official residence Gono Bhobon, she claimed that the candidates linked to grafts and criminal activities were