elected as mayors while her party supported candidates, who, despite having clean image, were defeated. She countered the explanation that national issues contributed to the AL debacle in the polls. She portrayed her government's successes in the power, education and agriculture sectors. Citing the successes, the PM questioned the national issues which caused her party backed candidates defeat.

She reacted sharply to the criticism against quick rental power plants. She said that she would go for a tit-for-tat policy against those criticising her government over the quick rental power plants. What will be her policy? Hasina said that the government would stop the production of power after the generation of 3200 MW. She said that her government had inherited this level of power generation from the BNP-Jamaat alliance when it came to power in January 2009. She went won: "I think, we'll go for that decision, it'll help people realise what the present government has done for the development of the power generation.

"Let the holy Ramadan be over, let the holy Eid pass by, I'll do that ...I'll do that after open declaration," she said.



Sheikh Hasina PHOTO: STAR FILE

Hasina said her government, after assuming power, increased power generation from 3200 MW to 6675 MW through installing 55 various power plants, including the quick rental ones. She said that she wanted to see what the critics of quick rental power plants will do when the power generation would come down to 3200 MW again.

"People will then realise what the Awami League government did for them," she said adding that otherwise the criticism would never end. She also advised the critics to refrain from unnecessary criticism.

Sheikh Hasina has made such remarks earlier too. She had spoken for cutting power connections of the residences of people who criticised the quick rental power or raised allegation of lack of transparency in the projects.

Does the premier really want to punish people who criticise her government and who did not vote for her party supported candidates in the city polls? Is this democracy?

Many critics are well wishers of her government. So, she should not brand all critics as her enemy. Rather she and her government should pay heed to criticisms and correct mistakes if there are any. Applying a tit-for-tat policy will cause severe damage to her party and her government.

She should not ignore voices of her party's grassroots level leaders who explained the reasons for the defeat in the city polls. Ignoring the grassroots voices will not yield any positive outcomes.

It did not bring positive results in the past. In October 2005 at a conference, grassroots level leaders of the then ruling BNP had criticised the then government for its failure in arresting the price hike of essentials and asked the party leadership to ensure uninterrupted power supply. They had urged the BNP-led government's policymakers to take proper steps to immediately resolve the issues. The BNP-led government did not take any measure in response to the grassroots level leaders. Rather the government high ups had blamed the media for the 'exaggerating news reports' on price hike of essentials and power cut. They also urged the grassroots level leaders not to read the newspapers reports and asked them to portray the government's successes.

The BNP high command did not take measures to honour the sentiments of grassroots level leaders. It got the results in December 29, 2008 parliamentary polls, facing a humiliating defeat after securing only 29 seats.

Now, PM Hasina will determine whether her government and AL will honour the sentiments of party grassroots who have been seeking her government's drastic actions to resolve the critical issues and also stern actions against grafts to prevent the image of the government from nose-diving further. If their sentiments are not honoured, the AL will get the results in the next polls.

The writer is Senior Reporter, The Daily Star.