army. But the way this success was achieved cannot be compared with the way the parliamentary polls will be held. Both are completely different in nature. The facts speak the truth.

The election to more than 4,000 union parishads was the large scale election the EC conducted during the present government's term in office. The elections were held in two phases – first in between March to April and second in between May to June of 2011. And the total number of voters were around six crore.

The same year in January it conducted polls to 254 municipalities which together had 74.53 lakh voters. And the polls were held in four different days of January 2011.

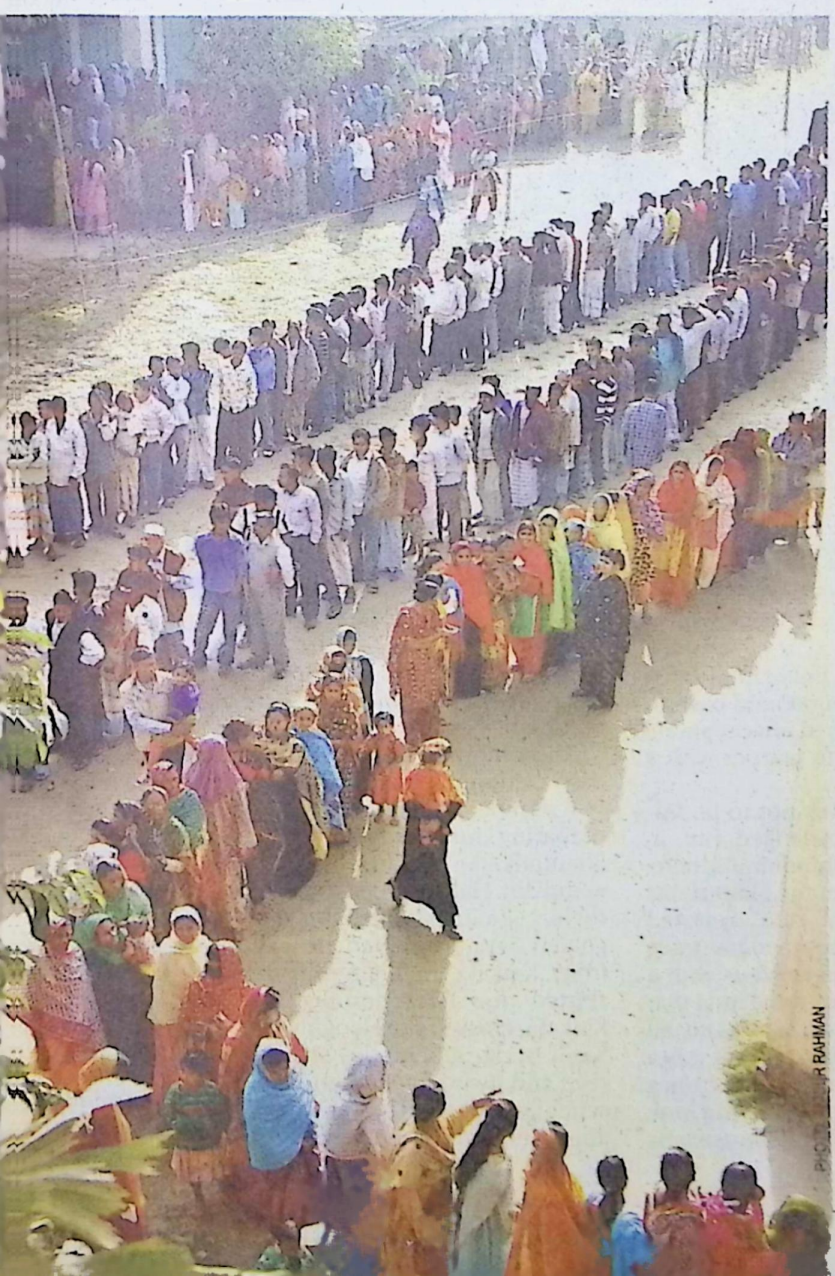
And the polls to nine city corporations that were held at different times in four years have altogether 48. 69 lakh voters.

Law enforcement agencies were able to ensure security as none of the elections were held countrywide. And the results were nothing to do with the change of state power.

But during the parliamentary polls the situation will be completely different. This election is the only legitimate means to get to power. And the EC will have to conduct polling in 300 parliamentary constituencies in a single day. The number of voters in the upcoming polls will be more than 9.20 crore.

So, the success in holding local government polls cannot be the reason behind the government's decision not to deploy army in the parliamentary polls.

The army was deployed to maintain law and order in all the parliamentary elections held since the country's independence. Assuming office in January 2009, the AL however indicated its stance against the army's role in election. It has amended the Representation of the People Order, scrapping the army's sweeping authority to arrest anybody without warrant for electoral offence on the polling day.



The army was given this authority before the 2001 parliamentary elections. In the 2001 polls, the AL suffered a debacle, and denounced the role of many army officers in the election. Later, the AL-led 14-party alliance in 2004 demanded that the government scrap the army's authority.

But in a sudden move during the emergency rule in 2008, the AL in an electoral dialogue with the EC announced that they had accepted the army's authority for the greater interest of the nation. But assuming office in 2009, the AL had changed its position.

The way the AL-led government is moving towards the next parliamentary poll has raised some crucial questions: does the AL-led government sincerely want to keep the army away from the political hullabaloo? Or does it want to keep the army away considering the situation that had prevailed in January 2007? Will the strategy work?

The writer is Senior Reporter, The Daily Star.