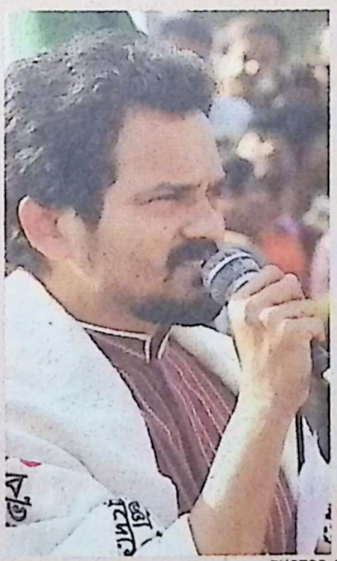
Another debacle that her leadership faced was in 2007 when a military controlled government tried to split the country's two major political parties in the name of brining about reform.

The kind of hatred that the two leading ladies in Bangladesh politics share with each other was exposed this year when a telephonic conversation between them was 'leaked'. The parley ended bitterly with Khaleda accusing her rival of lying. There are reasons to believe that the presence of both the ladies in politics and their acrimonious relationship is one of the many reasons behind the present political impasse. This is especially so if the AL leadership goes ahead with the one-sided election of January 5, which no doubt will make us compare the AL with the likes of the BNP and Jatya Party, which were born in the womb of military dictatorship.

Khaleda whose 'movement' has killed numbers of people in arson attacks might not want to run for a parliamentary seat in the general election her party decides to participate. The same cannot be said about Hasina. Be that as it may, it is, however, certain that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to reform Bangladesh's politics if both the 'begums' remain where they are now. Only time can tell as to when and how a change in Bangladesh politics will take place.

A GAME OF SHADOWS

Gonojagoron Moncho (GM) was formed when Jamaat leader Abdul Kader Molla was handed down life imprisonment for crimes against humanity at the beginning of this year. The Moncho, which consisted of mostly left activists, were successful in drawing the attention of the media and a large number of youths. Thanks to the movement, International Crimes Act was passed, introducing a provision where the prosecution can appeal to the appellate division if they feel aggrieved with a lower court verdict. But the zeal with which the GM was formed soon started to fizzle out. It was mostly due to a debate centering the murder of Rajib Haider, a GM activist who was outspoken about his atheist beliefs. After his murder, allegedly by a little known terrorist cell, the GM started to entertain some Islamic elements into its programmes. In fact, the GM lost much its support base as it centered round only war crimes, more so at a time when the nation is facing some pressing issues such as corruption, misgovernance, the killing of innocent people during hartal and blockades and holding of the general election. Also Awami League could not quite ride on the wave that the GM has created.



Imran H Sarkar

PHOTOS: STAR FILE



Ahmed Safi

The GM's stagnant popular support is inversely proportional with that of Hefazat-e-Islam (HI). Formed by a madrasa rector in a remote village in Chittagong, the HI shot to fame after it had held a huge gathering in the heart of the capital to materialise some demands that the group knows the government cannot meet. The HI's second rally in Dhaka and a GM-style sit in was met with some harsh actions by the law enforcers, resulting in the death of a few. The HI and its paraphernalia have put the death toll to a few thousands. Given the level of trust that the government enjoys in the country, many actually bought the HI's claim and the 'Shapla Massacre' has been one of the reasons why the AL met a humiliating defeat in the recent mayoral polls.

Both the GM and HI are now a skeleton of its previous self. It is highly unlikely that they will be able to remain as strong independent pressure groups. It is unfortunate that the GM, which started its journey as a progressive block, has not been able to keep the momentum and has failed to become an alternative political force.