

Hasina versus Khaleda

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Both Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia have made the same record of leading their respective governments to stage one-sided and controversial parliamentary elections. Khaleda was first to have done it in 1996 while her archrival Hasina followed suit in 2014.

However, Awami League chief Hasina has made something possible that her archrival BNP chief Khaleda had failed in 1996. Khaleda could not retain power by grabbing it through the February 15 one-sided polls in 1996. Her government was forced to step down in the next month.

This time around, the situation is different. Hasina has already completed one year in office as the prime minister, during which the BNP-led opposition could not mount pressure on the AL. The prevailing situation suggests that the BNP is under some heavy pressure.

Given the situation, Hasina now looks confident enough to continue office. But will she be able to complete her five year term?

History, however, may tell us to be skeptical about the future of the government. The governments and parliaments formed through controversial elections or that are faced with political turmoil were not able to complete their tenure in the last four decades.

The first parliament which was formed through a largely free and fair election in 1973 was forcibly dissolved by the military usurpers in November 1975. The then government which was formed by the first parliament had faced political turmoil. That had prompted some disgruntled army officers to stage the heinous coup to overthrow the Bangabandhu-led government.

The second parliament was formed through the 1979 election which was manipulated and managed by the then military ruler Gen Ziaur Rahman in favour of his newly floated party the BNP. The parliament was dissolved in March 1982 by another military ruler Gen HM Ershad, who grabbed power by overthrowing the then president Abdus Sattar-led government.



Political persecution and intolerance result in violent political activities.

Gen Ershad-led government held two stage-managed parliamentary elections in 1986 and 1988. But both the parliaments were short lived and dissolved much before their tenure expired. Military dictator Ershad, who grabbed the presidency, however, was in power until he was ousted through a mass upsurge in December 1990.

Fall of Ershad paved the way for the restoration of the parliamentary democracy in the country. Since 1991 six parliamentary elections were held. Of them the four elections, held in 1991, 1996 (June 12), 2001 and 2008 were largely free and fair. The fifth parliament which was formed in 1991 almost completed its five year term. The political turmoil forced it to get dissolved a few months before its five year tenure. For this, the then government-led by Khaleda could not complete its five year term in office. Her

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government however remained in office for a full five years during the eighth parliament which was formed through the 2001 election.

However, it was none but Hasina who was first to set the record of completing a five year term [1996-2001] in office as the Prime Minister. The seventh parliament that formed her government was also the first one that completed the five year term. Hasina has again done this by remaining in office for five years as the premier in between 2009-2014.

But this time the situation is different for Hasina as the current government is an outcome of the January 5 one-sided election. And Khaled seems to have appeared determined to oust her rival from power. In their fight for power, people have already started to suffer and their suffering will continue until the battle is over.

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