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Immediate DUCSU polls demanded as DU sits with student bodies today

Arifur Rahman | Updated at 12:19am on September 16, 2018

Academics and former student leaders emphasise favourable environment and immediate announcement of schedule as Dhaka University authorities are set for talks with student organisations today on the long-awaited election to Dhaka University Central Student Union.

Welcoming the move, they pointed out that flexing political muscle instead of intellectual exercise was the outcome of the absence of a functional DUCSU for about three decades.

Political coexistence, they demanded, must be ensured for a fair and participatory poll to the student union of the university which was the cradle of all democratic and cultural movements of the country.

Proctor AKM Golam Rabbani on September 12 sent a letter to the president and the general secretary of all student organisations and their Dhaka University units inviting them to the meeting.

The move came as fifteen former students of the university on September 12 filed a petition with the High Court for charging Dhaka University vice-chancellor, proctor and treasurer with contempt of court for violating a High Court order asking them to hold the DUCSU polls.

Talking to New Age, DU VC Professor Akhtaruzzaman said that the move was the first in sixteen years and they would discuss ways of how to revive DUCSU.

He further said that they would take further initiative after getting the feedback from the student bodies and other activities including updating voters' roll were already going on.

Praising the move, Dhaka University Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury said that DUCSU poll was a must as its absence had already caused irreparable losses.

As the university decided to sit with the student bodies, all stakeholders of the university should also reach a consensus on holding the election.

DU law department professor Asif Nazrul said that without ensuring political coexistence and democratic environment on the campus, all attempts to hold the poll would go in vain.

Demanding immediate election schedule, president of Communist Party of Bangladesh Mujahidul Islam Selim, also the first DUCSU vice-president after independence, said that DU VC should seek apologies firstly for collecting fees from the students in the name of central students' union without holding the poll violating university ordinance.

Former DUCSU general secretary Mostak Hossain said that the university authorities should declare the election schedule first and then other activities, including political coexistence, should be ensured to hold the poll.

On March 4 last year, president Abdul Hamid, also chancellor of the university, while addressing the 50th convocation of the university, had called for the university students' union election.

He had then said that in order to develop new leadership as well as strengthen the democratic foundation of the university, DUCSU election was necessary.

From the chancellor to the students, everyone wants it but the student union elections did not take place in about three decades as the successive DU administrations and governments did not want it to maintain their dominance on the campus.

On the one hand, they wholeheartedly glorify DUCSU roles in the nation's history while, on the other, they do nothing to hold the election, which is a clear violation of the university ordinance of 1973.

This practice is breaching express provisions of Articles 4 and 20 of the ordinances presidential order number 11 and the fundamental rights ensured under the article 27 of the same order.

This violation renders all the senate committees and vice-chancellor elections of the university in the last 27 years unconstitutional as in the senate of DU five seats are reserved for the student representatives that remained vacant since the fall of autocratic regime in 1990.

DUCSU was formed in 1924 after the establishment of Dhaka University in 1921, and its first vice-president was nominated in the 1924-25 academic session. Since then, the VP used to be nominated until 1953 when the first election was held.

The last DUCSU election was held in 1990. It was the sixth election after independence. Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal-backed Aman-Khokon (Amanullah Aman and Khairul Kabir Khokon) panel won the election and they stayed the leaders of the students' body until its dissolution.

On September 12, fifteen former Dhaka University students filed a contempt petition against Dhaka University vice-chancellor Md Akhtaruzzaman, proctor AKM Golam Rabbani and treasurer Kamal Uddin for violating a High Court order asking them to hold the DUCSU polls.

The vacation bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice KM Hafizul Alam would hear the petition today.

On January 17, the High Court bench of Justice Syed Muhammad Dastagir Husain and Justice Md Aatur Rahman Khan asked the Dhaka University authorities to take steps for holding DUCSU polls at a 'suitable time, preferably within six months.'

The court also said that the Dhaka University senate was not formed properly without five elected representatives of the DUCSU.

The Dhaka University senate was formed without the five DUCSU representatives for long, it observed.