

Wednesday, February 13, 2019



## Dhaka Univ authorities must pay for their failures

Updated at 01:04am on February 13, 2019

THE University of Dhaka authorities have announced the full schedule of the elections to the Dhaka University Central Students' Union finally after the issue has been in active conversation for more than a couple of years. The elections to the students' unions of the university and its halls of residence took place last in 1990, leaving the university senate to have functioned for the past 28 years with no student members, five of whom the central students' union nominates to the senate for them to hold office for a year. While this means that there had been no one for all these years to even take up with the senate the issues that concern students in the functioning of the university, other committees of the university and the halls that warrant student representation have, thus, gone without any student members, leaving ignored issues that require regular attention for a good academic atmosphere. In view of such propositions, the announcement of the full schedule of the university's central students' union is a welcome piece of news as it takes the process one step further. But what comes to be worrying is that there are possibilities, even if remote, that the elections at hand could bear the semblance of what happened in the December 30 general elections.

The fears are not unfounded in that the halls of residence and the campus have for the past decade been bastions of the student wing of the ruling party — the Awami League in this case — allowing student wings of other political parties or independent student groups no democratic space. It is in this context many students groups outside the ruling quarters have come up with the demand for the setting up of polling centres outside the halls of residence, where the Chhatra League of the ruling party is reported to have been in full control. The demand makes sense in that the high-handedness that the student wing has showed, especially in the past few years, in attacking general students, and also teachers in some cases, seeking reforms in public service recruitment quota and school and college students who held peaceful protests seeking road safety, students fear that they could be barred from casting vote in addition to the fears for electoral frauds such as ballot stuffing, boot capturing and miscounting of votes. Now the authorities deciding to set up polling centres inside the halls, despite opposition by all student groups but the Chhatra League, shows that they are dealing with the issue the way the Chhatra League wants.

The first and foremost task of the university authorities is to let the university administration run the affairs of the halls and the campus and treat the student wing of the ruling party like any other ordinary groups on the campus to hold the elections in a congenial atmosphere. Student wings of the ruling party taking over the administration of the halls and the campus has almost become a norm for a few decades. As the issue cannot be attended to overnight, the university authorities, considering their failure to do so, would do well in setting up the polling centres outside the halls of residence in efforts to make the elections to the students' unions free and fair.



Editor: **Nurul Kabir**, Published by the Chairman, Editorial Board ASM Shahidullah Khan on behalf of Media New Age Ltd. 30 Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208 Phone: 880-2-8170450-56 (PABX), Fax: 880-2-8170457