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No To Party Politics In Educational Institutions And Govt Organisations

The government move to ban party politics at educational institutions, banks and other commercial and industrial units, now underway, is a step in the right direction. Politics could be so partisan, unforgivingly cruel, corrupt and murderous because of the provision for organising party cadres in the name of front organisations at educational institutions and banking, economic and commercial units. Ever since the introduction of Political Party Act, 1976 by military ruler Ziaur Rahman, the student organisations have formally received the recognition as front organisations of different political parties. On the other hand, the Collective Bargaining Agencies (CBAs) too were tagged with the parent political parties and thus the most brazenly partisan, unclean and aggressive culture of politics started vitiating the factories, industries and banks in the public sector of the country. In the name of welfare of students, workers and employees, these front organisations or bargaining agencies turned almost every institution and organisation into vehicles of serving narrow party interests at the cost of common good of the people. Even teachers got divided into groups on political party lines. This is how professional qualities were compromised and students were turned into thugs or criminals. The lure of easy money and power precipitated the fall of standard of politics.

Now the government wants to stem the rot and the Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Ministry has already sent some proposals to the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat for their incorporation in the electoral rules and code of conducts now under review for effecting reform. It seeks to bring about changes in the political culture by including provisions that would rule out obtaining affiliation for front organisations from any political party. In short, political parties having such organs in the government and semi-government organisations to do this party brand of trade unionism will automatically lose the right to get registration and to compete in election. The problem is that the EC thinks it cannot go for such a measure and a constitutional reform would be required for this. In this connection, the Political Party Act, 1976 should not be an impediment if we take into account the milestone High Court verdict on the entire period of military regime of Ziaur Rahman, ruling it illegal, in connection with the Mazdar Hossain case. If that case, shelved with an ulterior motive, is revived and the verdict upheld in the SC bench, the act automatically becomes null and void. Many such legal stumbling-blocks will also disappear in the process.

This country no longer wants to go back to the days when party cadres had monopolised everything under the sun for advancing individual and group interests. Such reforms will create the right platform for returning the country to its people. Power-wielders cannot be the sole agents of every economic activity in the country. Merit must get over political affiliation and the country must ensure social, economic and legal justice for all. This move has the potential to take the country on to a level where people can get reward for knowledge, wisdom, efficiency, honesty and integrity. The days of political thugs should be over once for all, if we really want to see our society prosper. We will hope the political parties welcome the set of proposals and demonstrate their sincerity by endorsing them as a precondition for their internal reform.