

## Election To SCBA And DUTA

First the election to the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) and then the Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA) polls had to be postponed under pressure from the government. In the case of overdue election to the SCBA, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police card was played to rule that the necessary permission was not taken to hold the election but the lawyers knew better whether they were violating any rule or not and were determined to hold the election. At last it was the law adviser who had to employ his negotiation skill to persuade the lawyers amidst high drama on the morning of the scheduled election day i.e March 24 to defer the polls to April 28-29. But in the case of the DUTA election, both intimidation and arms-twisting tactics were employed to postpone it. Barely 18 hours before the DUTA election, reportedly a four-member team of joint forces went to the election commissioner's residence on the campus and tried to create pressure on him either to defer the election or resign. Then DMP requested through a letter to reschedule the election 15 days later and the DU teachers agreed to do so and have announced new date of election on April 12.

This government's poor handling of the university crisis earlier has remained questionable and now this latest move will only make further room for neutral people to question its motive. The postponement of the SCBA and the DUTA polls in so high-handed a manner will send a wrong signal to everyone looking forward to the stalled ninth parliamentary election. Many will be asking the question if some in the power are suffering from election phobia. Or else, this is quite undesirable and even shocking. When the government loves to institutionalise democracy at all levels of society, these two professional bodies' election would have helped the cause. It would be better if the government facilitated the polls to these bodies. Besides, the SCBA election was not going to be contested under political banners. Even the forum-wise election to the DUTA has become somewhat meaningless. So what prompted the government to interfere in the two bodies' election is incomprehensible.

Recently the election to the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI) has been held and in no way did it pose any threat to law and order. Rather, the newly elected office-bearers have pledged to cooperate with the government to bring down the prices. That should have been the spirit. A government that wants to hold local elections before parliamentary polls has no moral right to interfere in the elections of the SCBA and the DUTA. It would have been wise on its part to fully cooperate with the lawyers and the teachers with whom its relations are already strained and take them into confidence and thus prove it had nothing against the teachers. An opportunity has been lost and the relations have further soured. This was unacceptable. We hope the government will create no further hindrances to the holding of election to these bodies on the rescheduled dates. SS