

Delayed DUTA And Other Elections

The injunction on the Dhaka University Teachers' Association election was a bit surprising as polls to most other professional bodies are taking place under the emergency without any hitch. The suit by a student asking for a ban on the teachers' body election is slightly off-the-mark, as a student is not a direct party to the elections. He will only be affected in a vicarious manner. With the acceptance of such a case the High Court has opened the flood gates for many other similar suits.

What happens if anybody makes the same plea about the general elections? Will it be suspended, *ad infinitum*? If the current verdict on the teachers' association case is any indicator this may well be the case. This will endlessly quench our desire to see an elected polity in our midst.

The political change on 1/11 last year that brought in this government was meant to do away with political anomalies. If they continue what is the point of change? For one-and-a-half year now the incumbents have been grappling with everyday problems rather than solve the strategic ones. If strategic problems cannot be solved then there will be a chance of repetition in future.

The people who thought of the current dispensation should have looked at the structural problems of our politics before embarking on a mission to cleanse it. If they cannot identify the problem there is no way they can solve it. Rather, it is possible that they might as well become a part of the problem rather than a solution.

Things are getting even clumsier by the day. On the one hand, there is the relentless price hike that shows no sign of abating coupled with political uncertainty is making things worse. Already the election commission has missed out on the road map which it had announced itself. Even local government elections are increasingly being delayed. The much trumpeted voters' list is yet to be completed. The EC is now saying that they will finish it by October. Earlier, they had set June as the deadline. If the current trend continues it may take much longer than that.

The worst part is that most people believe that the EC has no urge to finish its job on time. There are fears also that all that they are doing may ultimately be only to delay the polls. This is unacceptable and it will create trouble across the country. If the road map is not adhered to, people who had given the administration the benefit of doubt will feel cheated. The government should not allow that situation to happen.

The moral high ground that the current government had claimed in its early days increasingly looks sullied. The government must regain it, if it is to reassert authority. For too long, it seems ambitious people have been running the roost; the government might as well seek the assistance of its backers to ease them out. The stakes are too high: one cannot dilly-dally with it for a long time. A fair political process must be ushered in; otherwise there is no justification for change.