the judiciary where attempts to partisanize this hitherto untouchable institution have already produced some lamentable outcomes. Elevation of a deputy attorney general, appointed by the outgoing political government, to the position of attorney general, strikes me as an impolitic move, given the partisan bias of the outgoing attorney general and his whole office.

A credible voter list, an independent EC and a non-partisan administration, may ensure a relatively free and fair election. If this could be done by the CTG under Shahabuddin, Habibur Rahman, and even, up to a point, Laufur Rahman, there is no reason why this cannot be achieved under Fakhruddin's CTG.

However, none of the previous CTGs could ensure that a free and fair election would ensure that people with money and muscle at their disposal would not receive nominations or deploy these resource to win the election. Obviously the campaign for clean candidates promoted by the Nagorik Committee and Shujan touched a responsive chord amongst citizens across the country There is today close to universal agreement that voters would prefer to vote for a better calibre of candidate and would like to be presented with such an option by the respective parties. The nominations of the two alliances which were made public prior to the deadline of January 3, set by the ousted CTG of Iajuddin Ahmed, suggest that the major parties were not particularly impressed by the public demand that they nominate clean candidates.

The point of departure for the present CTG from its predecessors appears to be that their power base also appears to be motivated by the objective of ensuring a cleaner slate of electoral candidates. To this end the powers that be have already begun a far-reaching crack-down on criminal elements, many of whom appear to be politically connected, and are now casting their net wider to catch the bigger fish, mostly on charges of corruption. It is not clear how much wider this net will be cast but it could go far enough to reach the inside pond of the two political leaders.

What has to be seen is whether this sweep into the depths of the main political alliances, to catch ostensibly corrupt or criminal elements on both sides, can be sustained long enough to keep them out of the elections to a point where arms and money became a marginal factor in the electoral process. It is possible that such an exercise by the CTG may be legally open to challenge and may even be politically contested. It would, at the least, require laws which disqualify particular categories of political elements from contesting elections. If due legal process is to be observed in eliminating selected politician from the elections, such a process would imply that the CTG will be around for quite some time. It is not certain that the political parties would remain idle for all that time so that the assault on the parties may have to go even deeper if they are to kept under restraint whilst the process of political cleansing is being completed.

It is, however, still not certain that enforcing expenditure ceilings and reducing the power of weapons will be enough to ensure the slate of clean candidates craved by the voters. Both corruption and political violence originate in structural problems and not mere deficiencies in personal character of the offending candidates.

It is arguable that the disqualification route may thus not be a feasible option, though the more egregious political elements, with proven track records for violence and corruption, can be detained, if convicted, under due legal process. Action can also be taken by a strong EC to eliminate the power of weapons and severely reduce the influence of money in the next elections. Enforcing a more sensibly defined election expenditure ceiling may be a novelty for the Bangladesh EC but there are many precedents for this in our neighbouring countries. Indeed, technical advice may be sought by the newly inducted EC from some retired chief election commissioners in India, who have managed to enforce expenditure ceilings on candidates, using the authority already available to the commission.

It is, however, still not certain that enforcing expenditure ceilings and reducing the power of weapons will be enough to ensure the slate of clean candidates craved by the voters. Both corruption and political violence originate in structural problems and not mere deficiencies in personal character of the offending candidates. Professor Yunus may have indulged in hyperbole when he recently observed that money making is the sole motivation of politics. There are still politicians at all levels driven by a sense of public service, and many of them, particularly at the local level, have made great sacrifices in the struggle for democracy. But it is becoming increasingly evident that a generation of political players are new assuming prominence in the major political parties for whom politics is assuming a largely instrumental role in their primary mission of pursuing wealth. This emerging political culture is leading to the depoliticization of the parties and their progressive divorce from issues of ideology and policy or the compulsion to address the most basic concerns of their voters. This culture has given birth to the winner take all mode of party politics which has bred the virulent confrontational politics which has eroded democracy within the parties, has paralyzed our parliament, and has, thus, virtually disenfranchised our people.

Can short-term efforts at political