

Can we hope for a better relationship between political rivals?

The people have always desired a fair and credible election contested by honest and patriotic citizens. With the same old political figures again in the electoral race there is enough doubt of any possible change in the political arena. Whichever alliance comes to power, the people will see the persons, arrested on charges of corruption and crimes, in the government, ruling the country again.

The good news, however, is that the EC has made an option of 'no vote' for the voters. If they do not find any fair candidate, they will use that no vote. In addition there are several positive measures that the EC has accomplished. This includes a flawless voter list, a strict electoral code of conduct, an amended Representation of the People Order (RPO), registration of a significant number of new generation voters, and a reduced number of 'dummy voters'. A change can already be detected in the restraint exercised by candidates - avoiding the use of mudslinging as a campaign tactic, refraining from the usual overzealous colourful postering and wall-writing. These are definitely positive signs.

But everything ultimately depends on the political commitment of the next elected government. The next elected government's course of action for fighting corruption and for good governance as well as for its approach towards opposition parties will be determining factors. The role of the opposition will be equally important too.

Since overthrowing military ruler HM Ershad through a mass upsurge in 1991, the people of this land have desired a healthy political scene so that democracy may flourish. Their dreams were shattered by the undemocratic attitudes and thuggish behaviour of the two major political parties which alternately ruled the country for 15 years, between 1991 and 2001. Critics have termed the regimes as 'democratically elected autocracies'.

Many might even question the credibility of the upcoming election too, because of the events preceding the poll including the Election Commission's frequent changing of laws, and the courts' very late reinstatement of candidates previously rejected by the commission. But so far the people seem to have accepted what is happening. Although one alliance is quite vocal about questioning the fairness of the managers of the upcoming election, the reason for their ire is well known, as their own track record has been far from clean in that respect.

Nonetheless, we are again dreaming of a true democracy. The people seem to believe this election is another chance for the politicians to make the dreams come true. Will they deliver? If not, the country will fall into a crisis once again, opening up doors for undesirable forces to come and take over.

The writer is Senior Reporter of The Daily Star