

raised, to which the administration turned a deaf ear. On March 11, 2012, advocate Manzill Murshid sent a legal notice to the then vice chancellor (VC), proctor and treasurer of DU to take steps to hold DUCSU elections. Having received no reply from the university authorities, he filed a writ petition demanding elections on behalf of several former students of DU. On January 17, 2018, the HC directed the DU authority to hold DUCSU elections within six months. However, the DU authorities, appealed against the High Court order after nine months in September 2018 when a contempt petition was filed against the VC Professor Dr Md Akhtaruzzaman and two others.

DUGSU Elections 2019:

Let's not play with the students

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

Currently, Dhaka University (DU) campus is full of excitement and apprehension due to the much-awaited Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU) and hall union elections. All the students' platforms including Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), Bangladesh Jatiotabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), quota-reformist group (Bangladesh Shadharon Chhatra Odhikar Shongrokkhon Porishod) and the coalition of left-wing student organisations have declared their panel of candidates who will contest the elections on March 11, 2019. The DUCSU and hall unions—in which all the representatives are to be democratically elected—act as the official spokespersons of all the students of DU. However, for the last 28 years, the DUCSU and hall unions did not exist.

The last elections to DUCSU and hall Unions were held in 1990; in 1992 the then unions were made defunct by the university administration. This implies that with the advent of democracy in Bangladesh, students of Dhaka University, who were the forerunners of all the movements against authoritarian regimes, lost their only platform for exercising their

democratic rights.

Why have elected governments not been interested in organising DUCSU and hall union elections? Perhaps the answer lies in their policy of controlling and containing the students of Dhaka University, who have always been a major proponent of anti-establishment movements. The elected governments of BNP and Awami League allowed their student wings to establish overwhelming dominance in the university campus to thwart any form of student agitation that could go against their rule.

Consequently, students of their rival groups were evicted from the campus and dormitories often through murderous conflicts. Whenever students from other groups or apolitical students staged any demonstration against an unpopular move of the government, cadres of the parties were unleashed to subdue them ruthlessly. The governments knew very well that had the DUCSU and hall unions been functional, their student wings could not have enjoyed such undisputed dominance on campus.

However, the demand for DUCSU and hall union elections was not forgotten. Time and again, such petitions were

In this regard, we should also remember the lone struggle of a DU student named Walid Ashraf demanding DUCSU elections. From November 25 to December 9, 2017, Walid continued his hunger strike for 15 days demanding DUCSU elections. The VC and some influential teachers of DU broke his hunger strike, assuring him that steps would be taken to hold the elections. Seeing no sign of fulfilment of that assurance, in January and April last year, Walid again staged his lone demonstration, defying threats and harassment by the ruling party cadres. Finally, he was forced to withdraw his sitin protest by the university authority on security grounds.

President Abdul Hamid, the chancellor of the university, has, in several of his convocation speeches, discussed the importance of a functional DUCSU. Nevertheless, the DU authorities did not take any visible step to hold the elections until September 16, 2018. On that day, after a meeting with the student organisations of DU, the VC suddenly announced that elections would be held by March 2019.

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