

After page 3

The confusion over the elections started to clear up as several steps such as amendment of the DUCSU constitution, appointment of returning and presiding officers and the declaration of elections schedules were taken quite promptly in the last two months of this year.

Although students are quite excited about this election, they are also perplexed about the sudden mood swing of the university authorities. Many candidates fear that the university authority now want to hold the elections because measures have already been taken to ensure a landslide victory of the BCL candidates. Their apprehension is not baseless.

The current VC of DU, who will conduct the election as the chief executive of the university and also will be the president of DUCSU, has hopelessly failed to prove his image as a neutral guardian of the students in the last two years. In 2018, when DU students were being assaulted relentlessly by the BCL cadres and by the police during the quota reform movement, he did not take any step to

protect them. Instead, he condemned the quota reformist students and compared them to Taliban militants.

Again, he is not an elected VC either as required by the university act. The act requires that the senate members would elect a panel of three candidates for the VC position. Then, the President will appoint one of them as the VC for the next four years. However, the current VC was appointed on September 4, 2017 on a temporary basis and has not been regularised yet. Chances are high that the VC, who needs the current government's favour to be regularised, might turn the tide of the election in the government's favour.

In fact, he has already taken several steps that has strengthened this possibility. Despite repeated requests from various student platforms to allocate polling centres in the faculty offices, polling centres have been allocated in the university halls—all of which are strongholds of BCL cadres. Obaidul Quader, general secretary of Bangladesh Awami League, delivered statements in support of this move.

In the last 10 years, BCL has effectively

evicted all students, who showed any sign of allegiance to BNP and its allied political parties, from the halls. On January 23, 2018 when students of several left-wing political parties besieged the office of the VC protesting oppression in the campus by BCL, the BCL cadres launched a violent attack on the protesters and 'rescued' the VC from his office, according to media reports. The students who participated in the protest have been evicted from the residential halls by the BCL cadres.

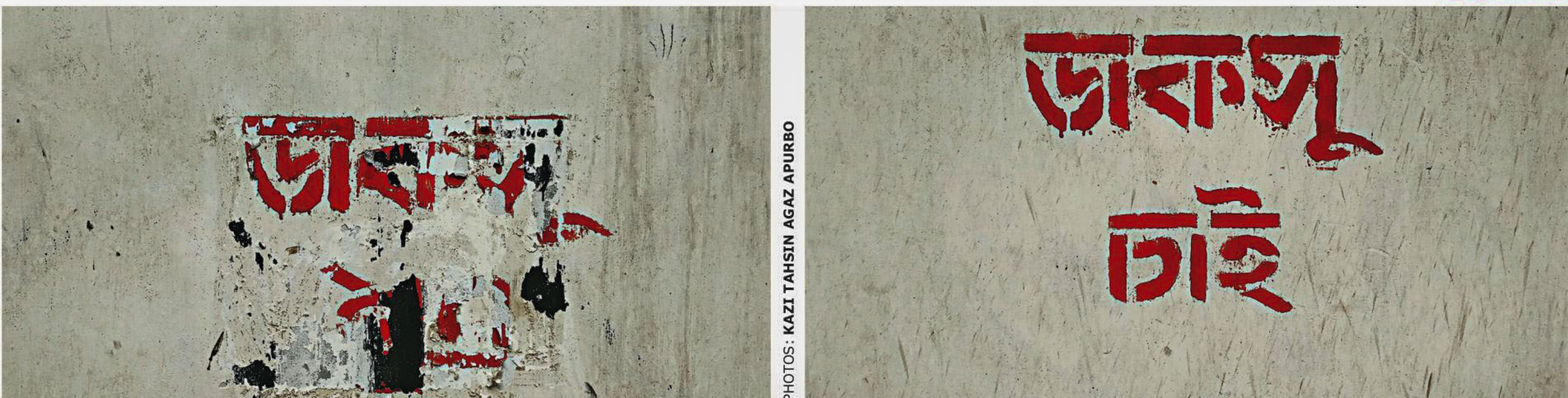
Again, during the quota reform movement, BCL cadres singled out students who participated in the quota-reform movement and drove them out from the halls. And, the DU authorities did not take step to protect them. Candidates from the quota-reformist students' group were also repeatedly assaulted by the BCL cadres during their publicity campaign for the DUCSU elections. In this situation, it is difficult to believe that fair and transparent elections will be conducted in these residential halls of DU where BCL still reigns without a rival.

The sudden reformation of the DUCSU constitution has also prompted questions.

The student organisations recommended that all the students of DU, regular and irregular, should be allowed to participate in the election (as voters and candidates). At first, the five-member committee appointed by the VC to amend the constitution also accepted this recommendation. Ultimately, however, the committee introduced the age limit of 30 to be able to participate in the elections, which allowed all the leaders of BCL to participate but disqualified students of several other organisations particularly of JCD, the arch-rival of BCL.

These facts are tell-tale signs of a manipulated election that might decisively harm Dhaka University's reputation as the most esteemed educational institution of Bangladesh. DUCSU's glorious past is so inseparably connected with the liberation of Bangladesh that after 28 years of painstaking wait, if Dhaka University delivers a sham DUCSU election, it will be disgraceful for the entire nation.

Md Shahnawaz Khan Chandan
can be contacted at
shahnawaz.khan@thedailystar.net



PHOTOS: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

Everything you need to know about DUCSU election

AANILA KISHWAR TARANUM

Earlier this week, I learned that many Dhaka University (DU) students have absolutely no clue what DUCSU is. Some have only seen this name being thrown around in memes, some have seen it on a building on campus, but they're not sure what it means. Many have it confused with political entities—they think that DUCSU is similar to student wings of political parties.

Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU) is meant to be a student governance body. It should act as a bridge between general students and the university authorities, and its purpose is to ensure that students' problems are heard, and solved. In the past, DUCSU was responsible for organising some of DU's biggest cultural programmes, debate and sports competitions. It is not the student wing of a political party, rather it

is a panel of elected leaders who should help students regardless of their personal political identity.

People tend to glorify DU's past, and lament how today's students aren't as spirited as those who once stood up for the country in 1952, '69, '71, and '90. DUCSU leaders had taken centre-stage in all of these movements. Ironically enough, DUCSU elections were regularly held during autocratic regimes, yet stopped soon after the country became fully democratic in 1990.

The last DUCSU panel dissolved in 1992. After 28 long years, on March 11, Dhaka University is about to get back the very union that made the most significant contributions to its glorious past, but a large number of students remain blissfully unaware of the significance of this event. It is time to burst that bubble.

Am I eligible to vote?

This year's election will allow up to MPhil students, aged below 30, who had originally entered the university through admission tests for four-year bachelor's degrees. So if you have already completed a four-year bachelor's degree and moved onto postgrad, you can vote. If you are in the middle of your four-year bachelor's degree, you can vote.

If you have already graduated from the university with an undergrad or postgrad degree, and are no longer actively studying there, you cannot vote. Those who are doing evening, professional, executive, doctorate, diploma, or language courses aren't eligible to vote. You must be affiliated with a DU hall, and possess a hall ID card in order to vote. Check ducsu.du.ac.bd to find your name on the voters list.

I don't have a hall ID card/My ID card has expired

You will find a notice on the website that urges students to renew their hall ID cards before the election. Many students seem to be under the impression that this will be a tiresome, bureaucratic process, and that hall authorities will be reluctant to help out, and so they've decided not to vote.

If you want to renew or obtain an ID card, all you need are your pay-in slips for yearly admission and a stamp-sized picture. Go to the hall office with the necessary documents, and they will specify how much money you'll have to pay. You will receive your ID card with the hall provost's signature within four days, generally.

Continued to page 5