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## Holding students' union elections is a must

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IT IS unacceptable that 38 out of the 42 public universities do not allow student representation in their highest decision-making body, blocking central students' union elections on the campuses. Student leaders of different organisations, as New Age reported on Tuesday, demanded that universities, which do not have student representation in policymaking, should immediately amend their rules as the University of Dhaka is holding the elections to the Dhaka University Central Students' Union and students' union in the halls of residence. It should be mentioned that student organisations have been demanding elections to central students' union in all public universities and government colleges for long while University Grants Commission officials said that if the DUCSU elections were held peacefully, they would call for necessary amendments to the university rules for holding students' union elections in other universities.

According to 1973 orders and laws that govern Dhaka University, Chattogram University, Rajshahi University and Jahangirnagar University, five students nominated by the central students' union of each of these universities would represent students at the respective senates. Despite having no such provision, central students' union elections in government colleges, in Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology and in Bangladesh Agricultural University were regularly held. The elections to the Engineering University Central Students' Union were last held in 2001 and to the Bangladesh Agricultural University Central Students' Union polls in 1998. The Islamic University in Kushtia, set up in 1980, does not allow elected student representation in decision-making although the university registrar said that the administration felt the importance of elected students' representation in decision-making. But he did not hesitate to add that an amendment to the university act was necessary. The Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology registrar said that the students' welfare council was looking into holding the students' union elections. What is deplorable is that Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University of Dinajpur does not allow student politics on the campus. The shocking part is that, as HSTU and Khulna University registrars said, there is no scope for holding students' union elections on their campuses. All university authorities need to realise that in the absence of an elected student representation, senates of the universities make arbitrary decisions which sometimes go against the democratic norms and interest of students; and the grooming up of future politicians is also being hampered in the absence of student unions. All the university-level institutions, therefore, should facilitate students' union elections thinking that students' demand for holding students' union elections cannot be dispensed with.

It is imperative for the authorities concerned to take expeditious steps to make necessary amendments to the university rules of all 38 universities so that holding students' union elections does not face any impediment as this would pave the way for senates of these universities to make sensible decisions without going against the interest of students in future.



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