

# DUCSU polls: Campaigning starts with rallies, tributes

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Candidates allege violations of election code



On the first day of official campaigning for the Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducusu) elections, Chhatra Dal's vice-president candidate Abidul Islam Khan and the left-leaning Protirodh Porshod's general secretary nominee Meghmallar Basu greet each other with smiles and a handshake. The photo was taken in front of the university's Senate building yesterday. Photo: Palash Khan

Campaigning for the Dhaka University Central Students' Union kicked off yesterday with vibrant rallies, tributes, and outreach efforts by major panels and independents across Dhaka University.

However, several candidates accused one another of breaching the election code of conduct.

Chief returning officer Prof Mohammad Zashim Uddin yesterday said they would keep army personnel as a strike force on election day.

He said 471 students were set to run for 28 posts in Ducusu after a total of 28 withdrew their nominations. Nominations of 10 others were rejected.

Candidates and panels started their campaigns on campus yesterday morning, the first day for electioneering, according to the schedule.

Islami Chhatra Shibir-backed Oikkoboddho Shikkharthi Jote began its campaign on the central library premises. Its VP nominee Abu Shadik Kayem claimed that its campaign boards at the Fine Arts Faculty had been vandalised.

"We demand immediate punitive action against those involved," he said.

During a press briefing on Monday, Chhatra Dal-backed panel VP candidate Abidul Islam Khan said, "A journalist is competing in the AF Rahman Hall Union election, and he is blackmailing students who are supporting the Chhatra Dal-backed candidate there."

The journalist in question, Ashiqul Haque Rifat, an independent, lodged a complaint against Abidul with the chief returning officer.

Ashiqul said Abidul was deliberately spreading lies.

Aparajeyo-71 and Oddommo-24 panel called for the disqualification of Shibir-backed candidates from the election. The panel's general secretary nominee, Anamul Hasan Onoy, said allowing Shibir candidates to contest would go against the values of Bangladesh's independence struggle.

"The defeated forces of '71 and '24 -- Shibir and Chhatra League -- must be disqualified," he said.

Meanwhile, Meghmallar Bosu, who is vying for the general secretary post from the Protirodh Porshod, said many candidates were breaching the code of conduct and that the administration was not taking any step against them despite being notified.

"We can walk away if we believe the election is a scam," said Bosu at a press briefing.

Swatantra Shikkharthi Oikko panel launched its campaign by placing wreaths at the Jagannath Hall memorial. Its VP candidate, Umama Fatema, said, "Ducsu polls should be held regularly ... it is the administration's responsibility to ensure that. Our campaign will not disrupt the daily activities of students."

The Gonotantrik Chhatra Sangsad-backed panel began with an outreach programme around 4:30pm.

Alongside these panels, several independents also hit the campaign trail, setting the stage for a competitive election across Dhaka University.

A DU press release after a meeting between the returning officer and candidates, said three-tier security system would be in place on election day.

It said the strike force would be at seven entrances of Dhaka University. "If necessary, the army will enter the campus and take control of the polling centres until the results are announced."

Meghmallar Bosu said, "The police no longer have any credibility. As a result, it may be necessary to deploy the army... Our apprehension is that voters can be intimidated by this, which could reduce turnout."

Abdul Qader, vying for vice president post from Boishommo Biroddhi Shikkharthi Oikya, said, "They have made a decision on the matter without any discussion with us at all. Perhaps they might have some ulterior motives."

Tanvir Baree Hamim, general secretary nominee from JCD backed panel, said, "It [deployment of the army] will instill fear among students...."