

JUCSU elections today after 33yrs

JU Correspondent  11 September, 2025, 00:23

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All preparations have been completed for holding the much-awaited elections to the Jahangirnagar University Central Students' Union and hall unions today after a gap of 33 years.

The elections will be held amid tight security measures on the university campus in Savar, on the outskirts of the capital.

A total of 11,919 registered students are expected to cast their votes to elect their representatives for 25 posts of the JUCSU and 15 posts of each of the 21 hall unions.

Optical Mark Recognition ballots will be used in all 224 booths set up in all students' halls.

Chief election commissioner Professor Md Moniruzzaman said that necessary measures had been taken for holding a fair election.

He said that the voting would begin at 9:00am and continue uninterruptedly until 4:00pm. 'The counting of votes will be completed in the presence of polling agents and the results will be announced at night.'

The elections to the JUCSU are going to be held a day after the Tuesday elections to the Dhaka University Central Students' Union and hall unions.

A total of 179 candidates are contesting for 25 JUCSU posts, including nine for vice-president, nine for general secretary, and 16 for the assistant general secretary post.

Eight panels, backed by different organisations, will participate in the race.

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir-backed Samonnito Shikkharthi Jote, Bangladesh Ganotantrik Chhatra Sangsad-backed Shikkharthi Oiyka Forum, Gano Abhyuthan Rokkha Andolon-backed Sotontro Shikkharthi Jote, eight progressive organisations including a faction of Bangladesh Chhatra Union-backed Samprতির Oikya, another faction of Chhatra Union and Samajtantrik Chhatra Front (Marxist)-backed Sangsaptap Parshad, cultural groups-backed Sotontro Ongikar Parishad, and Samajtantrik Chhatra Front (Leninist) have fielded their panels to vie in the elections.

Sheikh Sadi from JCD, Arifuzzaman Uzzal from Shikkharthi Oiyka Forum, Arifullah Adeeb from Samonnito Shikkharthi Jote, Abdur Rasid Jitu from Sotontro Shikkharthi Jote are among the 10 vice-president candidates.

A left-leaning panel, Samprতির Oikya, however, will have to vie in the elections without any vice-president candidate as authorities cancelled the candidacy of the panel's vice-president aspirant Amartya Ray John, alleging that his regular studentship had expired.

Tanzeela Hossain Baishakhi from JCD, Touhid Md Siam from Shikkharthi Oiyka Forum, and Mazharul Islam from Somannito Shikkharthi Jote are among the nine general secretary candidates.

Independent candidates, including national football player Mahmudul Hasan Kiron, who is running for sports secretary, also gained traction.

The university's 21 residential halls together account for 315 positions, 15 in each of the hall unions.

Of them, 102 candidates face no rivals and will be officially declared elected, while no nominations were filed for 63 seats, leaving only 150 positions to be contested on the election day.

According to a JU public relations office notification, 1500 police personnel, seven platoons of Border Guard Bangladesh, and five platoons of Ansar will be deployed on the campus.

Besides, the members of the Bangladesh Army will be deployed as a 'striking force' outside the campus under the Dhaka district administration.

'The armed forces will work inside the campus if the situation demands', said the chief election commissioner of JUCSU polls, Professor Md Moniruzzaman.

Restrictions on public access to the campus will remain in force, with only individuals carrying valid university identity cards or special passes will be allowed entry.

Eight check-posts have been installed at the main entry points, while mobile patrols and CCTV surveillance will remain active.

The university administration imposed restrictions on public entry into the campus from Wednesday evening and special shuttle services have been arranged to transport voters.

Additional Superintendent of Police Shahinur Kabir of the Savar Circle said that a 'security blanket' would cover the campus throughout the election day.

Vice-chancellor Professor Kamrul Ahsan said on Wednesday that the authorities had completed all logistical and security preparations to hold the elections in a festive mood.

During the electioneering, many candidates alleged irregularities in preparing the voter list, while female contenders said that they had to face cyber-harassment.

A group of left and progressive students kept the vice-chancellor and election commissioners confined inside the senate hall Tuesday overnight, demanding the reinstatement of Chhatra Union leader

Amartya Ray John as a vice-president candidate.

The students left the senate hall at about 5:00am on Wednesday.

The authorities initially announced Amartya a valid vice-president candidate and he began his election campaign, but, after over a week, the authorities cancelled his candidacy, alleging that his regular studentship had expired.

Amartya later moved to the High Court that, on Tuesday, reinstated his candidacy, but responding to an appeal filed by the university authorities, the Supreme Court on the same day stayed the High Court order and upheld the university's decision.

During the Awami League regime, Amartya was expelled by the university authorities in February 2024 allegedly for drawing anti-rape graffiti on the portrait of the country's founding president, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He got back his studentship after the fall of the Awami League regime.

His lawyer argued in court that his client was still a regular student, as the university had previously allowed him to appear in examinations following an earlier High Court directive.

Besides, the time of his remaining expulsion should be deducted to find him a regular student.

The protesters who confined the VC and the election commissioners accused the administration of misleading the court.

According to the protesters, the administration told the court that ballot papers excluding Amartya had already been printed and the election date would have to be deferred if Amartya's candidature was reinstated.

They claimed that the ballot papers were not printed until now and wanted to know whether the university authorities would hold the elections with ballot papers having the names of those who failed in the dope test, samples of which was taken only a day before the elections.

They alleged that the cancellation of Amartya's candidacy was a planned one as those who protested against Amartya and demanded his expulsion during the Awami League regime were now in the administration and the election commission.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Kamrul Ahsan said, 'This is a court verdict. We cannot change it.'

The election marks the return of JUCSU after more than three decades, with the last elections held in 1992.

The elected JUCSU body will send five representatives to the university's 93-member senate, potentially restoring a student voice in governance after more than three decades.