

RUCSU elections: Female candidates press seven-point demand on cyber safety

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Women candidates contesting the coming long-awaited student union elections in Rajshahi University elections on Friday raised a seven-point demand charter on comprehensive cyber safety to protect students particularly for women from online harassment.

They made the demands at a press conference at the university's Transport Market on Friday afternoon.

The demands, raised by women candidates contesting the Rajshahi University Central Students' Union, hall unions, and senate student representative elections, include adoption of a full-fledged cyber security policy with code of conduct for online activity; fact-checking protocols and penalties with specific provisions for women's safety; ensuring gender-friendly campus infrastructure with adequate lighting, CCTV cameras and security patrols; and formation of a 24/7 cyber safety and gender response cell comprising students, teachers, IT experts and psychologists to investigate complaints.

Their other demands are—mandatory ID card or document verification for membership in the university official groups and continuous monitoring to remove fake accounts; introduction of a privacy protection regime with strict penalties for misuse or distortion of personal data; and a ban on blanket surveillance; regular training and certificate courses to enhance digital literacy and cyber safety awareness among students and local residents; and verified social media pages for each faculty, hall and administrative unit to ensure professional and reliable information flow.

In a written statement, RUCSU vice-president candidate Tasin Khan said that there was no clear cyber policy ensuring stakeholder security in the university's online and social media platforms.

'Misleading information, rumours, defamation and personal attacks are being spread through Facebook groups, pages and chats opened in the university's name,' she alleged.

Women students' photos, videos and personal data were being used or distorted without consent, with sexually suggestive comments and posts, she further said.

Tasin alleged that despite repeated complaints, the university administration had failed to act.

'Instead, reckless steps, such as, publishing voters' lists with students' phone numbers have made us even more insecure,' she added.

Among others, women's affairs secretary candidate Samsad Jahan, assistant women's affairs secretary candidate Nadia Haque, assistant environment and welfare secretary candidate Lubna Sharmin, July-36 Hall vice-president candidate Humaira, Taposhi Rabeya Hall VP candidate Afia Khatun, July-36 Hall literary secretary candidate Su-Probha Islam and general secretary candidate Mohima Islam were present at the press conference.

According to the election office, 260 contestants will vie for 23 posts at RUCSU with 19 of them are set to contest for the post of vice-president, 14 for general secretary, and 16 for assistant general secretary.

A total of 60 candidates will vie for five posts of senate representatives in the elections, slated for September 25.

The final list of candidates will be published on September 14.