

# Shibir bags GS, majority posts in JUCSU polls

Independent candidate clinches VP post

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*Abdur Rasid Zitu (left) and Mazharul Islam (right). | UNB photo.*

Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir, student wing of the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, swept most posts in the Jahangirnagar University Central Students' Union in the elections held on Thursday, marked by widespread mismanagement and boycott by several panels.

According to the official results announced on Saturday, two days after the polling, Shibir-backed Samonnito Shikharthi Jote secured 20 out of the 25 JUCSU executive posts.

Chief election commissioner Md Moniruzzaman declared the results at about 5:10pm on Saturday at the university senate hall, more than 48 hours after Thursday's balloting.

Meanwhile, JUCSU election commission member secretary AKM Rashidul Alam and election commissioner Professor Lutful Elahi, among others, were present during the announcement of the results.

Earlier, Shibir secured most posts in the Dhaka University Students' Union elections held on September 9.

While Shibir-backed Samonnito Shikkharthi Jote captured the lion's share of posts, it failed to clinch the crucial vice-president position, which went to independent candidate Abdur Rashid Zitu.

Zitu, contesting from the Swatantra Shikkharthi Sommilon panel and supported by Gano Abhyuthan Rakkha Andolan, won 3,334 votes against the nearest contender Shibir nominee Arif Ullah, who polled 2,392.

Once an activist of the now-banned Bangladesh Chhatra League's Rabindranath Tagore Hall unit, Zitu emerged past year as a coordinator of Student Against Discrimination movement before forming his own platform.

'This win belongs to all independent-minded students who rejected both partisan control and electoral irregularities,' Zitu told reporters after the results were announced.

Despite the loss of the vice-presidency, Shibir bagged almost every other major portfolio, including the GS post.

Shibir-backed Samonnito Shikkharthi Jote candidate Mazharul Islam secured the position by defeating Touhid Md Siam of Bangladesh Ganatantrik Chhatra Sangsad-backed Shikkharthi Oikya Forum with a margin of 2,692 votes.

Shibir's Ferdous Al Hasan and Ayesha Siddiqua Meghla won assistant general secretary (male and female) positions, defeating rivals from Ganatantrik Chhatra Sangsad and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal

respectively.

Shibir also captured the secretary posts for transport and communication, health and food security, drama, literature and publication, ICT and library, education and research, and nature and environmental conservation, along with most assistant secretary positions.

It secured two of the three reserved male executive seats and all the three female reserved posts.

Among the winners, other than Shibir candidates, independent candidate and national footballer Mahmudul Hasan Kiron secured the sports secretary slot with the highest number of 5,758 votes.

Digital content creator Muhibullah Sheikh, another independent, popular among students for producing remake versions of hit films such as Manpura and 12th Fail, won the cultural affairs secretary post.

Ganatantrik Chhatra Sangsad-backed Shikkharthi Oikya Forum managed to have just two posts: Ahsan Labib as social welfare affairs secretary and Mohammad Ali Chisti as an executive member.

Panels backed by progressive student organisations and by Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, the student wing of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, failed to win any positions after boycotting the polls.

Five of the eight contesting panels — including JCD, Sampritis Oikya (a coalition of eight progressive groups), two factions of Bangladesh Chhatra Union, and Samajtantrik Chhatra Front (Marxist and Leninist)-backed—pulled out on the polling day.

They demanded a new commission and a fresh election schedule, alleging bias and structural irregularities.

The boycotting panels accused the commission of using ballot papers and Optical Mark Recognition machines supplied by a company allegedly linked to the Jamaat-e-Islami.

Although the commission later scrapped machine counting and shifted to manual tallies, the boycotting panels said that the change itself was irregular and created new risks of manipulation.

JCD VP candidate Sheikh Sadi Hasan alleged that Shibir activists created an atmosphere of fear in polling centres and claimed up to 20 per cent of ballots had been pre-marked.

Three BNP-leaning teachers who were serving as polls monitors — Nazrul Islam of mathematics, Shamima Sultana of Bangla, and Nahreen Islam Khan of geography and environment — resigned before the voting closed, citing partisan influence and irregularities.

Two election commissioners, Mafruhi Satter and Rizwana Karim Snighdha, also quit in protest, alleging that other commissioners obstructed efforts to ensure transparency.

Despite the boycotts, one BNP-backed candidate, Anjuman Ara Ikra, who contested for assistant general secretary (female), urged students in a Facebook post to 'accept the outcome in the greater interest of the student body'.

The Election commission reported that 7,934 out of the 11,747 registered students voted across 21 halls, marking a 67 per cent turnout.

Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Hall saw the highest turnout at over 80 per cent, while Nawab Faizunnesa Hall reported the lowest at 44 per cent.

The vote counting, initially planned to be conducted at individual halls, was moved to the university's senate hall, causing delays, overcrowding and heavy strain on staff.

Faculty members said that the centralised counting process was unnecessary and contributed to disorganisation.

Tensions worsened when assistant professor Jannatul Ferdous, serving as a polling officer, died on duty on Friday amid exhaustion from what colleagues described as 'inhuman pressure'.

During the announcement of results, the commission observed a one-minute silence to pay tributes to her.

'If counting had been conducted with machines, perhaps we would not have lost our colleague Jannatul,' said Professor Sultana Akter, warden of Nawab Foyzunnesa Hall and returning officer for that centre.

During the official announcement at the senate hall on Saturday at 5:10 pm, chief election commissioner Md Moniruzzaman denied accusations of bias.

'If any inquiry proves that I, along with my commission colleagues, acted partiality, I will resign from teaching and forgo my pension benefits,' Moniruzzaman declared.

Election commission member secretary AKM Rashidul Alam defended the process: 'We acted swiftly on minor irregularities that some groups tried to portray as massive. The commission and its staff worked under immense pressure during the manual counting.'

This year's JUCSU elections were the first in 33 years, the last being held in 1992 before unrest and political interference suspended the process for decades.

In total, 178 candidates contested for 25 posts from eight panels, including nine for vice-president and nine for general secretary.

Professor Kabir Hossain of JU biochemistry department said that the polls were significant not only for student politics but also for national political dynamics, given the influence of university campuses on Bangladesh's broader political landscape.