

Rucu candidates doubt participatory polls amid strike by teachers, staff

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Classes, exams remain suspended; complete shutdown from tomorrow



Photo: Star

The ongoing strike enforced by teachers, officers, and employees of Rajshahi University has raised serious concerns about participation of the students in the upcoming Rucu and hall union elections, scheduled for September 25.

Teachers and staffers started their daylong work abstention this morning, halting classes and examinations on RU campus.

They announced the work abstention yesterday to protest an alleged attack on the teachers during a scuffle with students who were demonstrating against reinstatement of the "ward quota", an institutional benefit for offspring of the teachers and staff.

While talking to The Daily Star, Masud Rana, treasurer of the RU Officers' Association, said they will go for a complete shutdown from tomorrow if their demands were not met. He, however, informed that the Rucusu election will remain out of the purview of the shutdown.

Irfan Tamim, independent senate member candidate, said, "If the work abstention continues, a participatory election will not be possible. Without classes and exams, most students will return home. These are the students who would have voted regardless of political affiliations. Their absence will benefit those with group-based vote banks."

Tasin Khan, vice-president candidate of Sorbojonin Shikkharthi Parishad, panel, said, "The environment for election at the university has been destroyed already. Students come here for classes and exams, not for elections. This is part of university administration. If a complete shutdown begins tomorrow, why will students stay on campus? I would say the administration should not hold this farcical election but rather ensure a proper one."



Photo: Star

Director of Physical Education Department, Rokhsana Begum, said, "Students came here to study and do research, not to fight. The institutional benefits we are demanding exist everywhere else. If they want to cancel it, they should cancel it everywhere first, and then here."

RU Officers' Association President Moktar Hossain said, "We also want a fair election. That's why we kept Rucusu out of the strike. We will provide the required manpower for the polls. But classes, exams, academic and administrative activities will remain off."

RU Pro-VC Farid Uddin Khan said, "The strike will certainly have some impact on the election. I heard officers have said that Rucsu is out of purview of the strike. But we cannot bring manpower from outside; our teachers, officers, and employees are our only workforce. We hope they will help us conduct the election properly."

During a visit, these correspondents saw officers and staff staging demonstrations at Buddhijibi Chattar this morning. Offices of the departments were found locked. Campaigning by a few candidates was visible in some corners of the campus, but much less compared to other days.