

# Printing place does not affect fairness of polls: DU VC

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*Dhaka University vice-chancellor Niaz Ahmed Khan | File photo*

Dhaka University authorities on Sunday admitted that ballot papers for the recently held Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU) and hall union elections were printed in Nilkhet, following widespread criticism.

Vice-chancellor Niaz Ahmed Khan, however, claimed that the location or number of printed ballots did not compromise the fairness of the polls.

‘The ballot paper printing place or number in no way affects the fairness of the election,’ Niaz told a press conference at the Abdul Matin Chowdhury Virtual Classroom, three days after a television report revealed that DUCSU ballot papers were printed at an unprotected press in Gausul Azam Market, Nilkhet, near the campus.

Reading out a written statement, the VC did not name the vendors but said the printing work had been awarded through a tender. Due to the large number of voters and time constraints, an associate institution was also engaged under the same contract.

‘The associate vendor did not inform the university authorities about printing ballot papers in Nilkhet,’ Niaz said.

He explained that ballot preparation involved multiple stages—printing, cutting to specific dimensions, applying security codes, and pre-scanning through optical mark recognition machines to ensure machine readability. Ballots became valid for voting only after being signed by the concerned returning officers.

Quoting the associate vendor’s written explanation, Niaz said 22 reams of paper were used to print 88,000 ballots in Nilkhet. After cutting and pre-scanning, 86,243 ballots were sealed and delivered, while the extras were destroyed.

Admitting the situation had caused embarrassment, Niaz said the university would take action against the vendor for failing to inform the authorities.

The September 9 elections—held after a six-year gap—were won by the Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir-backed panel, which secured 23 of the 28 posts, including those of vice-president, general secretary and assistant general secretary. The polls were marred by allegations of rigging, irregularities, and violations of the electoral code of conduct.

According to reports, MRM Engineering and Anza Corporation printed around 86,000 and 153,000 ballot papers respectively at unprotected presses for the polls.

Several student panels, including those backed by Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, Boishommo Birodhi Sikkharthi Sangsad, Swatantra Sikkharthi Oikyo, and Bangladesh Students’ Union, earlier raised

allegations over the printing process.