

# Enthusiasm runs high as RUCSU polls held after 35 years

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*Students stand in a queue to cast their votes in RUCSU polls | New Age photo*

Voting in the long-awaited Rajshahi University Central Students' Union (RUCSU), hall unions, and senate student representative elections began at 9:00am on Thursday at seventeen polling centres across the campus in a peaceful and festive atmosphere.

The elections are being held after 35 years, as the last RUCSU polls took place in 1990, when Ruhul Kabir Rizvi—now the senior joint secretary general of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party—was elected vice-president, and Ruhul Quddus Babu was elected general secretary.

‘Voting will continue until 4:00pm without any break,’ said chief election commissioner Professor F Nazrul Islam, adding that 28,901 students are expected to cast their votes.

From early morning, students were seen arriving at polling centres in high spirits to exercise their voting rights. Long queues formed in front of several centres as voters patiently waited for their turn.

After casting his vote at Sher-e-Bangla Fazlul Haque Polling Centre, Imtiaz Hossain, a fresher from the Islamic Studies department, told New Age that he was delighted to vote for the first time.

‘We want the university authorities to hold the RUCSU elections every year so that students can choose their preferred leaders,’ he said, expressing hope that the polls would end peacefully with cooperation from all parties.

A large number of law enforcement personnel—including members of the police, Border Guard Bangladesh, Rapid Action Battalion, and volunteers from the Bangladesh National Cadet Corps—were deployed across the campus, polling centres, and entry points to ensure security.

Security personnel were seen checking valid identity cards and passes at different entry points, as the university authorities restricted public entry to the campus for security reasons.

Nazmul Hassan, additional police commissioner (crime) of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police, said about 2,300 police personnel, six platoons of BGB, and twelve platoons of RAB had been deployed to maintain order.

Inside the polling centres, teachers serving as presiding and assistant presiding officers, along with volunteers, guided voters through the process. Voters were required to show their university ID card, departmental or hall ID, library card, or payslip before entering the booths.

A total of 247 candidates are contesting 23 RUCSU posts, while 597 candidates are vying in 17 residential hall union elections and 58 candidates are competing for five Senate representative positions.

Besides independent contenders, nine panels backed by various student organisations are taking part in the polls. These include Oikyoboddho Notun Projonmo (backed by Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal), Sammilita Shikkharthi Oikyo (backed by Islami Chhatra Shibir), Aparajeyo 71 (backed by a faction of Chhatra Union), RUCSU for Radical Change (backed by Chhatra Odhikar Parishad and Chhatra Federation), Ganotantrik Shikkharthi Parishad (backed by Ganotantrik Chhatra Jote), Swacheton Shikkharthi Parishad (backed by Islami Chhatra Andolan), Sarbojanin Shikkharthi Sangsad (backed by United Students' Democratic Forum), Adhipatyabirodhi Okya (backed by former Students Against Discrimination leaders), and Satantra Shikkharthi Parishad (backed by independent candidates).