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Professor Farhana Ferdousi, returning officer of the hall, claimed that 2,607 ballot papers were snatched away by the students. Polls at both the halls remain suspended till 3pm.

#### NUR, LITON ASSAULTED

At 11:30am Nurul Haq Nur, vice president (VP) candidate from the quota reformist panel went to visit Ruqayyah Hall.

According to his followers, he was assaulted by BCL activists and lost consciousness on the spot. Nur was immediately taken to the hospital where he remained for the next 24 hours. Liton Nandi, another VP candidate from the leftist panel, was assaulted by BCL cadres while he was visiting a polling centre at Mohsin Hall. Five of his followers were also injured during the attack. All of them needed treatment at the university's medical centre. Independent candidates also alleged repeated assaults and harassment by BCL activists during the Ruqayyah Hall and BKFH incidents. However, a case has been filed against Nur, Liton and 38 others for allegedly attacking the provost of Ruqayyah Hall, Professor Zeenat Huda.

#### UNIQUE FEAT OF VOTE RIGGING

The voting atmosphere at the male dormitories also started to deteriorate after



Candidates from the left, quota reformists and independent panels announcing their boycott of the DUCSU elections

BNP-backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal's (JCD) panel also gave the same announcement. All the panels called general strike and appealed to students to boycott all classes and exams on March 12. After the announcement, the followers of the panels formed a procession and moved towards the office of the vice chancellor and staged a sit-in procession demanding renewed election. On the other hand, BCL leaders claimed that the leftist and quota reformist leaders were spreading rumours and were trying to destabilise the university.

#### AN OVERJOYED, INDIFFERENT VC

At around 2pm, the Vice Chancellor (VC) of Dhaka University, Professor Dr Md Akhtaruzzaman, appeared before the media and expressed his satisfaction with the elections. He said, "I praise the students for their attitude towards democracy and co-existence." He repeatedly stated that the overall voting atmosphere was completely peaceful and students voted for their candidates freely and fairly, terming irregularities as isolated incidents.

#### FUTILE ATTEMPT TO RECOVER THE ELECTION

From 3pm, voting started again in Ruqayyah Hall and BKFH, which continued up to 5pm. However, in Ruqayyah Hall, the provost along with BCL activists were seen calling students to vote for the BCL panel. Very few students were seen responding to their call. The situation was similar at BKFH as all the panels except BCL had boycotted the election by that time. Eight teachers, who served as the election observers, appealed to re-arrange the election due to irregularities.

#### BCL'S PREMATURE CELEBRATION

3:15pm onwards, vote-counts started in 16 residential halls except Ruqayyah Hall and BKFH. After counting all the hall union votes, the VC, the president of DUCSU, was supposed to declare the result of the central students' union. From 6pm, the results from different halls started to come out and as expected, BCL's overwhelming victory in the hall unions became apparent. Out of 18 halls, BCL's hall vice president candidates won in 12 halls and its general secretary candidates won in 14 halls. BCL supporters flooded social media giving advanced congratulations to their central students' union VP candidate Rezwanul Haque Chowdhury Shovon and GS candidate Golam Rabbani for their imminent success. However, it took till 11pm to get results from all the

halls, which delayed the vote-count for the central students' union.

#### STUNNED BCL'S VICIOUS RESPONSE

After more than four hours of anxious waiting, the result of the central students' union was declared at 3:15am, stunning BCL activists. Nurul Huq Nur, hospitalised at that time, was declared the VP of DUCSU. BCL activists, gathered at the senate building of DU, reacted violently and boycotted the result right in front of the VC. They kept the VC's office and residence surrounded till 1pm on March 12 and rocked the campus with processions after processions calling the elections "a sham" and chanting slogans that they were boycotting. However, at 1pm, Golam Rabbani, who had been "elected" as the GS of DUCSU, told media that BCL did not want re-election in the hall unions where it achieved landslide victories, but wanted re-election only for the VP post. Throughout the day on March 12, BCL cadres launched vicious attacks against the activists of the quota reform movement and even beat up Nurul Huq Nur again, in front of the journalists.

#### A HASTY STEP TO PACIFY AGITATING STUDENTS?

Leftist student organisations, independent panels and even quota reformist leaders criticised the result stating that had fair elections taken place, the entire panel of Nurul Huq Nur would have won. Many of them claimed that the students who voted for Nur must also have voted for his panels; however, his GS and other panel members did not win which implied the elections had been rigged.

At around 4pm, a declaration from BCL's VP candidate Rezwanul Huq Chowdhury Shovon and Nurul Huq Nur ultimately calmed the situation. Nurul Huq Nur agreed to accept the election results and withdrew his initial declaration of a general strike in the university. Rezwanul also accepted the elections and greeted Nurul in a joint press conference, thus apparently ending a two-day long deadlock in Dhaka University. However, demands of the leftist student organisations, JCD and independent candidates remain unsolved as they are yet to accept the election results (till March 12, 2019 when this issue went to print) and are still stuck to their declaration of implementing a strike across the university.

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Students showing ballot papers all marked for BCL which they found in an unclaimed sack.

11pm. An abnormally long queue and extremely slow voting stirred suspicion and agitation among the students. Many students alleged that they could not cast their vote even after waiting for four to five hours in the queue. In all the male dormitories, BCL cadres were found forming artificial queues to decelerate the voting process. BCL activists, stationed to maintain order in the queue, assaulted the agitated students on several occasions. In retaliation, students also chased several BCL cadres and found out that they were not students of DU. Infuriated students handed the outsiders over to the proctorial team after beating them up. At 2pm sharp, all the queues in the male dormitories were disbanded by the DU administration, aided by BCL activists, leaving thousands of students unable to vote for their preferred candidate.

#### BOYCOTT AND STRIKE

At around 1pm, candidates from the left, quota reformists and independent panels called a press conference at Madhur canten and announced that they had boycotted the election. After half an hour,