

Leading insts withdrawing

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agricultural universities.

GENERAL CLUSTER

Jagannath University, which spearheaded the first cluster admission test, has formally withdrawn from the system and announced its 2024-25 undergraduate admission circular independently.

Prof Md Rezaul Karim described the cluster system as an initiative introduced with good intentions but marred by poor planning.

At Khulna University, Vice Chancellor Prof Rezaul Karim said students and faculty alike have opted out of the system.

"KU now handles five batches simultaneously, instead of the usual four, causing a session jam and disrupting the academic calendar," he said.

While acknowledging the university's recent progress in academic excellence, he warned that the flawed admission process risks undoing these gains. "We are also considering holding our own admission tests," he added.

Meanwhile, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Comilla University, Barishal University, and Noakhali Science and Technology University have also decided to hold independent admission tests.

Prof Md Anwarul Azim

Akhand, Convenor of the GST Integrated Admission Test Committee and VC of Maulana Bhashani Science and Technology University, expressed hope that the cluster exam could still proceed with the remaining universities.

He said no official discussions have taken place yet as the current academic year is still ongoing. A proper decision from the government is awaited.

ENGINEERING CLUSTER

The engineering cluster, consisting of Khulna University of Engineering and Technology, Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology, and Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology, is also dissolving.

KUET announced its independent admission circular on November 17, scheduling its test for January 11, 2025.

Following this, RUET called an emergency meeting to discuss its participation.

"With KUET's departure, the cluster effectively no longer exists," said RUET Vice-Chancellor Prof SM Razzak.

CUET has yet to finalise its stance, but said the departure of two major universities has left the future uncertain.

AGRICULTURAL CLUSTER

In the agricultural cluster,

admission processes for nine universities under the 2023-24 academic year are still ongoing, leaving decisions for 2024-25 pending.

Bangladesh Agricultural University has proposed holding its own tests, as recommended by its Dean Council. However, no official circular has been published yet.

Meanwhile, a group of students preparing for the 2024-25 admission tests submitted a memorandum to the education ministry, urging measures to preserve the cluster system.

They said without it, their application fees and travel expenses would rise substantially.

UGC's POSITION

University Grants Commission (UGC) Chairman Prof SMA Fayed said the UGC has no legal authority to prevent universities from conducting independent admission tests.

Prof Fayed suggested that universities opting out should consider holding tests in divisional cities and keeping application fees low.

"We will monitor the decisions of other universities and coordinate the next steps. However, universities should prioritise students' convenience and consult all stakeholders before finalising their decisions," he added.

AL's election

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The Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad-led commission presided over the one-sided January 2014 election, in which 153 out of 300 lawmakers were elected unopposed after the opposition, including the BNP, boycotted the vote. The Awami League-led alliance secured more than two-thirds of seats in all three general elections under the Hasina government.

During the discussion, participants unanimously called for a caretaker government, Badiul said.

"The Election Commission must be made independent and strengthened," he added. There was also widespread support for reinstating the "no" vote option and promoting internal democracy within political parties.

If democracy is not established within political parties, it cannot be

expected to flourish at the national level," he added.

Proposals for direct presidential elections and direct elections to reserved seats for women in parliament were also raised by academics and citizens.

Jahangirnagar University Prof Naseem Akhter Hussain suggested a bicameral legislature and an increase in reserved seats for women to 100.

Prof Al Masud Hasanuzzaman of the same university

discussed various aspects of the proportional representation system, as well as issues such as proper constituency demarcation, transparent party funding, and the involvement of all stakeholders in ensuring fair elections.

Film star and Nirapad Sarak Chai Chairman Ilias Kanchan also proposed reintroducing the "no" vote system and urged a swift resolution of election-related cases.

JU students continue

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Nazmul Hossain Nirob, a first-year marketing student.

The protesters also cut off the electricity supply to the administrative building. Around 11:30am, they marched through the Business Studies building, gathered there briefly, and then returned to the administrative building, where they staged a sit-in protest. As of noon, the sit-in was still ongoing.

On Thursday, students locked the Business Studies Faculty building while pressing their 11-point demands, including greater safety measures on campus.

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