

RUCSU POLLS Deadline for nomination paper collection extended

Potential delays in holding election spark protests

NUR AHSAN MRIDUL

The Rajshahi University Central Students' Union (Rucusu) election is set to be delayed as the deadline for collecting nomination forms has been extended till August 31. The last day was yesterday.

It means that the polls will not be held on September 15 as announced earlier.

The decision has sparked fresh protests on campus. Students gathered yesterday evening and marched through several streets, demanding that the polls be held as per the schedule.

Chief Election Commissioner Prof F Nazrul Islam said the extension to nomination collection deadline was required because he has taken charge recently, and it takes more time to complete dope tests of candidates and meet various demands of students.

He added that a new date for voting would be announced later.

In the first three days, 168 students collected nominations for 23 central posts. Seven applied for vice-president, five for general secretary, and seven for assistant general secretary. Nineteen students submitted nominations for five Senate seats. At the half level, 363 forms were collected for union posts.

Prof Nazrul also announced that polling centres will be shifted from residential halls to academic buildings. A cyber cell will be set up to monitor activities. Photos will be attached to the voter list. First-year students, admitted after the election schedule was announced, will not be eligible to vote.

Salahuddin Ammar, a former coordinator of RU unit of Students Against Discrimination (SAD), told The Daily Star that the administration's explanation was not convincing. He said the election had already been rescheduled three times and it seemed that the authorities were working to benefit one group.

Shah Poran Likhon, a candidate for assistant general secretary, said past governments had delayed elections to favour certain organisations, and the same thing was happening now.

Mostakur Rahman Zahid, vice-president candidate and Islami Chhatra Shibir's Rucusu unit president, called the decision irrational.

Former SAD coordinator Tasin Khan warned that students would announce tougher programmes if the authorities failed to ensure transparency.

Rucusu CEC Prof Nazrul denied the allegation of making decisions to favour anyone. "These steps are only to ensure a fair and transparent election. I believe students will get their answers once the election is held."

Asked about the new date for voting, he said, "We will hold a meeting tomorrow [today]. The decision will come after that."

Rohingyas may go hungry after November: WFP

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Scalpelli stressed that continued support is essential as the Rohingyas cannot simply stop eating after November. "They want to return home, but until safe and voluntary repatriation is possible, they must be able to eat every day."

A Rohingya man at a food distribution centre said the support is already too little. Requesting anonymity, he said, "Families survive on this little amount by cutting meals and going into debt. If this falls further, malnutrition will rise and unrest will grow inside the camps."

BANGLADESH CAN'T SHOULDER ALONE

Chief Adviser's Deputy Press Secretary Azad Majumder, who briefed the media during the visit, said nearly 100 delegates, including diplomats, UN officials, and NGO representatives, toured hospitals and distribution centres.

"What they have seen is that support for the Rohingya is shrinking by the day. WFP has informed them that if no new funding arrives, food assistance will stop after November. That means potential chaos in the camps, even famine," he said.

Azad also said the current ration is already inadequate and if it is reduced



Palestinians flee their homes in Gaza City's Zeitoun neighbourhood on August 26, 2025. Israel's defence minister on June 20, approved a military plan for the conquest of Gaza City, authorising the call-up of about 60,000 reservists, piling pressure on Hamas as mediators push for a ceasefire.

PHOTO: AFP

1 in 4 people lack access to safe drinking water: UN

AFP, Geneva

More than two billion people worldwide still lack access to safely-managed drinking water, the United Nations said Tuesday, warning that progress towards universal coverage was moving nowhere near quickly enough.

The UN's health and children's agencies said a full one in four people globally were without access to safely-managed drinking water last year, with over 100 million people remaining reliant on drinking surface water -- for example from rivers, ponds and canals.

The World Health Organization and UNICEF said lagging water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services were leaving billions at greater risk of disease.

They said in a joint study that the world remains far off track to reach a target of achieving universal coverage of such services by 2030.

Instead, that goal "is increasingly out of reach", they warned.

"Water, sanitation and hygiene are not privileges: they are basic human rights," said the WHO's environment chief Ruediger Krech.



"We must accelerate action, especially for the most marginalised communities."

The report looked at five levels of drinking water services.

Safely managed, the highest, is defined as drinking water accessible on the premises, available when needed and free from faecal and priority chemical contamination.

The four levels below are basic (improved water taking less than 30 minutes to access), limited (improved, but taking longer), unimproved (for example, from an unprotected well or spring), and surface water.

DRINKING OF SURFACE WATER DECLINES

Since 2015, 961 million people have gained access to safely-managed drinking water, with coverage rising from 68 percent to 74 percent, the report said.

Of the 2.1 billion people last year still lacking safely managed drinking water services, 106 million used surface water -- a decrease of 61 million over the past decade.

The number of countries that have eliminated the use of surface water for drinking meanwhile increased from 142 in 2015 to 154 in 2024, the study said.

In 2024, 89 countries had universal access to at least basic drinking water, of which 31 had universal access to safely managed services.

The 28 countries where more than one in four people still lacked basic services were largely concentrated in Africa.

GOALS SLIPPING FROM REACH

As for sanitation, 1.2 billion people have gained access to safely managed sanitation services since 2015, with coverage rising from 48 percent to 58 percent, the study found.

These are defined as improved facilities that are not shared with other households, and where excreta are safely disposed of in situ or removed and treated off-site.

The number of people practising open defecation has decreased by 429 million to 354 million 2024, or to four percent of the global population.

Since 2015, 1.6 billion people have gained access to basic hygiene services -- a hand washing facility with soap and water at home -- with coverage increasing from 66 percent to 80 percent, the study found.

"When children lack access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene, their health, education, and futures are put at risk," warned Cecilia Scharp, UNICEF's director for WASH.

"These inequalities are especially stark for girls, who often bear the burden of water collection and face additional barriers during menstruation."

"At the current pace, the promise of safe water and sanitation for every child is slipping further from reach."

Man held over rape of girl with disability

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Police have arrested a man on charges of raping a teenage girl with intellectual disability in Bandarban's Larna upazila on Sunday.

Md Imran, 27, was arrested on Monday after the victim's father filed a case in connection with the incident earlier in the day, according to Sub-Inspector Ahmed Morshed, officer-in-charge of the Aziznagar police outpost.

"The accused was brought to the police outpost," he said.

Quoting locals, police said the victim was alone at home at the time of the incident. Her father was away for work at the time, and her mother was away at a Chittagong hospital for the delivery of a baby of the victim's elder sister. Finding her alone at home he raped the girl.

The matter came to light the following day after the victim confided the matter to a neighbour. As the news of the incident spread through the community, locals and an union parishad member detained the perpetrator and handed him over to police.

"I learned about the rape yesterday [Monday] evening. Some of us, with the help of local residents, detained the suspect, Imran, and handed him over to police," the UP member said.

Acting officer-in-charge of Larna Police Station Tofazzal Hossain said, "The victim will be sent to a Bandarban hospital for medical examination today [yesterday]. Following completion of legal procedures, the accused will be presented before the court," he added.

Man sentenced to death for raping, killing child

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A Cox's Bazar court yesterday sentenced a man to death for raping and murdering a six-year-old girl in Moheshkhali upazila in 2022.

Judge Mohammad Osman Gani of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-2 delivered the verdict in presence of the convict, Md Soleman, of Chakmarkul area in Teknaf's Whykong union, confirmed Public Prosecutor Mosharraf Hossain.

According to court records, on November 30, 2022, after returning from school, the victim, a class-1 student, was playing in the yard of her home when Soleman lured her to his house with snacks and raped her.

When the child lost consciousness, he placed her inside a suitcase and took her to the Koriyaria embankment in Ujantia union of Pekua upazila.

After opening the suitcase, he found the girl dead and buried the body. Later that night, he phoned the victim's family, claiming she had been kidnapped and demanded Tk 5,00,000 ransom. The family filed a general diary with police, and Soleman was arrested on December 3, according to case details.

State prosecutor Mir Mosharraf Hossain Titu said, "For such a heinous crime, the only real punishment can be the death penalty."

"This verdict will send a message to society that anyone committing such brutal crimes -- rape, murder, and abduction -- will face this kind of punishment," the prosecutor said.

The victim's father expressed satisfaction with the ruling.

Families leave Gaza City

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Tuesday, local health authorities said, including 18 people around Gaza City.

Around half of the enclave's two million people currently live in Gaza City, with several thousand already moved westward, pouring into the heart of the city and along the coast.

Others have ventured further south to central Gaza and the coastal area of Al-Muwais near Khan Younis.

Monday's attack on Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis killed cameraman Hossam al-Masri, a Reuters contractor, near a live broadcasting position operated by Reuters.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel deeply regretted

what he called a "tragic mishap," but the Israeli military has yet to provide details of the incident.

ISRAELI DAY OF DISRUPTION

Israeli protesters blocked roads in Tel Aviv and elsewhere in the country, holding up pictures of hostages still held in Gaza and calling for the war to end. A rally planned outside Israel's defence headquarters later on Tuesday is expected to draw thousands of people.

"For 690 days, the government has been waging a war without a clear objective," said Einav Zangauer, mother of Israeli hostage Matan Zangauer, in a statement with other hostage families who launched the

so-called Day of Disruption.

"How will the hostages, the living and the fallen, be returned? Who will govern Gaza the day after? How do we rebuild our country?" she said.

The war began on October 7, 2023, when Hamas-led gunmen burst into southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mainly civilians, and taking 251 hostages.

Israel's military offensive against Hamas has since killed at least 62,000 Palestinians, mostly civilians, according to the Gaza health ministry, plunged the enclave into a humanitarian crisis and internally displaced nearly its entire population.

Campaigning starts with rallies

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panel VP candidate Abidul Islam Khan said, "A journalist is competing in the AF Rahman Hall Union election, and he is blackmailing students who are supporting the Chhatra Dal-backed candidate there."

The journalist in question, Ashiqu Haque Rifat, an independent, lodged a complaint against Abidul with the chief returning officer.

Ashiqu said Abidul was deliberately spreading lies.

Aparajeyo-71 and Oddomm-24 panel called for the disqualification of Shibir-backed candidates from the election. The panel's general secretary nominee, Anamul Hasan Onoy, said allowing Shibir candidates to contest would go against the values of Bangladesh's independence struggle.

"The defeated forces of '71 and '24 -- Shibir and Chhatra League -- must be disqualified," he said.

Meanwhile, Meghmaller Bosu, who is vying for the general secretary post from the Protirodh Poroshod,

said many candidates were breaching the code of conduct and that the administration was not taking any step against them despite being notified.

"We can walk away if we believe the election is a scam," said Bosu at a press briefing.

Swatantra Shikkharthi Oikya panel launched its campaign by placing wreaths at the Jagannath Hall memorial. Its VP candidate, Umama Fatema, said, "Ducus polls should be held regularly ... it is the administration's responsibility to ensure that. Our campaign will not disrupt the daily activities of students."

The Gonotantrik Chhatra Sangsad-backed panel began with an outreach programme around 4:30pm.

Alongside these panels, several independents also hit the campaign trail, setting the stage for a competitive election across Dhaka University.

A DU press release after a meeting

between the returning officer and candidates, said three-tier security system would be in place on election day.

It said the strike force would be at seven entrances of Dhaka University. "If necessary, the army will enter the campus and take control of the polling centres until the results are announced."

Meghmaller Bosu said, "The police no longer have any credibility. As a result, it may be necessary to deploy the army... Our apprehension is that voters can be intimidated by this, which could reduce turnout."

Abdul Qader, vying for vice president post from Boishomma Biroddhi Shikkharthi Oikya, said, "They have made a decision on the matter without any discussion with us at all. Perhaps they might have some ulterior motives."

Tanvir Barai Hamim, general secretary nominee from JCD-backed panel, said, "It [deployment of the army] will instill fear among students...."

Polls boycott can exclude parties

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has assured. There is no doubt about it.

"But one or two parties are trying to create confusion... this may be their strategy. In order to maintain the national unity against fascism, we hope for a fair election. This election will be a historic event in political history."

BNP has found some aspects of the July Charter unreasonable, he said.

The party will join the consensus commission's discussions with alternative proposals, Salahuddin said. "Nothing can be placed above the constitution. Political parties will reach a consensus through talks."

He said BNP does not want any complexity over the national election under the interim government.

"Discussions are ongoing with some Islamist parties, there may be an alliance with them, but nothing is final yet."

Responding to a query, the BNP leader said there is no chance of forging an alliance with Jamaat.

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