

JU VC panel polls today amid tension

Staff Correspondent and JU Correspondent

TENSION mounted in Jahangirnagar University over the elections of the vice-chancellor's panel, scheduled for today, as protesting teachers announced that they would continue hunger strike until the administration called off the elections.

The High Court, meanwhile on Thursday, asked the government and the police to deploy additional law enforcers on the campus to ensure the holding of free and fair elections to the vice-chancellor's panel.

The bench of justice Naima Haider and Justice Muhamunad Khurshid Alam Sarkar passed the order after hearing a writ petition filed by the JU Teachers' Association vice-president, Abul Khair, also known to be a supporter of former VC Sharif Enamul Kabir.

The home secretary, the inspector general of police and the officer-in-charge of the Ashulia police were asked to comply with the directive.

Aggrieved teachers, under the banner of Sammilita Shikkhak Parishad who have been staging sit-ins since July

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14, demanding the cancellation of the elections to the vice-chancellor's panel, began a hunger strike in front of administrative building.

The university registrar, Abu Bakkar Siddque, on the other hand, told New Age that the elections would be running for two hours from 10:00am.

The vice-chancellor, Anwar Hossain, told New Age that the elections to the panel would take place as scheduled and in keeping with the Jahangirnagar University Act 1973.

Three teachers — senate member Prithila Naznin Nilima, also executive committee member of Shikkhak Samiti, Mujibur Rahman, joint convener of Bang-

abandhu Parishad, and Fazlul Karim Patwari, director of the Institute of Information and Technology, began the hunger strike on Thursday demanding deferral of the of the vice-chancellor's panel polls.

Sammilita Shikkhak Parishad began the hunger strike as part of its movement to push for elections of deans and to the syndicate and the senate before the VC panel polls.

The platform also demanded elections to the Jahangirnagar University Central Students' Union and the registered graduates to the senate.

According to the university act, senate members must be elected first and selected so that they can elect the vice-chancellor, they

added.

The teachers claimed that 52 out of the 88 positions in the senate were being held by unelected representatives.

Statistics teacher Kapchan Chowdhury had led a vow of the three teachers about 10:30am before they began the hunger strike.

Prithila said, 'We have decided to continue our hunger strike until the administration withdraws its unethical decision.'

Anwar Hossain hoped that senate members, including those who are now rallying, would participate in the elections.

The university has seen months of protests after English department student Zubair Ahmed died on January 9 after being tor-

tured by a group of activists of the Bangladesh Chhatra League, the ruling Awami League's student wing, on the campus the day before.

Sharif Enamul Kabir, who was vice-chancellor then, was removed from his position in the face of protests by students and teachers.

Dhaka University teacher Anwar Hossain replaced Enamul Kabir as the vice-chancellor on May 17.

The senate at a meeting on July 2 decided to hold a special session to elect the three-member vice-chancellor's panel.

The demonstrating teachers have abstained from work since July 14 and on Wednesday announced non-stop demonstrations to push for their demands.