

Rajshahi University Central Students Union: Past and present

THE Rajshahi University Central Students Union (RUCSU) is the apex body of the students of Rajshahi University. All bonafide students of this university are its members. The RUCSU works through the directly elected student representatives and it operates in the general interest of students irrespective of casts, creed or political affiliation of the students. The RUCSU is a statutory body in the sense that it is explicitly recognized by the Rajshahi University Act, 1973. It is, therefore natural that the RUCSU enjoys an enviable position in the university community.

In recent years, however, there has been considerable decline in its significance. It is now a body shown off the halo of glory which used to surround it in the past the RUCSU has been reduced to such lack luster condition since the university has suspended all its (RUCSU) activities a few years ago. Notwithstanding this, it is general feeling that , no description of the fascinating history of Rajshahi University will be adequate without any present of RUCSU.

The present write-up has been designed to keep this view in mind.

The origin, aims objectives structure of RUCSU

The famous enactment of the Rajshahi University Bill in the East Bengal Provincial Assembly took place on 31 March 1953, but the main function of the university i.e. teaching began with the starting of Masters previous year classes in the academic session 1954-55. Among the students admitted that year many were politically conscious and some of them were veteran student leaders who took

ment and in the Rajshahi University, movement when they were college students. There students realized the need of a union, in the university students soon after their admission in the university. They prepared a charter of their various demands and placed it before the university authority. In that charter the demand for a union was given the pride of place. At that time the Vice-Chancellor of the university Dr. I.H. Zuberi was the personification of the university authority, he did not readily agree to the demand of the students nor did he turned down the demand into the adopted what might be called a temporizing policy in respect of the matter. This attitude of the Vice-Chancellor provided the students pertinent cause to give call for strike. The news of strike for the cause of union was properly flashed in various dailies and it created public opinion in favour of the students cause, constrained by various such circumstances the university authority then formed a 15-member committee with M.Z. Islam (then inspector of colleges of Rajshahi University) as its convoyor, to form a constitution for the proposed union. Some students were included in that committee among them mention must be made of late Mohsin Pramank, Abdur Razzaque Khan, L.R. Mallick and Moniruzzaman Mia because they always kept the interest in the affairs of Rajshahi University and always tried their best for the progress and prosperity of the university.

The Rajshahi University students' Union RUSU (not RUCSU) was formed this way. Two elections of the office bearers of RUSU were held in the year 1956-57 and 1957-58 respectively. The RUCSU was however very short

lived body. The promulgation of Martial Law and abrogation of the constitution by Field Marshal Ayub Khan, in October, 1958 put strict ban on all sorts of democratic and congregational activities (Union activities) throughout the nook and corner of the country. Along with many other democratic bodies and institutions RUSU met an abrupt end of its life.

The second phase of the Movement and formation of the RUCSU the whole of Pakistan was under unbridled Martial Law from October 1958 to May 1962, in June 1962 field lifted Martial Md. Ayub Khan apparently Martial Law and gave the country a constitution of his own living and own design. Restriction on political activities were gradually being relaxed. Party politics was allowed. During 1958-62, noticeable changes also took place in the mental make up and desires and aspirations of the people. Disenchantment will the belief in the superiority of Martial Law, increasing urge of mind for democratic form of government and regard for democratic values institutions all these phenomena prepared the ground for carrying out movement of ideological reformation within next few years. It was during this period of great intellectual awakening that the interest of the university students union was launched a new with increased enthusiasm and vigour. By 1962-63 certain changes were brought about in the academic programmes and infrastructural facilities of the university. Three years Honours course was introduce in the academic year 1962-65; and again a few halls of residence for the university students were set up on the university's own campus at Mother. The students felt that there must be unions of the stu-

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dents at hall level as well as at the central level. Hall unions would be meant for resident students and attached students of the hall and the central union for the students of the university central students union (RUCSU) was started this way. Towards the end of 1962 a batch of young enthusiastic and enterprising students of the university met the then Vice-Chancellor V-C Prof. M. Ahmed who was a scholar of long experience and of remarkable freight. He agreed to the demand of the students and formed a committee for framing the constitution of the RUCSU. The committee was headed by reputed scholar Dr. A.R. Mallik, eminent student leader of that time Rustam Ali, Bayazid Ahmed, Serajul Islam, Mahbubul Huq, Zakaria Ahmed, Sardar Amzad Hussain were included in the constitution making body. The RUCSU came into being under resolution No. 6 of the Rajshahi University syndicate meeting held on 15 December.

Aims and Objective:

The aims and objectives of the RUCSU were stated as follows; (1) To promote corporate life amongst the students for preparing them for tune citizenship and to create leadership among them, (ii) To foster fellow feeling , mutual understanding and amity among the students of the university, (iii) To stimulate interest in the students for developing the faculty of speaking; debating, lighting etc, and for these purpose to be active. To organize social gathering, dramatic performance of central activities, to organize games and athletics, to organize games and athletic and common room, to arrange for the publication of a students' journal, to arrange debates and

bettors, to arrange competition in special recitations, essays etc, and to send, if possible representatives to the inter-university competi-

tions and conferences etc. In short, the RUCSU was formed with the grand idea that it would conceive, design, plan and prepare programmes for all sorts of curricular and extra curricular activities of the university students and would make necessary arrangements for the realization and implementation of those programme. For checking out the RUCSU annual programme and for their implementation and for the overall management and conduct of the affairs of the union ie for its administration. There is a 15 member executive committee. The Vice-Chancellor of the university shall be ex-officio president of the union and the treasurer shall be nominated by the president from amongst the teachers of the university. The remaining positions of the executive-committee, the Vice-President and the General Secretary (GS) other departmental Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries shall be filled in by the directly elected representations of the general members of the union i.e. by the students of the university as a whole. It must be said that no student body of the university can be more democratic and representative than RUCSU.

The RUCSU was founded in the year of 1962-63. Since then and upto the academic year-1989 to 1990. RUCSU elections were held 15 times in all. For many reasons such as tentions, troubles and unrest in the country or on the university campus, countrywide movements of various kinds liberation war, suspension of union activities by the military government, devastating natural calamities like floods and cyclones for all these reasons RUCSU elections could not be held in the year of 1970-72, 75-80 and during most part of 1980's. More than a decade has passed since the last election

was held in the year of 1989-90. The reasons are not definitely the ones as mentioned above installation ceremony of the RUCSU office-bearers was one of the most impatient and gala functions of the RUCSU. If was the ceremonial function through which the elected office-bearers were sworn into this office power and responsibilities central functions arranged on these occasion used to attract thousands of people from all sections of life. In addition to this function all students attended the function of inter Hall sports RUCSU drama, arranged debates and seminars kept the university campus humming with extra-curricula and curricular activities throughout most parts of the years and top of all. The RUCSU annual magazine was the most coveted journals of the University students and teachers-all felt honoured to be associated with this either as units in this journal or being placed in its editors management boards.

If RUCSU is to be remembered, if it is to be recorded in the history of Rajshahi university then it is not for its having performed these routine and assigned activities. RUCSU should be remembered for an important democratically run students body and symbol of democratic institutions for its initiative of participation into various liberal democratic movements which during wartime contributed much towards liberation of Bangladesh.

In much more occasions RUCSU played a glorious role. The anti-Ayub movement via the anti-Monayer Khan movement in the whole of the erstwhile East Pakistan was initiated on the Rajshahi University campus on February, 1963. The RU student leaders and RUCSU leaders took bold steps to postpone a convoca-

tion function in which Monayer Khan as chancellor of the University wanted to address the function. Students allegedlly involved in road accidents were expelled, cases were also filed against many students. In the 1968-70 countrywide movement when the students of the country formed Students Action Committee (SAC) on January 5 in 1969, the RUCSU and other leaders formed a branch of the action committee in the Rajshahi University.

It is to be noted that this committee played heroic role in 1969 70 glorious movements. In the independence of Bangladesh and after 1975 the RUCSU leaders took active part in the movement for the restoration of democratic government in the country and democratic practices in the university the contribution of Bazlu Rahman Chhana Badsha, Jahangir Kabir Rana, Shahjahan Seraj Ruhul Kabir Rejvi and many others shall remain fresh in our memory for many year to come.

Many of the RUCSU office bearers rose to very important position in life. Moniruzzaman Mia, first VP of RUCSU became the Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University, Abdur Rahman, Sardar Amjad Hossain and Abdur Rou were elected representatives in our national assembly. Fazlur Rahman Patil, Sardar Amjad Hossain were ministers during BNP and Ershad regimes, Fazle Hossain Badsha is now an established political leader in the country. All of them had their first training in politics as RUCSU office bearers. They dicplend jobs while in the RUCSU and they have done well later in lives. If the RUCSU is brought to life and allowed to function without any hindrance it will create patriotic leaders for the country.