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An unworried BCL at CU for five yrs

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In a span of five years, since the Awami League-led government took over in January 2009, the chronicle of the Bangladesh Chhatra League's activities at Chittagong University has been one of violence and terror.

This was a period when the warring factions of the pro-AI, student body clashed 30 times -- mostly over petty matters like grabbing a seat on the shuttle train or owing to previous rivalry -- on the campus, injuring 108 activists. They also fought with the workers of the Jamaat-e-Islami backed Islami Chhatra Shibir five times.

In all, these 35 violent incidents left 179 students wounded and two others killed and cost the university 92 work-days when academic activities remained suspended, according to reports in national and local newspapers.

Why all these clashes? Some BCL leaders say it was to establish control on the campus.

If they cannot rule the campus, they will face hurdles in gaining leadership positions, former president of CU unit BCL Abul Monsur Jamshed told The Daily Star.

Another leader, on condition of anonymity, said the BCL unit needed to meet the expenses of political activities without the help of the central committee.

"There is no way to meet these financial needs. So, they get engaged in crimes like extortion, which eventually requires them to achieve control of the campus."

In the last five years, the BCL men were not only belligerent about controlling the campus, they have also harassed teachers, assaulted journalists, and extorted from on-campus shop owners.

University-based journalists were the most common victims of the Chhatra League's wrath. In 2011 and 2012, a total of 11 journalists were beaten up, two of them inside classrooms, and harassed. No action followed any of these incidents.

Their latest attack on journalists came on July 30. They locked up the office of Chittagong University Journalists' Association (CUJA).

Following such behaviour, the BCL's central committee apologised to CUJA and suspended four CU unit leaders.

The BCL men also vandalised the offices of two hall provosts and the proctor, and locked the room of the political science department's chairman in 2011.

Last year, at least two incidents related to extortion from campus shop owners came up in the newspapers. One of those led to a factional clash.

After all these incidents, the student body, however, hardly took any effective punitive action against the culpable activists. In some cases, a handful of them were suspended, not expelled, and they continued to be rowdy, in covert or overt manner.

After a factional clash on April 29-30, 2011, which left five activists injured, the university suspended

activists tried to establish that their rowdiness was in the interest of the organisation. "As they were treated politically, no action followed in most cases," he said.

Soumen was seriously injured in the April 29-30 clash and underwent medical treatment for six months.

A total of eleven factional clashes left 27 activists injured in 2011.

The latest infighting occurred between two compartment-based BCL groups of the university shuttle train on August 30 this year, injuring 15.

The most violent year in terms of casualties was 2012. At least 10 incidents of infighting and a huge clash with Shibir wounded 64 students and killed two Shibir men.

After the clash with Shibir on February 8, two cases were filed against BCL men and a university probe body held 14 BCL men responsible but no punitive action followed.

The year 2010 was the least violent, which witnessed five factional clashes, injuring 13.

In 2009, the second most violent year, four BCL-Shibir clashes and three incidents of BCL infighting left 60 BCL men injured.

For all this violence of the pro-ruling party body, the most visible action was taken only after a factional clash on September 29 last year, when six BCL men were wounded.

As a punitive measure, the central committee suspended 11 BCL men of the CU for various terms and the university suspended eight students, including five BCL men, for six months to one year each. In addition, at least 34 BCL activists were sued.

Former proctor Prof Akhtar Hossain said the university administration took stern action after those incidents but the BCL avoided punishing anyone.

For him, the appointment of an elected vice chancellor could put a stop to such hooliganism.

"Leaders of the government-backed organisation always put pressure on the vice chancellor and administrative officials because they are appointed politically."

BCL CLASHES IN FIVE YEARS AT CU

YEAR	No. of Factional Clashes	No. of Clashes with Shibir	Wounded	Dead
2013	1	0	15	0
2012	10	1	64	2
2011	11	0	27	0
2010	5	0	13	0
2009	3	4	60	0
TOTAL	30	5	179	2

seven BCL men for one year each and 14 BCL men were sued.

Only three months later, one of the seven men, Fazle Rabbi Sujon, who did not hold any post in BCL but was involved with the organisation, asked the proctor in offensive language to withdraw the case against him and allow him to sit for exams.

The aggrieved proctor and three assistant proctors resigned following this August 2 incident, though they rejoined office later. But the BCL did not punish Sujon in either case.

CU unit BCL President Mamunul Hoque said the responsible persons were not given any post on the committee. "That's why they took the advantage to abuse BCL's name."

Soumen Das, assistant secretary of CU BCL, however, said the so-called