

CGS PEACE REPORT

an initiative of BPO

CGS CENTRE FOR
GENOCIDE
STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA



Volume 3, Issue 1
January- February 2019



Photo courtesy: BPO Team

**Crime and Violence in
Bangladesh:
An Analysis from BPO**

**DUCSU Election 2019:
A Brief History**

**University of Dhaka:
The Heart of the Language
Movement**

**Commentary:
Professor M. M. Akash
Professor Sadeka Halim**

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BPO- Bangladesh Peace Observatory



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From the Editor's Desk

Youth has always engaged in activism, whether non-violent or violent. How else would one describe or define a youth? Age seems to be a significant criteria. As the United Nations would say, persons between the ages of 15 and 24 are youth. This has had some revisions lately, with the World Health Organization in 2017 classifying youth as those who are between 18-65 years old. This, of course, is related to the average increase of human longevity, with the 'middle-age' now falling between 66-79 years old and the 'elderly/senior' falling between 80-99 years old. I find the criteria of 'age' and its classification, however, somewhat limiting as it can hardly distinguish as to what to be expected from each of the phases. My definition of age is a simpler one. Anyone who believes and works for *change* is a youth. There is no point in calling someone youth if s/he dogmatically holds to the status quo and refuses to entertain change. If this is the case then one could see that the University of Dhaka, the oldest tertiary educational institution of Bangladesh, established in 1921, had youth buzzing and bubbling around for nearly one-hundred years, but then not without phases where the youth looked very crabbed and aged!

Dhaka University Central Students Union or DUSCU certainly had youthful days, indeed, more than it had prepared for. Boasting a birth as early as 1924, with Jogendranath Sengupta selected as the first General Secretary and the very next year, Mamtaz Uddin Ahmed nominated as the first Vice President, it soon got active in the task of displacing the British colonial regime, and following the departure of the latter in 1947, it could not rest in peace but found itself, along with a large body of general students, engaged in the task of displacing the semi-colonial regime of Pakistan.

On two occasions the students of Dhaka University made a difference, which no university in the world could take pride in. In fact, in many ways Dhaka University gave birth to Bangladesh. In 1952 several students of the university sacrificed their lives for the mother-tongue, Bangla, which is now celebrated as the International Mother Language Day. Each year on 21 February the university welcomes all the dignitaries, including the President and the Prime Minister, and millions of people, all barefoot, to lay wreaths and pay homage to the martyrs at the *Shaheed Minar* (Martyr Monument) located within the campus. Indeed, no other university in the world hosts a national event.

The second occasion is no less historical. On 2 March 1971 the students of Dhaka University, including DUCSU, raised the first national flag of Bangladesh and handed it over to the national leaders. Indeed, this was done some three weeks before the proclamation of independence, which was declared on 26 March 1971. But the cost was heavy. Dhaka University ended up becoming the epicentre of 1971 genocide, with the Pakistan military attacking and killing brutally the students, faculty members, officials, employees, even helpers and canteen owner, of the university on the night of 25 March 1971. This could hardly cower down the students, many ended up joining the liberation war of Bangladesh, fighting valiantly and making Bangladesh free of Pakistani occupation on 16 December 1971.

The youthful days got somewhat dampened after Bangladesh came into being. The whole University seemed to be in the grip of a melancholic song of Rabindranath Tagore composed as early as 1915, *klanti amar khoma karo probhu*:

FORGIVE MY languor, O Lord,
If ever I lag behind
Upon life's way.
Forgive my anguished heart
Which trembles and hesitates
In its service.
Forgive my fondness
That lavishes its wealth
Upon an unprofitable past.
Forgive these faded flowers
In my offering
That wilt in the fierce heat
Of panting hours.

Protracted resistance and agitation against the British for 26 years and then against the Pakistanis for 25 years could be the reason for what could be referred to as the post-independence syndrome of crabby age and tiredness. Money and muscle did come to play, which saw DUCSU robbed of its glorious past, making student politics at times violent and bloody. Undemocratic forces took advantage of this, making the students less youthful and a force of change. Instead, they became more a force reproducing the status quo and in the service of the aged.

But then again it got up from its slumber when the students of all ranks joined hands and forced the military to handover power to civilian political forces in 1991. But then ironically the force that got the civilian political forces to power found its rights in the campus restricted, albeit in the name of containing violence, by withholding DUCSU election from 1991 onwards. It took a hunger strike of a student named Walid Ashraf for 14 consecutive days in 2017 and a High Court order on 17 January 2018 for the authorities to finally decide in holding the DUCSU election once again after a lapse of 28 years. The hope now is that the students would remain youth as ever and a force of change!

Imtiaz Ahmed

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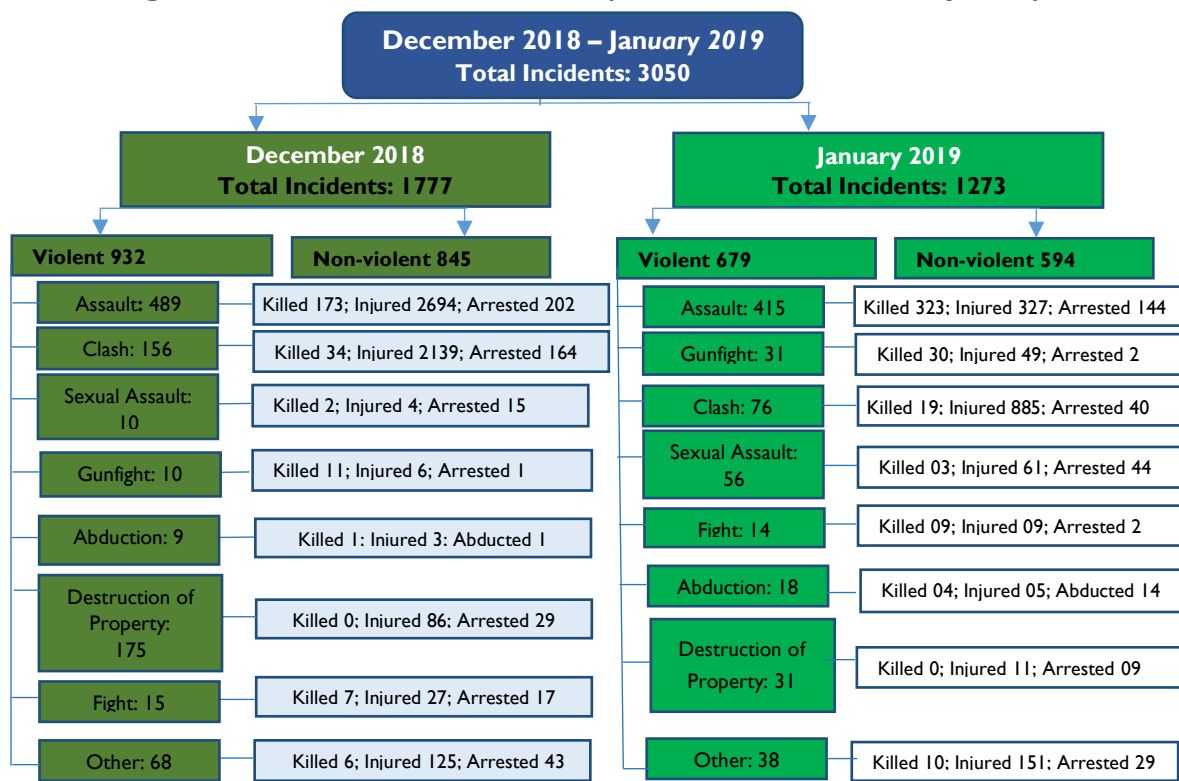
Crime and Violence in Bangladesh: An Analysis from BPO

Part A: Violence Update: (December 2018 - January 2019)

The Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO) brings together different streams of publicly available data on violence using news reports from prominent national dailies. From December 2018 to January 2019, BPO recorded 3050 violent¹ and

non-violent² incidents all over the country. **Figure I** segregates these incidents into some general categories by type of violence. A brief description of each category is available in the Annex.

Figure I: An Overview of Incidents (December 2018 - January 2019)



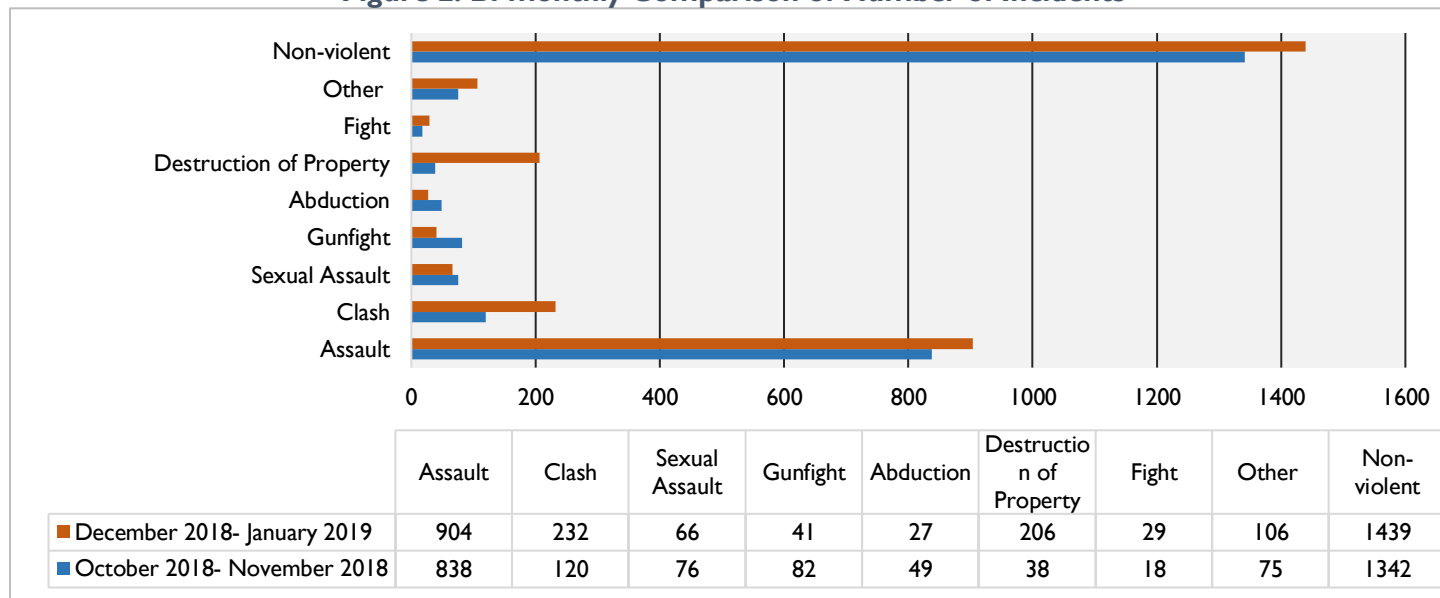
¹ **Violent Incident:** According to BPO Codebook: The reported incident involved the intentional use of physical force by an individual or group against another individual or group, in a manner that resulted or could have resulted in death, injury or any other form of physical harm to persons or property.

² **Non-violent Incident:** According to BPO Codebook: The reported incident did not involve the intentional use of physical force by an individual or group against another individual or group, in a manner that resulted or could have resulted in death, injury or any other form of physical harm to persons or property, e.g. Arrest, Peaceful Protest, Rescue and Recovery.

According to BPO data, the number of incidents has considerably increased in recent months in Bangladesh. The combined frequency of incidents during October-November 2018 was 2,638, which increased by 15.62% in December 2018- January 2019 (**Figure 2**). Previously, there was a 22.53% in October-November 2018 and 4.90% rise during August-September 2018 compared to June-July 2018 and a 30% rise in the period of June-July 2018 compared to April-May 2018. Figure 2 makes some observations on the critical areas of incident prevalence. First of all, along with the increase in the total number of incidents, there is a significant rise in the number of

incidents of destruction of property, assault, and clash in December 2018- January 2019. In the reported 206 incidents of destruction of property, a total of 164 incidents were allegedly associated with electoral issues. Secondly, the number of assaults had a relatively lower increase by 7.88% in December 2018- January 2019 compared to the period of October-November 2018. During December 2018- January 2019, a total of 496 people were killed, 3021 were injured, and 346 people were arrested in this connection by the law enforcement agencies in the 904 reported incidents of assaults.

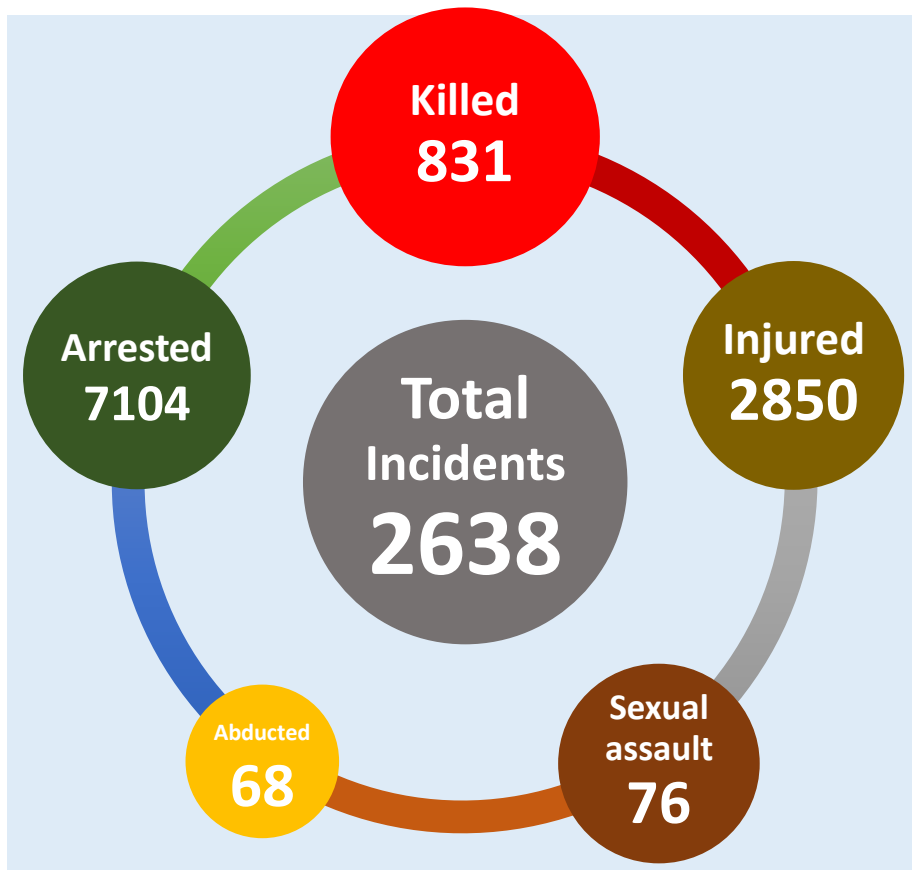
Figure 2: Bi-monthly Comparison of Number of Incidents



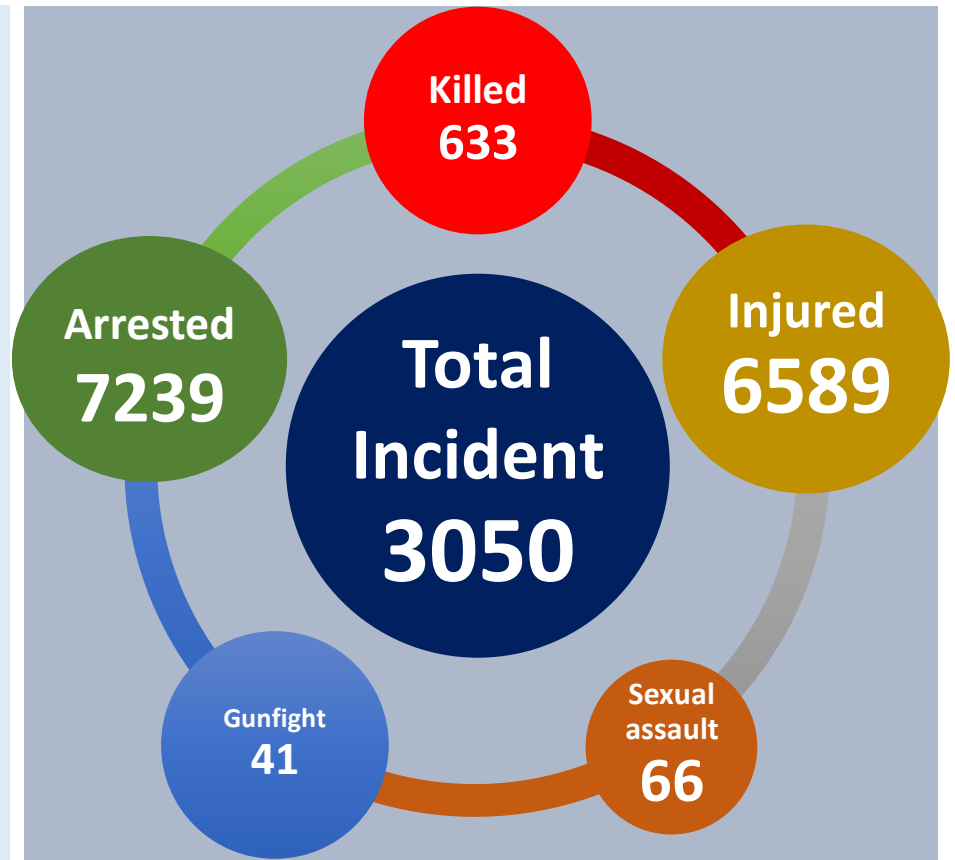
This indicates a 12.73% increase in death, 480.96% increase in injury, and 40.08% increase in arrest in December 2018-January 2019. This sharp increase in the number of injuries has been mostly caused by electoral violence in which a total of 2551 people (84.44% of total injured in assault) were injured in 285 incidents of assaults. In case of self-targeted assaults, 88 persons committed suicide, of which 42 were female. In the instance of gender-based violence 76 women were killed, 44 injured and 62 were victims of sexual assaults. Thirdly, during December 2018-January 2019, the number of clashes also increased by 93.33% than the previous months. 166 out of the 232 clashes were reportedly political clashes in which 26 people were killed, 1671 were injured (55.26% of the total injured in clashes) and 121 were arrested. Apart from these, the number of gunfights has reportedly decreased in December 2018- January 2019 in which 41 were killed, 55 were injured, and three were arrested.

This indicates a 50% decrease in incident prevalence, 46.76% decrease in reported death, and 34.52% decrease in injury. The number of reported abduction and sexual assault is also on the decrease according to the sources. Last but not the least, the trend of increased number of arrests continued in December 2018- January 2019 as was seen in October-November 2018 (**figures 3, 4**). In August-September 2018, a total of 5,774 people were arrested while in October-November 2018 the number of arrests was 7,104, indicating a 23.03% rise during the period in question while previously there was a 23.55% decline recorded in August-September 2018 than June-July 2018. In December 2018- January 2019, a 1.90% rise was observed with reported arrests 7,239 in 1,665 incidents.

**Figure 3: Consequences of the Violent Incidents
(October-November 2018)**



**Figure 4: Consequences of the Violent Incidents
(December 2018 – January 2019)**



A monthly breakdown of December 2018 and January 2019 reflects a gap by incident prevalence and consequences (**figure 5**). The figure indicates that there is a trend of decline in January 2019 than December 2018 in terms of total number of reported incidents, injured, and arrests in large number. But there is a noticeable increase in the number of reported death in January 2019. The decline of incident prevalence is 28.36% and by consequence 70.65% decrease in reported injuries, and 52.36% in reported arrests. But the number of reported death increased by 70.51% in January 2019 despite of lower incident prevalence. In case of the number of reported injuries, in December 2018, a total of 5094 people were injured in 472 violent incidents while in January 2019, a total of 1495 people were injured in 246 violent incidents. In December 2018, a total of 4159 people were injured in incidents of electoral violence which constituted 81.65% of the total injured of the month. In January 2019, only 50 injuries of post-electoral violence were recorded. Apart from the electoral

violence induced injuries, there are incidents of clash between garments workers and police, between groups of Tablig Jamaat (a non-political global Sunni Islamic missionary movement), between groups of villagers with land dispute or previous enmity, to gain control over natural resources/local businesses, and sports dispute which resulted in large number of reported injuries. Figure 5 indicates an increase in the number of total people killed in violence in January 2019 compared to December 2018. A total of 234 people were reportedly killed in 439 incidents of violence in December 2018, while 399 were killed in 721 incidents of violence in January 2019. According to BPO data, there is an increase in the number of reported death in incidents like dowry related violence, land dispute, raids, robbery in January 2019. But as a matter of concern, in December 2018, a total of 73 out of 234 were reportedly killed by unknown perpetrators all over Bangladesh while the number in January 2019 was 159 out of 399.

Figure 5: Comparative analysis of Incidents (December 2018 – January 2019)

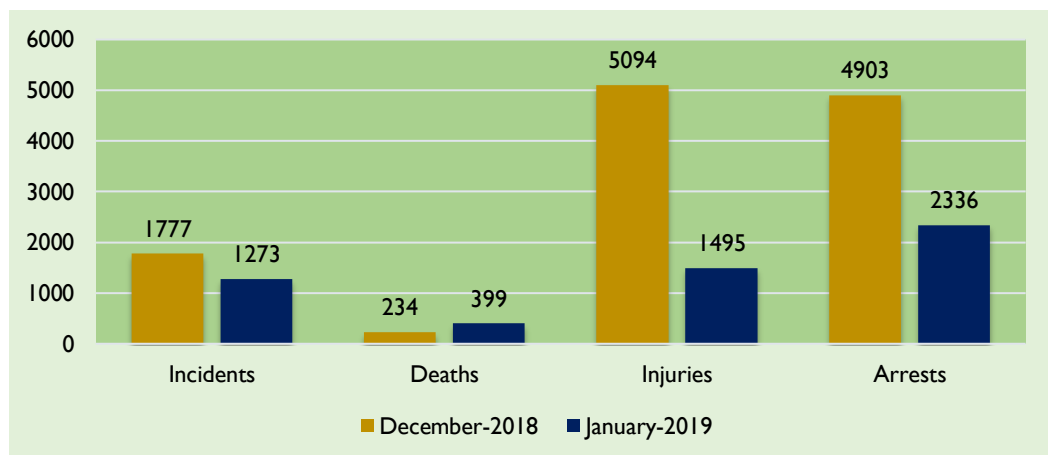


Figure 6: Bi-Monthly Divisional Distribution of Incidents (October-November 2018)

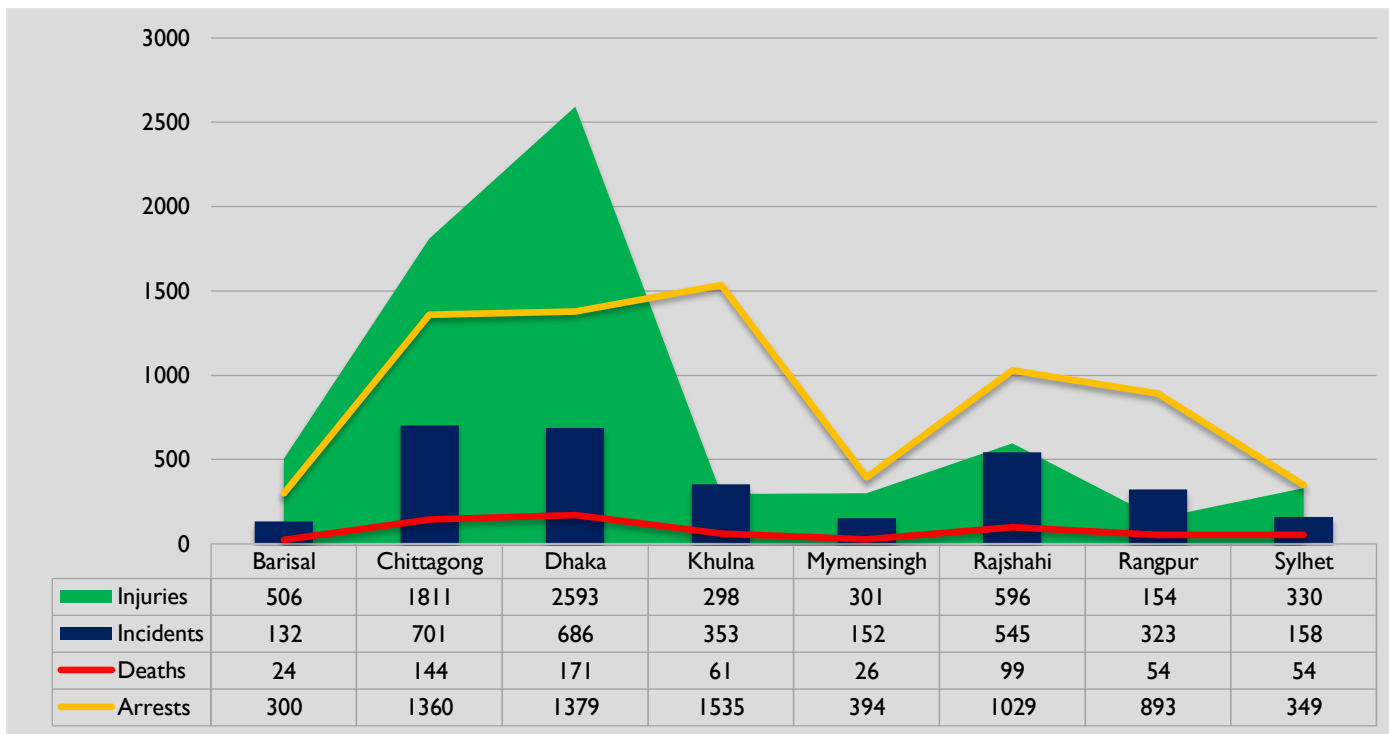


Figure 6 provides a spatial glimpse through the divisional distribution of the recorded incidents in BPO and their consequences. The figure indicates that Chittagong is at the top in terms of incident prevalence (1811) while Dhaka is at the top in terms of reported death (171) and injuries (2593) and Khulna, despite of being the fourth in incident prevalence (353), is at the top in reported arrests (1535). In the previous months, there has been a different scenario in which Dhaka was in an allover top position. In terms of arrests by the law enforcement agencies, BPO data suggests that, 94.85% of the total arrested in Khulna were incidents of arrests and special drives against drugs, subversive activities, and combing operations. Similarly, 82.38% in Dhaka, 90.22% in Chittagong, 89.60% in Rajshahi, 86.53% in Sylhet, 94% in Barisal, 92.05% in Rangpur, and 85.03% of the total arrested were incidents of arrests and special drives against drugs, subversive activities, and combing operations.

In addition to arrests, in case of injuries, Dhaka (2593), Chittagong (1811), and Rajshahi (596) divisions has the maximum number of people injured in violence. Most of these violence occurred in the form of electoral violence and clash among different actors. For example, in Dhaka division with the highest number of reported injuries, 1309 out of the 2593 total injured persons were casualties of electoral violence. However, there are evidences of non-political violence in the division in which a large number of people were injured. On 1st December 2018, a man died and 200 people were injured in a clash between two groups of Tablig Jamaat who followed two different leaders, over the long standing tension between them and the upcoming Iztema (an annual gathering of Muslims) of both the groups at the same venue in Tongi Iztema field, Gazipur.³ Again, 252 garment workers including 20 policemen were injured in six separate incidents of clash between the police and agitated garment workers in Narayanganj, Savar, and

³ The Daily Jugantor (2018). Accessed 27 February 2019. Available at: <https://epaper.jugantor.com/2018/12/02/11/details/>

_r4_c2.jpg,
https://epaper.jugantor.com/2018/12/02/14/details/14_r3_c3.jpg

Gazipur in Dhaka division.^{4,5,6,7} In Chittagong, 1507 out of the total 1811 and in Rajshahi, 388 out of 596 injured were casualties of electoral violence. Of all divisions, Dhaka (171), Chittagong (144), and Rajshahi (99) divisions have the highest number of reported deaths during December 2018- January 2019. It is noticeable in the previous months (October-November 2018), the same divisions ranked the same with a higher

prevalence [Dhaka (272), Chittagong (208), and Rajshahi (109)]. In December 2018- January 2019, a total of 414 (including 100 women) people reportedly died in 391 violent incidents in these three divisions. Notably, among them, 54 were victims of sexual and gender based violence, 66 reportedly committed suicide, 30 allegedly killed in gunfight, and 142 reportedly killed by unknown assailant.

⁴ The Daily Star (2019). Accessed 27 February 2019. Available at:
http://epaper.thedailystar.net/contents/2019/2019_01_02/content_zoom/2019_01_02_16_2_b.jpg ,
http://epaper.thedailystar.net/contents/2019/2019_01_02/content_zoom/2019_01_02_10_3_b.jpg

⁵ The New Age (2019). Accessed 27 February 2019. Available at:
http://epaper.newagebd.net/images/09_01_2019/regular_38604_news_1546979255.jpg,
http://epaper.newagebd.net/images/09_01_2019/regular_38605_news_1546979695.jpg

⁶ The Daily Star (2019). Accessed 27 February 2019. Available at:

http://epaper.thedailystar.net/contents/2019/2019_01_10/content_zoom/2019_01_10_12_5_b.jpg
http://epaper.thedailystar.net/contents/2019/2019_01_10/content_zoom/2019_01_10_1_1_b.jpg ,
http://epaper.thedailystar.net/contents/2019/2019_01_10/content_zoom/2019_01_10_2_6_b.jpg

⁷ The Daily Karatoa (2019). Accessed 27 February 2019. Available at:
https://www.ekaratoa.com/2019/01/25/3/details/3_r8_c5.jpg ,
https://www.ekaratoa.com/2019/01/25/7/details/7_r10_c7.jpg

Part B: Incidents Recorded by BPO on Student violence

Student politics of Bangladesh generally refers to activities and practices among Bangladeshi students, mostly from the tertiary level of education. The contributions of the student community in the history of Bangladesh in the Language Movement of 1952, political movements in the 1960s, and 1971 not only supported the cause of the liberation movement but also paved the way for democracy in 1990. Ironically, in the last few decades, student politics has followed a trajectory, which, according to many experts, might lead to a gloomy future for student politics. The upshot is the wide visibility of student violence in the university campuses.

BPO records and maps reported incidents related to the student affairs. It includes incidence of violence related to student politics, raid operations by the law enforcing agencies, and other crimes related to students.

From January 2018 to February 2019, a total of 705 incidents, violent and non-violent, have been recorded at the BPO platform where students were involved. The number was high since Bangladesh observed two major student movements: the Quota Reform Movement and the Safe Road Movement. During that time, many incidents turned violent throughout the country. Besides, in one incident, 6 female students were injured in an assault during the reception of a new Principal of an institute by the opposition party in Brahmanbaria.⁸ In another incident, Chhatra League and Chhatra Dal were locked in a clash in Chandpur following previous fights that left 15 injured including 4 members of the police.⁹

Table I represents the types of incidents where assault occurred mostly and the reasons behind the 106 death toll. On the other hand, clashes have caused 1070 injuries.

⁸ The Daily Ittefaq (2019). Accessed 2 March 2019. Available at: http://epaper.ittefaq.com.bd/2018/02/18/images/02_117.jpg

⁹ The Daily Ittefaq (2019). Accessed 2 March 2019. Available at: http://epaper.ittefaq.com.bd/2018/01/07/images/02_124.jpg

Table 1: Types of incidents of the Student Involvement (January 2018-February 2019)

| Types | Incidents | Deaths | Injuries | Arrests |
|------------------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| Non-violent (Arrest) | 172 | 0 | 8 | 650 |
| Abduction/hostage | 20 | 2 | 2 | 12 |
| Assault | 333 | 106 | 725 | 97 |
| Clash | 107 | 4 | 1070 | 85 |
| Destruction of property | 14 | 0 | 4 | 2 |
| Fight | 18 | 0 | 31 | 14 |
| Mob violence (large group assault) | 5 | 1 | 25 | 0 |
| Other | 11 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Sexual assault | 14 | 0 | 4 | 10 |
| Unclear | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Violent demonstration | 10 | 0 | 169 | 36 |
| Grand Total | 705 | 115 | 2039 | 906 |

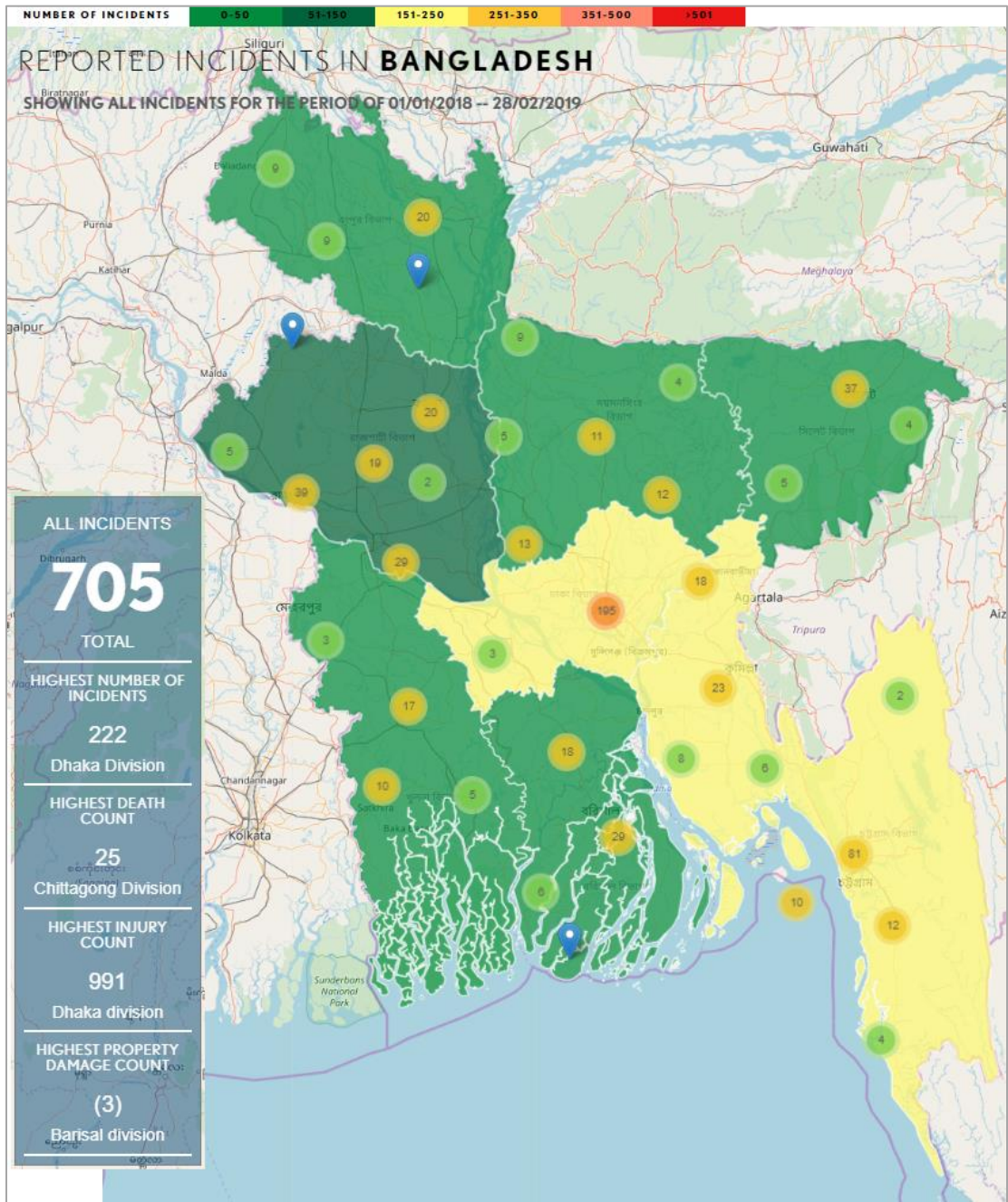
In terms of regional distribution of the incidents, **Map 1**, Dhaka and Chittagong have the maximum numbers of incidents as well as casualties. For example, a college student was killed by his friend over a

trivial issue in Chittagong¹⁰. In another incident an admission seeker student was hacked to death by unknown assailants in Narsingdi District¹¹.

¹⁰ The Daily Purbakone (2019). Accessed 2 March 2019. Available at: http://www.edainikpurbokone.net/content/2018/2018-01-27/zoom_view/1p.jpg, http://www.edainikpurbokone.net/content/2018/2018-01-27/zoom_view/11g.jpg

¹¹ The Daily Karatoa (2019). Accessed 2 March 2019. Available at: http://ekaratoa.com/2018/11/23/12/details/12_r9_c4.jpg, http://ekaratoa.com/2018/11/23/11/details/11_r15_c3.jpg

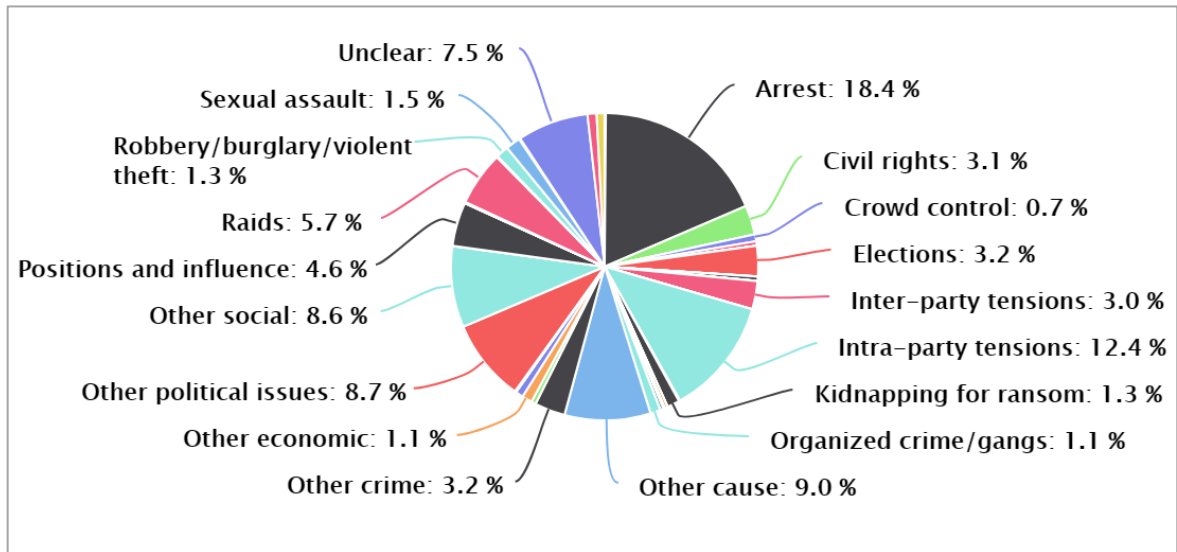
Map I: Regional Distribution of incidents of the Student Involvement (January 2018- February 2019)



As per the findings, **Figure 7**, one the major motives behind the incidents is the intra party tension which caused more than 12 percent of the incidents. The clashes among different groups of the

same party over different interests intensified the violent incidents. Other categories of political violence were also significant during the specified time frame.

Figure 7: Motive of the Student Violence (January 2018- February 2019)



The Flag Raising on 2nd March: Historical Significance of University of Dhaka in Bangladesh

University of Dhaka is the only institution, which had a significant role in the birth of Bangladesh as an independent state. The students and teachers sacrificed their lives for the country on several occasions. Our national flag was first publicly hoisted on March 02, 1971 in the University of Dhaka campus. The incident of first hoisting of the national flag accelerated our movement towards the great Liberation War. The then Vice President of Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU), ASM Abdur Rob unfurled the flag from the rooftop of the western porch of the Arts Faculty of University of Dhaka. On that day, a huge meeting of students was held at the University of Dhaka campus, following the declaration of postponing the National Assembly by Pakistani military dictator Yahya Khan on March 1st, which was scheduled to be held

on March 3, with Chhatra League President Nur E Alam Siddique in the Chair. In that meeting, the students raised a slogan that, "*Jinnar Pakistan, Azimpurer gorosthan*" (Jinnah's Pakistan now rests in Azimpur graveyard). Mass people had held huge demonstration across Bangladesh (the then East Pakistan) including its capital Dhaka. Dhaka had turned into a city of processions, people of all stages and ages were raising slogans demanding independence. Their voice reached every corner of the country, and the whole nation raised voice with a similar tone. Pakistan government clamped curfew on that day in Dhaka from 8pm to 7am of the next day. People defied the order and hit the streets at night. The army opened fire, leaving many casualties. The day's activities were actually the outburst of accumulated anger of earlier years¹².

¹² Daily Sun (2017). Looking Back At the History of Our National Flag. Accessed: 6 March, 2019. Available at: [http://www.daily-](http://www.daily-sun.com/printversion/details/209438/Looking-Back-At-The-History-Of-Our-National-Flag-)

[sun.com/printversion/details/209438/Looking-Back-At-The-History-Of-Our-National-Flag-](http://www.daily-sun.com/printversion/details/209438/Looking-Back-At-The-History-Of-Our-National-Flag-)



Photo: Students hoist the national flag of independent Bangladesh at the University of Dhaka campus. Photo Courtesy: Jalaluddin Haider

In the month of March, 1971, the politics assumed a distinctly radical turn and on March 3, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman called a non-violent non-cooperation movement in the province. By that day it had become clear that political authority in East Pakistan had passed into Mujib's hands. On the same day, Yahya Khan, taken aback by the severity of the reaction to the postponement of the National Assembly session, invited the leaders of ten political parties to a Round Table Conference in Dhaka on March 10. On 7th March, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

combined courage with political acumen to highlight his vision of the future. He told the regime that it needed to fulfill a set of preconditions before he could consider taking part in the National Assembly session, which by now had been rescheduled for 25 March¹³. In his speech Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman stated: "The struggle this time is the struggle for emancipation- the struggle this time is the struggle for independence," which was the slogan for the patriots. On March 25, the Pakistani military force attacked the sleeping people of Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) at night through

¹³ Dhaka Tribune (2018). Flashback to March 1971. Accessed: 6 March, 2019. Available at: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/oped/2018/03/21/flashback-march-1971>

Operation Searchlight. After a brutal crackdown, Bangladesh declared the War of Independence on 26th March, 1971.

After all, the journey of the birth of Bangladesh started from the movement of the students of University of Dhaka under the banner of DUCSU (Dhaka University Central Student's Union). The flag hoisting event on 2nd March, 1971 was one of the significant steps when Bangladesh

announced its imminent arrival to the world. It was the historic day through which the people of the then East Pakistan sent a very bold message of their aspirations of independence. That is why the historical significance of University of Dhaka is recognized by all the citizens as well as the foreigners. Every year people also celebrate the 2nd day of March as the National Flag Day in Bangladesh.

University of Dhaka: The Heart of the Language Movement

The language movement of 1952 was a turning point in the history on many counts. First, after a great sacrifice of innocent human lives it established Bangla as a state language of Pakistan. Secondly, and more importantly, it provided a distinct identity to the Bangla speaking people of the then East Pakistan. Finally, the identification and preservation of this distinct identity led to the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent sovereign state after a bloody War of Liberation that took a toll of three million lives. In all these important historical junctures, the University of Dhaka played a very significant role. In fact, Dhaka University after the language movement became a deliverer, of course, under political leadership of the hopes and aspirations of the people of now Bangladesh¹⁴.

In 1948, one year after partition, Pakistan government imposed Urdu as their state language although only 3% of the Pakistanis actually used it as their mother tongue. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the Governor General of Pakistan publicly announced on a visit to Dhaka that “*the state language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language*”. He also made the same statement while he was participating in the Special Convocation of the University of Dhaka on 24 March 1948. All students of the convocation protested against the announcement. And from that point the conflicts of language rights started to take its shape and the Dhaka University Language Action Committee was formed on 11 March 1950. Soon the movement begun to be spread by the university students all across the East Pakistan.

¹⁴ Hussain, Dr. Akhter (2018). University of Dhaka, Language Movement and Birth of a Nation. Daily Sun, 4 March, 2018.



Photo: Students of University of Dhaka gathered at Amtola on 21st February, 1952 before breaking down the Section 144. Photo Courtesy: Ekush: Bhasha Andolonor Shochitro Itihash (1947-1956) by CM Tarek Reja

On 21 February 1952, the Language Movement took its climax when the Language Action Committee decided to organize a general strike and country-wide demonstrations. Knowing that government had issued an emergency 144 Section on Dhaka. The students ignored the order and joined meetings on 21 February and rallied on the streets of University of Dhaka for the rights of language. Police opened fire on the rally and many students along with general people died in that incident. Pakistan government also tried to remove the dead bodies from Dhaka Medical morgue by ordering a commando operation at night. However, students found the dumping place at Azimpur graveyard and while the

army left students marked the sites of the dumped dead bodies. The next morning thousands of people came to the graveyard to pay their respect to the martyrs. This inflamed the people of Pakistan and students even more. After this tragic occurrence they rallied and declared this day as one of the mourning days with the name 'Ekushey February'. Students and others who sacrificed their lives were named as Language Martyrs and in the nearby spot of the firing site an extraordinary structure known as "Shahid Minar" was built as a tribute to the Language Martyrs. Subsequently, UNESCO also declared this day as International Mother Language Day to give respect to the language martyrs for the

greatest sacrifice for their love for their mother tongue in 1999.^{15,16,17,18}

With the successful completion of the language movement the University of Dhaka emerged as the ultimate hub for all

subsequent movements and political struggles of the people. Political leaders conceived the ideas and the student community of University of Dhaka translated them into popular movements by taking the masses with them.

¹⁵ Bdnews24.com (2011). 'DU history and its part in Bangladeshi national identity formation' Accessed on: 28 Feb 2019. Available at: <https://opinion.bdnews24.com/2011/09/25/du-history-and-its-part-in-bangladeshi-national-identity-formation/>

¹⁶ মুক্তমনা 'Bangla Language Movement' Accessed on 28 Feb 2019. Available at: [https://mm-gold.azureedge.net/new_site/mukto-](https://mm-gold.azureedge.net/new_site/mukto-mona/bengali_heritage/bangla_language_movement.html)

[mona/bengali_heritage/bangla_language_movement.html](https://mm-gold.azureedge.net/new_site/mukto-mona/bengali_heritage/bangla_language_movement.html)

¹⁷ Banglapedia (2015). 'Language Movement' Accessed on: 28 Feb 2019 Available at: http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Language_Movement

¹⁸ <http://www.londoni.co/index.php/24-history-of-bangladesh/1952-bhasha-andolon/206-bhasha-andolon-bangladesh-language-movement-1948-1952-jinnah-declaration-history-of-bangladesh>

Student's Views on DUCSU: FGD based Finding

Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU) election is now a buzzword among the youth students in Bangladesh. After a 28 years gap, in honor of the verdict of High Court, DUCSU election is going to be held on 11th March, 2019 by the current university administration. Enthusiastic students from different political parties collected nomination forms to be the representatives of the students through DUCSU election. Common students are dreaming skyscraper for having better educational and cultural facilities from the DUCSU representatives. Candidates of DUCSU are campaigning to convince the student voters for casting their votes in their favor. Voters are also assessing the candidates and thinking who will be the best representatives of DUCSU. Prioritizing this significant issue, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted with the current students of the University of Dhaka. Students shared their views on various aspects related to the long awaited DUCSU election.¹⁹

Expectations from DUCSU Election

¹⁹ The FGD took place on 26 February 2019 at Teacher-Student Centre (TSC), University of Dhaka. The FGD was conducted by Ms. Arfay Jannat Korobi & Ms. Tasnuba Tazrin. The participants were: Sohel Rana, Md. Jhagir Al Fahad, Jakia Islam Shanta, Naeem Rezwana, Md. Omer Hossain,

FGD participants shared that a culture of political domination instigates fear in student's mind which often prevents them from telling the truth. Students need a political support especially the male students who are living in the dormitory for a little more comfortable stay. They believe that, if the election is held successfully this will create a platform for all the students where they can have equal voice and talk about their problems. DUCSU has an entity of reliability in leadership which will represent all the students going beyond the political divide.

Will it be a participatory election?

From the opinion of the FGD participants, different scenarios emerge for the female dormitories and male dormitories. Female dormitory of the university has a more politically flexible environment and they do not experience any problem in participating in the election. A female student politician stated that they are truly depending on the support of the general students that will help in electing a representative rather than political backup. On the other hand, a male respondent mentioned that all the

Azharul Islam Bhuiyan, Tithi Chakrabarty, Md. Ashikul Islam, and A.F.M Khalid Hossain Bhuiyan. All of the participants are the current students of University of Dhaka and voters of the DUCSU election.

candidates are carrying color of the political parties who are either in power or in opposition. FGD participants have not found a single independent candidate purely backed up by students' popularity which raises question on how effectively a political candidate may emerge from DUCSU election who can raise the demands of all the students without being biased and implement the ideas of keeping the university free from political influence. Different political parties collected their nominations to become the representatives of DUCSU but collecting nomination paper is not a big issue regarding fair participation; rather unrestricted participation of all the students during voting is.

What should be the responsibilities of DUCSU for student development?

According to the statement of FGD participants, elected DUCSU representatives should dedicate themselves to solve common problems of the students. Elected leaders should include in their agendas issues pertaining to the improvement of educational and cultural facilities. Students' complains in dormitory, transportation problem and the problem of outsiders should not remain the same as it has been for years. They should work on reducing the chaos and sound pollution in order to create a suitable environment for studying and mental peace in the university premises. They should play the vital role in maintaining the decorum of the University of Dhaka premise.

Should polling centers be placed inside the halls?

Placing polling centers inside the university halls is safe for the students. Most of them believe that it will help to organize the election easily as well as to ensure free and fair election. One of the respondents opined that the activists of *Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal* or *Islami Chhatra Shibir* are not able to stay in dormitories, so he doubted if they would be comfortable to cast their vote on the Election Day after entering halls.

What will be the impact of DUCSU election upon student politics?

Already all the student wings of different political parties have declared their panels for upcoming election. The FGD respondents shared that most of the students are holding political identities who collected nomination forms. Hardly anyone comes from general students. So if *Bangladesh Chhatra League* panel wins, then every member will get doubly empowered. At the same time, the voice of *Chhatra League* and DUCSU elected members will be the same. If other panel or groups like *Jatiyatabai Chhatra Dal* or any left-leaning students' panel will win, then it may create a room for conflict in terms of choices and interests. Participants thought that, DUCSU election reinforces student politics in many ways. Since the DUCSU representatives will be elected by the students' vote, so they will be much more accountable to student's development.

In overall perspectives how do you see the election?

FGD participants thought that DUCSU election will help the practice of democracy. It is not only the matter of politics, it has also a social and cultural value. Participants also opined that the elected leaders will be the leader of students rather than a political leader. But one of the participants said if the vice-president comes from ruling party, then it would be easier for him to work for students' development.

What do you think about the female students' participation in this election?

One of the female participants said that she wants equal participation of women in every sphere. But if she talks about politics she will see a different scenario. Female students are not interested most of the time in politics because of varied reasons. There are objections from family. It is also a challenging way, so women are not likely to take the challenge all the time. But they all think that DUCSU will give a big platform for female students to come forward in political arena and also boost up their leadership quality.

DUCSU Election 2019: A Brief History

Dr. Delwar Hossain²⁰

The acronym 'DUCSU' (Dhaka University Central Students' Union) has a special place in the history of Dhaka University. It bears a testimony of national struggle of the people of Bangladesh toward achieving rights to mother language, identity, education, equality, autonomy, self-determination, freedom and democracy. The first DUCSU was formed in 1924 with Mamtaz Uddin Ahmed and Jogendranath Sengupta as Vice President (VP) and General Secretary (GS) respectively. However, the first election of DUCSU was held in 1953 where SA Bari Ati and Zulmat Ali Khan won as VP and GS respectively. DUCSU elections were held for seven times during the period covering 1971-1990. Hence, the upcoming election of DUCSU and Hall Unions is the 8th election in the post-Liberation Bangladesh. The elections are going to be held on 11 March 2019. The previous elections were held on 6 June 1990 during the final days of the Ershad regime. It is more than twenty eight years that have passed without elections of DUCSU and Hall Unions at the University of Dhaka.

The successive political regimes even with their democratic credentials could not organize the elections although there

were some attempts to hold the elections. Hence, the scheduled elections of DUCSU are historic in every sense. Student led political parties, student activists and general students have demonstrated a considerable degree of enthusiasm about the elections. The preparation for holding the elections is at its final stage. Meanwhile, the university authority has completed a number of major steps.

First of all, the voter list has been prepared and finalized. The election schedule was declared on 11 February 2019. A five-member election conducting team was formed under the leadership of a Chief Returning Officer. Two returning officers have been appointed in each residential hall. The constitution for DUCSU and Hall Unions was amended by the Syndicate in its meeting on 29 January 2019. The same meeting of the Syndicate also approved a code of conduct for holding the elections. Nomination papers were distributed and duly submitted to the returning officers. A final list of candidates has been declared. The candidates are now on the election campaign trail. No violent incident involving the elections has been reported so far.

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DUCSU ELECTION AT A GLANCE

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| ELECTION DATE | MARCH 11 |
| Voting hours | 8am to 2pm |
| Positions contested | 25 |
| Final voter list publication date | February 20 |
| Deadline for submitting nominations | February 26 |
| Deadline for withdrawing nominations | March 2 |
| Last Ducsu election held | June 6, 1990 |

Source: *The Dhaka Tribune*, 11 February 2019

The 2019 DUCSU and Hall Union elections will be a major event in terms of number of voters and candidates. It has already drawn a huge attention at national level. The University has turned into a festive place. According to the final voter list as declared by the University on 5 March 2019, there are 40,999 voters who will vote in the elections. A large number of candidates are also vying for various positions in the elections. The total number of candidates in DUCSU is 229 who will be contesting for 25 positions. In the case of Hall Union election, 482 candidates will fight for 234 positions in different residential halls. It may be mentioned that each residential hall has 13

positions for electoral contest. It has been estimated that about 1.73% of total voters are contesting in the DUCSU and Hall Union elections which has transformed the elections into a competitive and participatory event.²¹

The election of DUCSU reminds us of the glorious past of the University of Dhaka as well as Bangladesh. The elected leaders of DUCSU and Hall Unions have always been in the frontline of resistance movements during the British and Pakistan days. Following the Liberation War in 1971, student leaders from DUCSU led political movements against the autocratic rulers. Student leaders of the University of Dhaka fronted the Language Movement,

²¹ Information is based on website available at ducso.du.ac.bd accessed on 6 March 2019.

Liberation Struggle, and the War of Independence in Bangladesh. The hoisting of National Flag on 2nd March 1971 at the University of Dhaka under the erstwhile repressive Pakistan state is a great historic event where student leaders were at the forefront and demonstrated their utmost courage and love for the Bengali nation. The identity of student leaders as office bearers of DUCSU had a phenomenal impact on the directions of movement leading to the creation of the Bangladesh state.

Termed as the mini-parliament of Bangladesh, DUCSU represents more than 40,000 students at different levels of the University's decision-making, to act as the voice for students in the national higher education policy debate, and to provide direct services to the student body. For example, according to section 20 of the Dhaka University Ordinance 1973, out of 105 senate members, there will be 5 members from DUCSU.

DUCSU is particularly significant for its contribution to create leadership among the students who are supposed to lead the nation of tomorrow. It is rightly considered the most prestigious elected student union in the country. It created a good number of high profile student leaders who later emerged as national political leaders. Tofael Ahmed, a former minister, a senior leader of Bangladesh Awami League and former VP of DUCSU

in the late 1960s observes that Dhaka University is called the factory of future leaders. Many student leaders from DUCSU became national leaders.

Finally, the critical issue is that DUCSU elections have a positive impact on student politics as demonstrated in different phases of history of Bangladesh. It is an imperative that the current trends of student politics need to be changed in a drastic way due to its reliance on coercive and non-democratic practices at various levels. DUCSU is a great hope in this regard. The successful holding of the upcoming DUCSU and Hall Union elections is in the great interest of student community at the University of Dhaka as well as the whole Bangladesh.

History of DUCSU

| TIMELINE | DESCRIPTION | TIMELINE | DESCRIPTION |
|------------------|--|-------------|---|
| 1924 | Ducusu is established, Jogendranath Sengupta is the first ever leader, selected as GS | | On January 17, High Court orders the authorities to arrange Ducsu polls within six months |
| 1925 | Mamtaaz Uddin Ahmed is nominated as the first VP | | On September 12, 15 former DU students file a contempt petition against DU VC Akhtaruzzaman, Proctor AKM Golam Rabbani and Treasurer Kamal Uddin for violating the High Court order to hold the Ducsu polls |
| 1953 | First polls held; SA Bari elected as VP, Zulmat Ali Khan as GS | 2018 | On September 16, as part of election preparations, DU authorities sit with 15 active, campus-based student organizations called Paribesh Parishad. During the meeting, the DU VC said the Ducsu polls might be held by March 2019 |
| 1953-1971 | During the Pakistani regime, under military ruler Ayub Khan, Ducsu elections are regularly held, except for 1965 and 1969. | | On October 31, DU publishes the database (draft voter list) of hall-based students. Among 38,493 voters, 14,509 were female and 23,984 were male |
| 1973 | First elections after the emergence of Bangladesh are held. Muzahidul Islam Selim and Mahbub Zaman were elected as VP and GS, respectively | | On January 6, the Supreme Court clears the way for holding the Ducsu polls, annulling its earlier order that stayed a High Court order asking the DU authorities to take necessary steps within the next six months to hold the election |
| 1974 | Elections are arranged in 1973-74, but scrapped later | | On January 10, a five-member committee, led by Prof Md Mizanur Rahman, takes suggestions from student organization representatives regarding the amendments of the Ducsu constitution and announces the deadline extension till January 14 |
| 1979-1990 | Two Ducsu elections are held during the rule of Ziaur Rahman (1979-80 and 1980-81). During the rule of Abdus Sattar, polls were held in 1982 and twice during the rule of autocratic ruler HM Ershad in 1989 and 1990. After Ershad's fall, Ducsu elections were not held for 28 years | 2019 | On January 17, the DU VC appoints Prof SM Mahfuzur Rahman as chief returning officer. The DU authority held a meeting with all 22 Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) based socio-cultural organizations of DU to exchange views about the Ducsu polls |
| 1990 | Last Ducsu elections are held on June 6. Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal-backed Aman-Khokon (Amanullah Aman and Khairul Kabir Khokon) panel won the election, and they stayed the leaders of the students' body until its dissolution | | On January 19, the DU VC appoints five returning officers and forms a seven-member committee to draw up a code of conduct for candidates |
| 1998 | Ducusu committee is dissolved on May 28. The authority declared that the elections would be held within six months. The Ducsu constitution was also amended. Paribesh Parishad was formed | | On January 21, DU holds the second meeting of the Paribesh Parishad where they discussed the amendment of the constitution and the electoral code of conduct |
| 2005 | Then DU VC SMA Faiz declares that elections would be held in December. Chhatra Dal was in favour of the elections, but Chhatra League opposed it | | On January 23, the polls schedule is announced; Ducsu elections are set to take place on March 11 |
| 2017 | Walid Ashraf goes on hunger strike on November 25, continues for 14 consecutive days | | |

Source: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/dhaka/2019/01/23/ducusu-polls-on-march-11>. Accessed on 8 March 2019.

Commentary:



Dr. M. M. Akash²²

In 1974, I was admitted to University of Dhaka to the Department of Economics. At that time Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was in power. The student's politics in the university campus was quite vibrant and students Union was more active and popular among the students. Students Union was elected in all the public university students' cabinets such as--DUSCU, CHUCSU, RUCSU and EUCSU. Teachers of Economics department were also left-oriented and that was led by Chairman Dr. Anisur Rahman. On the first day of our class he said to us that there was no textbook, the only textbook was the peasants of Bangladesh and their production function. He took us to Suhrawardy Uddyan and showed us how to grow crops and taught Economics on the basis of peasant's production function. DUCSU cabinet was playing vital role in representing student's rights and regularly held different kinds of

political programs within the campus which also ensured the participation of a large number of students from not only Dhaka University but also from other educational institutions of Dhaka city. There was a competition of flourishing extra-curricular activities via debate, cultural programs, etc. These are the positive sides of the then DUCSU.

There were negative sides also.

The negative sides were internal and fractional conflicts of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL). Bangladesh Chhatra League was the student wing of AL which was the ruling party of the country at that time. In 1972 the followers of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal came out from AL and Bangladesh Chhatra League was also divided and the new break out part quickly became very popular in the whole country with their radical slogans against the sitting power. JSD was promoting at least in slogan

²² Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka.

“scientific socialism and class struggle” and they became popular very quickly. They mostly were anti-ruling party. The defeated pro-Pakistani political forces shrewdly had also joined with them and created a broad political platform of all anti-Indian and anti-Soviet political forces. It was virtually an alliance of ultra-left, rightist and right reactionary political forces of the then Bangladesh but they were successful in harboring the popular sentiments of the youth against the government and the then AL. At that time everybody could see how in AL a small fraction was quickly becoming *nouveau riche* through plundering the scarce resources of the state.

Pro-JSD student’s wing formed their own panel and ran the DUCSU election against the joint panel of BCL and pro-Moscow Bangladesh Students Union. In that election the joint panel was defeated and the ballot box was hijacked by presumably the defeated party.

There was also bitter fractional bickering and infightings between one fraction of “Mujibbadi Chhatra league” and the Jubo (youth) League led by Fazlul Haque Moni. So there was continuous tension among them within and outside the campus. At one stage seven workers of the Jubo League were murdered in front of the Mohsin Hall or Surya Sen campus, I cannot remember the date exactly.

But at least the class and exams were held regularly and University administration also continued to encourage DUCSU which produced a wide range of young talented politicians and led different types of movements before and after the liberation war. These can be labeled as the peaceful positive sides of DUCSU which was sadly short-lived.

So in one side there were the ultra-left actually working for the pro-right knowingly or unknowingly and on the other side there were actually students union and pro-Soviet left who were working for the nationalists under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The traditional old left, followers of the Soviet line, was truly inspired by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and all the ultra-left as well as the right-wing forces within and outside the AL got united against Mujib’s version of socialism. They were also tacitly supported by the defeated pro-Pakistani forces of liberation war. Right-wingers believed that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the key person who led the progressive forces of the nation in those days and by removing Mujib from the political power, positive changes would be possible in the opposite direction. Right-wing forces were successful after the killing of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The main leader of the right-wing forces, Khondokar Moshtaq, came into power who actually was a right-winger inside the Awami League.

In 1975, after the killing of Bangabandhu and his family, University campus became hot and full of unrest, factional politics had already begun in 1974 and turned into chronic chaos. Student politics had become dirty; violent politics where accumulating more power due to internal disputes which mainly led to new splits among almost all the student bodies.

The student politics in campus led to the death of around 24 students till the dissolution of DUCSU in 1998 and in 1974 alone we had seen the seven murders within the campus area, in Mohsin Hall specifically. These killings had mostly happened due to internal political conflict, tender manipulation, extortion and power sharing struggle among the students on power leading to more and more violence. But there was no record of killing or disappearing on the occasion of DUCSU election in the campus though few incidents like hijacking ballot boxes and clashes between parties did happen. Academic activities had been hampered since the late 1970s. The campus arena become more violent and vulnerable during the military rule of General Ershad. During the period of 1980-1990 there developed a glorious democratic student movement against the autocratic rule of General Ershad. Most of the victims of that movement were activists of student fronts of the Awami League, BNP, Communist Party and Jatiya Samajtantrik

Dal while some others who sacrificed their lives were general students too.

Often a question is raised about why socialism was popular and appealing among the young politicians and to the general people of Bangladesh in the early 1970's? The answer probably lies with the fact that both China and the United States sided with Pakistan which led to a discontent among the population towards these great powers. On the contrary, Indian socialist ideology was pretty much influential in our political domain from the beginning and so was the case with the former Soviet Union. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the Father of the Nation also had proclaimed that socialism should be the future course of development before his death in 1975. The party in power and the main opposition both were pro socialism! So there was a popular positive attitude towards socialism.

Since 1980s the whole scenario of DUCSU changed and together students, politicians joined in anti-Ershad regime movements which definitely showed its past glory and strength of unity in many levels during that period. DUCSU worked relentlessly until the fall of Ershad regime but after that they lost the unity of purpose to thrive within the campus, different minds, and different ideology played inside the student groups, money, arms and special bribes induced certain student's leaders to become the play toy

in the hands of their patrons inside the ruling political parties. Student politics began to ebb.

Though Bangladesh Awami League played a glorious role in all the democratic movements from 1952 to 1971, left-wing political parties led DUCSU immediately after the independence. It is also because of the geopolitics of that time and the momentum of the armed liberation war. At that time there were 14 socialist countries in the world, and it was thought that Bangladesh would be the 15th. Before the death of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman he introduced a one party system called the BAKSAL. Though the announced aim was revolutionary, not all the people behind it were revolutionary.

Generally, the students are now anti-politics. The seats of resident halls are controlled by the student wing of the ruling party. I heard that some of them leased the seat and took money from them. The power system is uneven. The other ideology believers or opponent party followers were not given rooms to stay inside the hall even if they were allotted rooms by the university authority.

The glorious history of DUCSU has not been established within a day, it has its own elements, strength and unity of struggle against the power monger ruling class almost for a half a century. It creates many legendary, strong, brilliant young

leaders and make places for the new leaders to flourish and nurture. There is no doubt that DUCSU and student politics in the campus support and actively promote many student politician whom are now in many cases do a favor for the future generation students who wants to do a clean politics. But at the same time, we have to remember that student politics of the campus at a certain period got derailed and was promoting misuse of power cliques, got involved in many violent activities including internal political conflict which finally lost its appeal in national politics and gradually gave rise to the negative notion of politics that further led to the demolition of the student politics in the campus and fall of DUCSU.

There lies another crucial question that is—'Is there any possibility of changing the power structure inside and outside the campus by DUCSU election in current situation or not?'

It depends on who wins because if we observe the history there is a tendency of the ruling government to hold the domination over DUCSU, the so-called second parliament of Bangladesh, as much as possible. So, it might be logical for the current government to expect the same outcome as before or at least can hope for the win. If the general students' demand to transfer the voting centers from halls to academic buildings were accepted, then we may hope for a fair election. And it is

justified, I think. The demand is ignored by saying that the constitution of DUCSU does not permit it which is very unfortunate because we have to update the constitution as time demands to do so. But the only hope is the general students who will have to come to the center to apply their voting rights without any fear and if they see any inconsistency or face barrier to go into the center then they will have to raise their voice and will have to protest against it. Otherwise there will be no change and the administration might see it as their victory against the general students. The initiative taken by the university administration till now is not sufficient. The primary thing which is to resolve the controversy of resolving the place of the voting center for better transparency was not done. Because the voting centers were not transferred to neutral places so there is a strong skepticism about the fairness of this year's DUCSU election. In past the centers were at halls, because there was a balance of power, both Chhatra League and Chhatra Union were strong and sharing power in many levels without much of a clash. But now the power structure is uneven. It is important to change the constitution for changing the place of voting to ensure a free and fair election.

The main reason of not conducting DUCSU election for 28 years was only for political reason. Because the ruling party

was not interested to share the DUCSU excluding its concern.

If the votes take place peacefully and no unfair means are adopted, the voting rate is 60% or more then there might be a possibility of change. Even if Bangladesh Chhatra League wins there might be some members who may come from other political parties. Then we will get a better administration which will help the university administration to perform its development works in a neutral manner.

DUCSU gets the attention of mass media because of history. In past all national demands were achieved by DUCSU. They represented the whole nation. The students of Dhaka University were from the middle class family, they represented the instrumental demands. That is why DUCSU got the symbolic value. I don't think the symbolic value is still there. I think DUCSU will no more play a vital role in national politics but will play a vital role inside Dhaka University to make it a better place from elsewhere. And if the result becomes acceptable to all political parties then other universities central students' union will also be more effective. If the election is at least fairer than the last national election, then there will be a positive change, I think, in national politics as well as student politics, however small it may be.

Most of the teachers are not optimist about DUCSU election. Also a large part of the student body is not optimist because of the uneven power structure of hall politics. If everything occurred within the status quo then there will be no change. The only change will be the ruling party celebrating the victory and others saying that we do not accept the result.

The representation of female students is nothing remarkable. A large number of students are not interested about DUCSU election till now. The quality of education

depends on the quality of teachers. DUCSU has nothing to do with it. The immediate challenge is to have a peaceful acceptable DUCSU election. If we can ensure that, a virtual change may occur. If the apprehended result takes place and the post-election situation proves to be the status quo then nothing would be possible. The voter list is okay. I don't find any problem regarding this. I think extra courses like evening courses will not hamper the election because he/she might be the valid undergraduate student.

Commentary:



Dr. Sadeka Halim²³

While I was a student of Dhaka University in 1980-81 session, my father was the Vice-Chancellor of this University for the periods from 1976 to 1983. It is noteworthy that during that period, three DUCSU elections were held in the years 1979, 1981, 1982 and I, along with other students exercised our voting rights in latter two elections. We know that University of Dhaka is governed by an Ordinance in 1973 which gave this institution a strong legal footing to become an autonomous public university. In this Ordinance, it is clearly stated how the university administration should run, what should be the rights and responsibilities of the teachers, the nature of teacher-students' relationship, proctorial rules-all three necessitate some changes. Necessity of DUCSU was felt in

the early years of the university as the union formed in 1924, yet after a long journey of 29 years, first election was held in 1953. After that regular elections were held except for the years 1965 and 1969. Formation process of DUCSU was articulated in the 1973 ordinances as such; The VC will be the president of DUCSU, 10 elected members from the 16 representatives and a teacher as the treasurer. According to the constitution after the last amendment in 2019, with the VC as ex officio president of DUCSU, the executive committee will be consisted of 24 members. The major point is that DUCSU election is to be held every year to ensure the democratic norms and culture. Election process is also clearly explained in the ordinance. In every hall, a hall union will be formed by the students

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Director, Center for Advanced Research in Social Sciences, University of Dhaka;
Former-First Female Information Commissioner, Information Commission, Bangladesh.

of respective halls through neutral election, and in the same day students will vote for the central positions. DUCSU is very important because in the universities like Oxford, student union is also elected.

The initiative to hold the election after 28 years by the current administration is indeed a positive and praiseworthy one. It has another story to answer the question of this gap of 28 years. That is, every Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University must be elected by the Senate. If the VC is selected by the President, s/he has to make it legal through a Senate election. However, the Senate was incomplete without the registered graduates and DUCSU members during the terms of previous VC Professor AAMS Arefin Siddique. When we writ against this, the High Court ordered to hold the registered graduate election and DUCSU election by March, 2019. So in honor of this verdict, this election is going to take place by current university administration after 28 years.

University of Dhaka is the prime university in this Country. In four years we will celebrate 100 years' anniversary of this university. We have reached to a vast proximity than the primary years. We have 13 faculties, 88 departments and 11 institutes in this university. DUCSU contributed in all the major political events which shaped the country's history from 1952 to 1971 and after. Central Student's

Union hoisted the flag for independent Bangladesh. So, Dhaka University shapes national politics. From this platform, many people joined the War of Liberation in 1971 and afterwards gained recognition in their own rights, represented many sectors of the government. So, the student organizations work as an umbrella for every major political parties in Dhaka University. We want to see them working neutrally but, as they are facilitated by the political parties, sometimes they get instructions from the upper tier. Students get involved in national politics through these practices. Previously, students of Dhaka University got involved in national political issues like protest against military government in the 1990s, Anti- Majid Khan Education Policy, in that time DUCSU played a very crucial role. Student's demand was denied and they were beaten indiscriminately. My father, Dr. Fazlul Halim Chowdhury, then Vice-Chancellor of this university resigned from his position to protest against this torture. Students were protesting against a national education policy which was not suitable for the people of this country. That is why the role of DUCSU is significant in the realm of national politics.

I have seen three elections in 1979, 1980 and 1982 and voted in the latter two elections. I have seen some violence in the 1979 election when my father was the VC and we stayed in the residence. We should

realize that Bangladesh was undergoing a complex political situation after the assassination of the Father of the Nation, Bangobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975. He was going to preside in the Convocation of University of Dhaka on 15th August. Afterwards the VC of that time was removed and my father came as successor in 1976 through the Senate election. In that situation of political turbulence, JSD-Chhatro League, Chhatro League, Chhatro Union and slightly rightist political parties existed. It was the period of Zia regime. It was during this period when Chhatro Dal was born and came into existence. With all these confrontations existing alongside, there were several violence we have seen. I had not seen anyone killed or die a martyr, but shootings, crossfire and arms usage among the students were visible. By controlling this situation, elections in 1979 and two successive polls were held. This violence was very unfortunate. Arms and weapons came to students' reach, supplied by the ruling power. Students were polluted and corrupted, money was in the play. By controlling this situation, the polls were held, students also cooperated very much.

DUCSU election is a political election, because everyone is carrying various colors. Different student organizations like Chhatro League, Chhatro Dal, Leftist organizations, Progressive Student Union, Quota reformists are being gathered in

Madhur Canteen. Everyone knows that this a micro-level political election. Obviously a political leadership is developing here. We have an old opinion that politicians do not study. In our student life, we saw that people who were involved in politics, were meritorious also. Now the trend has changed and who comes to politics, takes it as a profession. They do not need to be meritorious. Meritorious does not necessarily implies bookish and structured knowledge. A student leader in becoming, has to be well-prepared in many disciplines. Many social issues and welfare and challenges of students should be handled with intellect and merit. To be an enlightened student leader, extensive study and knowledge about country, society and other world leaders' life is necessary. Comparatively elderly people are entering into this platform, some are businessmen. We have to keep watch that if anyone is coming for their business interest. Meritocracy is a major point to be emphasized. I think the environment is not suitable for studies in the student halls. In the *Ganaroom* (mass room; densely populated) students cannot study. Students takes control of the seat allocation from the provost. After DUCSU election, the student union can play a vital role in this situation but if they decide only to help those who follows them, it will be wrong. When they are elected they shall have to serve everyone. This kind of mindset will help to emphasize

on meritocracy. I think to create the space for meritocracy is a major task for the new leaders and it is a challenge.

I heard that seven female candidates will run from the Chhatro League as members, and a woman was General Secretary of *Baam Dal*. Actually I expected that one female candidate from Chhatro league will run for the position of Vice President (VP) or General Secretary (GS), but it did not happen. I hope in future their reflection and presence will be visible. It is clear that the leadership is directed by the upper tier of the political parties. So, this decision has to come from there. But the elected female members should work for the opportunity to reach the higher seats in future. Female candidates do not get equal participation in political parties. Like national election, expectations are not being met in DUCSU election yet.

After DUCSU election I think university administration will be elevated. To my opinion, administration of University of Dhaka is incomplete because of the absence of strong Student's Union. University is for the students, for their welfare. This is an in-house campus, we provide accommodation for teachers and students. So, to consider things from every angle, DUCSU has an important role in the administration. It is noteworthy that three elections I had seen, the elected body played a very proactive role with the

administration. They did not interfere or propose anything that was beyond their boundary. For example, teacher's recruitment is not DUCSU's concern, they will see if academic activities are running smoothly, student's affairs and such. They can point out the shortcomings of the administration and help by all means to run the day-to-day affairs of the university very effectively. The relationship has to be reciprocal and chivalrous.

DUCSU will help to build up student-student relationship. Since the students do not know where to go in any problem. Detailed information should be provided about their rights through DUCSU. Networking and mobility with the leaders will build social capitals for students. I think these relationships between teacher-students and student-student based on the election are positive.

We could not practice micro-level democracy for a long time. After DUCSU election, chances are that RUCSU, CUCSU and others will follow. Their Senate are incomplete, their VC are not elected by the Senate. In this regard University of Dhaka is the pioneer. So, there will be a spill-over effect. There were four public universities formed after 1973 ordinance. So, DUCSU election will catch the attention of other universities and encourage to changes. This is the beauty of democracy.

Annex:

Some definitional clarification according to BPO Codebook.

Gunfight. Shootout opposing the police or security forces to criminals, militants or other irregular forces that do not match the definition of a non-state armed group.

Clash. Two-sided violence between groups, outside of the context of war or insurgency. *Example: supporters of rival political parties fight each other.*

Assault. One-sided violence by an individual or small group against another individual or small group. *Example: stabbing, shooting of someone by a perpetrator*

Fight. Two-sided violence between individuals or small groups. *Example: brawl between 3-4 people.*

Sexual assault. One-sided sexual violence, such as rape or attempted rape, by an individual or small group against another individual or small group.

Destruction of property. One-sided violence perpetrated with the intent of damaging property. *Examples: vandalism, arson.*