

# 165 BCL clashes at CU in 5yrs



Unrest on campus ahead of fresh intake on Mar 2



BCL internal power struggle fuels violence



Inaction against offenders offer encouragement

The Chittagong University campus has been in a state of unrest for the past few days as a result of back-to-back clashes between leaders and activists from the ruling party's student wing -- the Bangladesh Chhatra League.

Students and teachers have expressed concerns about the indifference of the university administration at sudden clashes ahead of the fresh intake on March 2 and the negative impact it is having on the overall academic atmosphere.



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According to sources, BCL factional clashes are a recurring menace on campus, with at least 165 such incidents over the last five years. Erupting over trivial matters, these clashes left over 400 leaders and activists injured and several university dormitory rooms vandalised.

However, the authorities have not filed a case on these incidents so far.

Many BCL leaders have also been accused to be involved in ragging, sexual harassment, assaulting journalists, misbehaving with teachers and students, as well as tender rigging and recruitment irregularities.

According to BCL insiders, every clash saw Chhatra League men arrive on the scene brandishing lethal weapons, but they were never met with any music from the administration, which encouraged them to become even more aggressive.

Senior teachers and former CU BCL unit leaders said if the administration responded harshly to each incident, it would curb the offenders' recklessness.

The university suspended 31 leaders and activists of BCL for various terms in the last three years over clash incidents. However, no suspension order was implemented. The suspended leaders continued to live in residential halls, appeared in examinations, and even received certificates. The majority of the suspension orders were cancelled on 'humanitarian grounds'.

On September 24, 2023, the central BCL committee dissolved the CU BCL unit over infighting, extortion, and Prior to this, there were two clashes between these factions on Thursday and Friday, during which at least 29 leaders and activists from both sides were injured. Earlier on Wednesday night and Thursday afternoon, Sixty-Nine clashed with another CU BCL faction, "Bijoy", during which at least 15 people were injured.

Speaking to senior teachers and former BCL leaders, this correspondent also learned that these clashes tend to occur frequently before fresh intakes as it creates an opportunity to exert pressure on the administration.

Under these circumstances, the BCL leaders are in a position to ask for favours in exchange for their assistance in settling the disputes.

Their demands may include contracts for construction projects on campus, influence on the university recruitment process, and even cash benefits.

Professor Siraj Ud Dowla, dean of the social science faculty, told The Daily Star, "The absence of exemplary punishment against the unruly BCL men has enabled them to become more violent. The administration should immediately address the matter for the sack of the general student body."

Asked about steps taken by the university, CU Proctor Nurul Azim Sikdar told reporters that two probe committees were formed to investigate the incidents.

"Through news media outlets, we have seen the photos of those who were carrying weapons during the clashes, and we are taking necessary action with the help of police."

The university authorities held a press conference at Fine Art Institution on Sunday night over the incidents of recent violence.

There, Vice Chancellor Shireen Akhter said, "The university administration is unable to take action against offenders immediately after a clash. There are procedures to follow such as forming probe

committees. Action is taken based on the reports and recommendations of the committees."