

Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) is the highest seat of technical education in Bangladesh and now regarded as one of the best engineering education institutes in the world. Hundreds of meritorious students get themselves admitted in BUET and the campus resounds with their pithy and wise talks. Perhaps there is no University in the world like BUET where the galaxy of talented students of the whole country swarms. BUET has many highly qualified teachers with great academic and intellectual attainments. There is no doubt about the degree of their devotion and sincerity to their profession. Their fame as a teacher is impeccable. Students make the campus hum on working days with educational activities. They live in amity with each other. Many BUET graduates find their niche in many places of the world and leave their footprint in the field of research. Yet many of the young generations may not know that BUET has come to this position after traversing a long way of about one hundred and fifty years of intellectual development or about them whose intensive efforts, tireless labor and pursuit have been as the propeller for the establishment of BUET. Hopefully, this article will prompt the young generation to know the glorious history of BUET.

Bangladesh formerly was a part of British India as East Bengal. The area comprising present Bangladesh had no university for a long time during the British rule (1757-1947). In 1823, a general committee of public instruction was constituted in Calcutta for the development of education in this area. Afterward, education in this area was guided by the Christian missionaries with a new vision and they started setting up many new schools. This paved the way of English education in British India. In 1835, Lord Bentinck introduced English as the language of instruction in India. The colonials thus vouchsafed English medium education to the Indians as it is the language of business and globalization. In 1857, the establishment of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras University opened a new era for the development of higher education in British India. Thus it appears that the first university adjacent to present Bangladesh was the University of Calcutta. The root of engineering though can be traced to the dawn of civilization; Institutions for engineering education were founded as the outcome of the Industrial Revolution around the world during the 18th and 19th centuries. In about the middle of the colonial period, British engineers undertook the work of surveying and mapping, improvement of road and water transport and building of railroads in India. The history of engineering education in Bangladesh dates back to 1876 when the Dacca Survey School was founded at Nalgola in a rented building near the west of the current Sir Salimullah Medical College Campus, in old Dhaka to train surveyors for the government of Bengal in British India. The nucleus of the present BUET was formed. BUET had thus a humble beginning as the survey school that was established with no great cause or mission in the minds of its founders except that the imperial rulers needed surveyors. Nawab of Dhaka Sir Khwaja Ahsanullah, a philanthropist endowed donations for developing the survey school. After his death in 1901, his son, the then Nawab of Dhaka, Sir Khwaja Salimullah released 112,000 rupees grant in 1902 for the upgrading, development, and expansion of this institution.

In 1902, Lord Curzon instituted the Indian University Commission to improve the condition of higher

education in India. In 1905, during the period of Lord Curzon, Bengal was divided and a province named East Bengal and Assam carved out with its capital in Dhaka. A country-wide agitation started and the agitation was led by the privileged class in Calcutta against the partition. In 1906, the Survey School building was constructed at government initiative near the present Shahidullah Hall of Dhaka University. Even a few years ago a tall chimney that existed at this location used to bear the testimony to this institution. In 1908, the school started to offer diploma degrees. As an acknowledgment of Nawab's donation, the school was renamed to Ahsanullah School of Engineering. In 1911, the partition of Bengal was annulled. In 1912, the Ahsanullah Engineering School was moved to BUET's present premises. Initially, the school was affiliated with Dhaka College and later it was brought under the Director of Public Instruction. The annulment of Bengal partition left a deep mark of anger, sorrow, and frustration in the minds of the majority population of Eastern Bengal and Assam. In January 1912, the leading personalities of this section the Nawab of Dhaka Sir Salimullah, Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury and Sher-e-Bangla A.K. Fazlul Huq made strong representations to the British Viceroy, Lord Hardings, in favor of setting up a university at Dhaka. To assuage the feelings of the people of this part, the government issued a communiqué in February 1912 assuring them that it would be set up. In May 1912, the then government of Bengal set up a committee known as the Nathan Committee to recommend a scheme for the establishment of the university. In 1913, the government of India passed a resolution to establish some teaching and residential universities in British India including one in Dhaka. In 1917, the Calcutta University Commission was formed headed by Sir Michael Sadler. Finally, following the recommendations of the Commission, the University of Dhaka was established in the year 1921 which was the first university in present Bangladesh. In 1938, A.K. Fazlul Huq, the then Prime Minister of Bengal, appointed Hakim Ali as the principal of the Ahsanullah Engineering School. After World War II (1939-1945) the government took up large-scale plans for industrial development in Bengal, but there was an acute shortage of skilled manpower. A government appointed committee made recommendations for establishing an Engineering College at Dhaka with an enrolment capacity of 120 to offer a 4-year bachelor's degree programme in mechanical, electrical, chemical and agricultural engineering.

The Indian subcontinent when achieved independence from the British rule on August 14-15, 1947, was divided into two separate states in the name of India and Pakistan. Pakistan was divided into two wings i.e. West Pakistan and East Pakistan (presently Bangladesh). After the partition of India, Chief Minister of East Bengal Sir Khwaja Nazimuddin approved the Ahsanullah Engineering School to be upgraded to Ahsanullah Engineering College as a Faculty of Engineering under the University of Dhaka with a view to meeting the increasing demand for engineers in the country and expanding the facilities for the advancement of engineering education. Hakim Ali was appointed as the first Principal of the college. In 1948, the Government of East Pakistan gave recognition to the Engineering College and approved a degree programme in civil, mechanical, electrical, chemical, agricultural and textile engineering and a three years long diploma programme in civil, mechanical and electrical engineering. Later, metallurgical engineering was started instead of textile and agricultural engineering.

In 1951, TH Mathewman was appointed as the next principal. Dr. M. A. Rashid succeeded him in 1954 as the first Bengali principal of the college. In 1957, the enrolment capacity for the bachelor's degree was increased from 120 to 240 and the diploma course was withdrawn from 1958. As Manufacturing and process industries started to grow gradually in the 1950s and 1960s, the then govern-

ment of Pakistan in 1958 set up an Education Commission known as Sharif Education Commission. Dr. Rashid was one of the members of this commission. In the middle of the year 1961, Dr. Rashid was appointed as the Director of newly established Directorate of Technical Education. The Sharif commission recommended establishing two technological universities: a university of engineering and technology by upgrading the Ahsanullah Engineering College into EPUET in Dhaka and an agricultural university by upgrading the East Pakistan College of Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry into Mymensingh Agricultural University. After a few days, following the recommendation of the Commission a project committee was formed by the then East Pakistan Government to take actions for setting up an engineering university in this part. Its members were Education Secretary Mr. Ali Hasan, Technical Education Director Dr. Rashid, Education Advisor of Ahsanullah Engineering College Dr. Bergelin and the Technical Education Advisor of Government of Pakistan Dr. V. G. DeSa. All the meetings of the project committee were held at the house of Dr. Bergelin. During the meeting, Dr. Bergelin, visiting professor from Texas A&M College, offered lunch and afternoon snacks with his own expenses. According to the recommendation of that project committee, the East Pakistan Engineering and Technological University (EPUET) Ordinance, 1961 was issued by the then East Pakistan Government in September 1961. Thus in order to create facilities for post-graduate studies and research, the Ahsanullah Engineering College was upgraded to EPUET. And EPUET started its formal journey as a technical university on 1 June 1962. Dr. Rashid was appointed as the first Vice-Chancellor of the University. A partnership with the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas (renamed Texas A&M University) was formed, and professors from A&M came to teach and formulate the curriculum.

In 1962, when the Ahsanullah Engineering College was transformed into EPUET, then all the Classrooms, College Library, Laboratories, Principal's office, and Administrative offices were accommodated in the only yellow colored two-storeyed building of the College. The Building was called the "Press Building" as the Government Press office of the province, Eastern Bengal and Assam was situated (1905-1911) in the building. Workshops and other supporting offices of the college were located in some semi-building tin sheds. The present machine shop is standing as a witness of that time. In the college premises, there was the Principal's residence occupying a large area and two more Bungalows where senior teachers lived. There were also a few thatched barracks where some teachers, officers, and employees used to live. There were two College hostels - Main Hostel and Palashi Tin Shed Hostel. The University had started its journey with the allocation of only 18 lakh taka and teachers and employees of Ahsanullah Engineering College. Professor of Rajshahi Government College and renowned mathematician Muhammad Abdul Jabbar was appointed as the first registrar of the university. Professor M. Kabiruddin was appointed as the first director of student's welfare and Prof. Dr. V.G. DeSa was appointed as the director of DAERS. At that time, the post of controller of the examination was not created. University registrar did all the work related to the examination of the university. Professor Momtazuddin took the charge of the first comptroller and Mr. M. Sahabuddin was appointed as the first librarian of the university. The construction works of the university started by building the present Civil Engineering Building. After that, Titumir Hall (then Quaid-e-Azam Hall), Sher-e-Bangla Hall, Suhrawardi Hall (then Liakot Hall), Shahid Smriti Hall, Female Students Hall (Chattri Hall) and Dr. M.A. Rashid Hall were constructed consecutively. Architecture and Planning Building, Gymnasium and Auditorium, EME Building etc were built. The residence of the teachers (building number 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7) was built by demolishing the residence of the Principal of the engineering college and later some more residential buildings were built on

the land known as "Dhakeshwari area" when handed over to the university by the then Pakistan P. W. D. at the end of 1968. Earlier, the Vice-Chancellor Office and various administrative offices were shifted in the main hostel. At present, the urban campus occupies 91.37 acres (0.37km²) of land. ECE Building of West Palashi campus is a landmark of BUET. The construction work of the university is still in progress. In the session, 1962-1963, the total number of enrolled students in EPUET was 1022; three of them were female in two faculties and 10 departments. There were 89 teachers.

After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, East Pakistan University of Engineering and Technology (EPUET) was renamed as the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET). Out of six universities of the newly born Bangladesh, the four general universities began to operate under the New University Ordinance of 1973. They have a senate. In these universities, the teachers of the University also elect some of the members of the Senate, Syndicate, the Academic Council and the Deans of the Faculties. BUET did not come under the purview of the new 1973 ordinance as Bangabandhu thought that BUET should be run by the old 1961 ordinance. Bangabandhu, the Father of Nation, was a mastermind and a visionary who could see beyond the petty party squabbles and interest. He wanted the stakeholders of BUET to be preoccupied with learning, researching and teaching. He truly took a pragmatic initiative to stop the finishing of merit and creative faculty. BUET does not have the Senate, elected members of the Academic Council and the Syndicate. Deans of faculties are also not elected in BUET. In essence, there is no election in the university for different bodies and positions. BUET is perhaps one of our success stories of post-independent Bangladesh which we could be rightly proud about.

BUET has been trying over the years for being a center of excellence through research and scholastic achievements instead of remaining as a teaching university only. At present, BUET has eighteen teaching departments under five faculties and six institutes. About six hundred fifty teachers are teaching in these departments and institutes. The members of the faculty having envying strength of faculties are taking extensive programs for both teaching and research to emerge BUET as one of the most prestigious universities for higher education and innovative research in Bangladesh and be counted as a world top ranking university. Postgraduate research works are now among the primary functions of the university. BUET has already established a Technology Transfer Office (TTO) with a view to managing the intellectual properties created from our research and boosting up innovation culture in BUET. Every year the intake of undergraduate students is around 1055, while the intake of graduate students in Master's and Ph.D. programs is around 1000. BUET is fully able and rendering its full support in the development programs of the country. The present status of BUET has made us dreamy. Maybe, our Alma Mater has grown up slowly to her present position with the long passage of time. Now, we cherish the idea that BUET will reach to the pinnacle of advancement in engineering education and research by the magic of metamorphosis like the emergence of a beautiful butterfly through an amazing transformation from its present stage in the near future.