

Non-students rule new JCD committee

8 of central committee earlier reported as victims of enforced disappearance

PRABIR BARUA CHOWDHURY and MAHDI AL MUHTASIM

The new central committee of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) has at least five members who are alleged victims of enforced disappearances.

Another five such victims have been named in two unit committees of the BNP's student wing.

While one group of JCD leaders says this has been done with the hope that they would return alive, the other claims it was aimed at gaining political advantages.

There are barely any regular students in the 736-member full-fledged JCD committee, approved by BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia on Saturday night, 15 months after its 151-member partial committee was announced in October 2014.

Then again, the committee allegedly had married

members -- something that BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia earlier reportedly prohibited -- and people who were accused in criminal cases.

The JCD central committee, led by President Rajib Ahsan and General Secretary Akramul Hasan, has also approved committees for different educational institutions, including Dhaka University, Jagannath University and Jahangirnagar University.

The victims of forced disappearance who have been included in the central committee are assistant general secretaries Mahbub Hasan Sujan and Selim Reza, assistant organising secretaries Iftekhar Ahmed Dinar and Mofidul Islam Rashed, and executive member Kazi Farhad Hossain.

Aminul Islam Zakir has been made president and Tariqul Hasan Jhantu vice president of the JCD's

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Tejgaon College chapter while Asaduzzaman Rana, Majharul Islam Rassel and Md Al Amin have been named as joint general secretaries of the Jagannath University unit.

Contacted, new JCD Office Secretary Abdus Sattar said, "We hope that they would someday return among us alive. That's why we have kept them in the committees."

But another central leader of the student body gave a different explanation.

"It's completely a political move. This was done so that we can say the law enforcers made our party colleagues to disappear," said a JCD vice president.

Established in 1979, the JCD is yet to have a constitution. Though a draft charter was prepared more than 12 years ago, it never got the final approval.

"But we follow the draft and it stipulates that the central committee cannot have more than 151 members in it," said the JCD vice president, preferring anonymity.

Asked why then the new committee has so many members, he said that the central command of the BNP wanted to "reward" everyone who worked for the party since 1/11 changeover in 2007.

However, while doing so, the JCD in a Dhaka University hall committee gave membership to a person who never even studied at the university.

"One Lahul Galib got membership in Ziaur Rahman Hall committee though he is not a DU student," alleged JCD Assistant Organising

Secretary Amir Amzad Munna.

"While verifying the information he provided, we found that he was never admitted to Dhaka University. We conveyed to the [BNP] high command our protest but in vain," he told The Daily Star.

There are more anomalies. According to the draft JCD constitution, one must be a student to be eligible even for the primary membership.

"But almost all of the 151 members of the partial committee announced in 2014 were not even students. The same goes for the full-fledged committee," said another JCD leader, who was involved in the selection process.

"We tried to keep only students in the committee but no one listens to us. We send a list to the party high command for approval but they replaced all the names in most of the cases," he added.

To fulfil the requirement, around 100 leaders of the committee had recently enrolled themselves as MBA students or MPhil researchers in different universities, according to JCD insiders.

Then again, there were at least 500 people in the 736-strong committee who were "never seen in the field in the last four or five years," according to another vice president of the student organisation.

"We requested the senior [BNP] leaders not to pick any inactive member for the central committee posts. But they did not pay heed," he added.

According to him, only five of the

35 JCD vice presidents and five joint secretaries out of 29 in the new committee are active. "The rest were never even seen in party gatherings in the past five years."

Some JCD leaders alleged that many of the central leaders were married.

According to them, Khaleda, before the "partial committee" was announced in 2014, asked the then JCD leaders to not pick married people for the top five posts.

"The new president of the organisation's DU unit, Al Mehedi, got married five to six years ago and got divorced a few years later," said one of the vice presidents. He too wished anonymity.

Mehedi, however, rejected the allegation. "If anyone has any proof, let them present it."

Some central leaders also alleged that Mehedi got admitted to the accounting and information system department of the DU in 2002-03 and was no more a student.

Mehedi claimed he was currently doing masters in Japanese Studies at the university.

New General Secretary of the DU JCD, Bashar Siddique, has been accused of not being a student anymore and was accused in a case over running drug business.

Justifying his selection, Bashar said, "Though I am now out of study, I have completed my honours and I will sign up for a masters programme later."

About the case, he said, "A false case was filed against me four years ago to harm my political career."