

45 unit committees: Chhatra Dal faces flak from its grassroots

Protesting leaders allege bias in member selections

9 HOUR(S) AGO UPDATED 6 HOUR(S) AGO POLITICS

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Staff Correspondent



Chhatra Dal activists clash in Rangamati.

Chhatra Dal, the student wing of the ruling BNP, is facing growing resentment from its grassroots after announcing committees for 45 units, with “deprived” leaders and activists staging protests in at least five districts and accusing the central leadership of ignoring long-serving organisers.

The backlash has created a fresh organisational challenge for the Bangladesh Nationalist Party’s affiliated organisations as it tries to expand and strengthen its field-level activities, insiders said.



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On Saturday night, 45 committees -- for university, medical college, district and metropolitan units -- were announced, including 22 new partial committees and 23 full committees.

Following the announcement, grassroots leaders and activists staged protests, demanding the reconstitution of the committees.

The protests have already spread to Rangamati, Noakhali, Kishoreganj, Dinajpur and the capital’s Nayapaltan area, where demonstrators alleged that active, long-serving organisers were ignored while inactive, married, elderly and non-student individuals were included.

Chhatra Dal General Secretary Nasir Uddin Nasir said, “When we give posts to two persons and give other posts to the rest, many people often feel disappointed and resentful. For now, we are taking these things as quite normal.

“We believe they will accept the organisation’s decision. If they remain patient and follow the organisation’s rules, a situation and environment will be created for them to become leaders in the future.”

He said the committees were formed after considering all factors and that the allegations against them were baseless.

Chhatra Dal insiders said the grassroots discontent has become a major test for the central leadership at a time when the organisation is trying to revive educational institutions and district units after years of weak organisational presence.

In Rangamati, a clash occurred yesterday over a programme organised by the newly formed partial committee of the district unit, as protesting leaders and newly appointed leaders faced off, leaving at least one person injured. As tension escalated, the local administration imposed Section 144 in the area to prevent further violence.

Army and police personnel were also deployed in parts of the town after two days of protests and counter-protests raised fears of further clashes, sources said.

A similar protest erupted in Noakhali, Nasir’s home district, where protesting leaders declared him “unwanted” following the announcement of the district committee.

After a 37-member district committee was announced, several hundred leaders and activists burned tyres and blocked roads in Majdee Town. Several crude bomb explosions were reported during the protest, sparking panic in the area.

During the hours-long protest, commuters and students faced considerable distress.

The protesters alleged that the committee was formed without properly assessing the role of leaders who had remained active during difficult political periods. They also claimed that some leaders with weak organisational records were given posts due to lobbying and personal connections.

A faction of leaders in Kishoreganj also brought out a procession, alleging that supporters of the district party leader and a state minister were prioritised when the district committee was formed.

Protests were also seen in Cox’s Bazar, Dinajpur and in front of the BNP central office in Nayapaltan, where protesting leaders gathered to demand that the central leadership review the committees before discontent spreads further among grassroots activists.

Meanwhile, at least five district-level Chhatra Dal leaders announced their resignations on their Facebook profiles, citing dissatisfaction over the committee formation process.

Several of them said they could not accept committees where those who “were absent from the field” had been rewarded while long-serving activists were ignored.

Central Chhatra Dal leaders, however, said the protests were unacceptable and went against BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman’s instruction to maintain discipline.

A central leader, preferring anonymity, said some of those protesting had failed to secure expected posts and were now trying to pressure the organisation.

“The party high command has repeatedly asked all leaders and activists to maintain discipline. Those taking to the streets against organisational decisions are defying that directive,” he said, adding that the central leadership would look into specific complaints, but indiscipline, road blockades and violence would not be tolerated.

(Our correspondents from Noakhali, Cox’s Bazar, Rangamati, and Kishoreganj contributed to the news.)