

'Rise of fundamentalism threatens human rights'

By Staff Correspondent

Noted journalists, poets and writers at a seminar in the capital yesterday observed that the rise of fundamentalism was threatening human rights in the country and hindering national development.

The speakers said the activities of the fundamentalist and communal forces were jeopardising the national independence and sovereignty and urged the progressive, secular and pro-liberation people to foil their conspiracy.

Organised by 'Magnet', a social organisation, the seminar was held at the Jatiya Press Club auditorium.

Poet Shamsur Rahman presented the keynote paper on the topic of the seminar: "Development and Human Rights: What is the Objective of fundamentalism?", while Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui of the Jahangirnagar University, the editor of the daily Aker Kagoj Kazi Shahed Ahmed, editor of the Janakantha Atiqullah Khan Masud, Abed Khan of the Daily Ittefaq and writer Panna Kaiser spoke on the issue. Novelist Rahat Khan chaired the seminar.

In his keynote paper, Shamsur Rahman said he felt scared and concerned over the situation caused by the fundamentalists and *fatwah* who were about to destroy the fruits of the country's Liberation War. "These evil forces opposed the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971," he said, adding that the same forces are again active in the name of protecting Islam. "To them, Islam and Pakistan are synonymous," the renowned poet said, blaming the religion peddlers for still acting to revert Bangladesh into Pakistan.

Shamsur Rahman stressed the need for establishing a secular civil society which, he said, was a pre-condition for democracy. "Fundamentalism had taken roots in independent Bangladesh only after secularism was dropped from our constitution after the great leader of the Liberation War Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was killed," he added.

"Late president Ziaur Rahman removed the secular character of the country and rehabilitated the killers and collaborators of 71 because he did not believe in democracy," the keynote paper said. Shamsur Rahman underlined the need for uniting the majority population, who are secular minded, against the religion-peddlers and so-called *fatwah*.

DUTA concerned

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hadat Ali.

Meanwhile, the Dhaka University Syndicate, in an emergency meeting yesterday afternoon, expressed deep concern over yesterday's violent incidents.

The Syndicate sought cooperation of all concerned to maintain congenial academic atmosphere on the campus.

The meeting was held at the VC's house with the Vice Chancellor Professor Emdadul Hossain in the chair.

The Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers' Association (FBUTA), in a statement yesterday, also condemned the terrorist activities and the attacks on the teachers. The federation observed that it was the moral responsibility of the government and the university administration to ensure the security of the teachers.

The FBUTA press release was signed by its secretary general Professor Md. Fasilul Alam.

Bangladesh is now identified to the world community as a country of the fundamentalists because of the present government's patronage of the fundamentalists, he remarked.

Atiqullah Khan Masud, in his speech, held the major political parties responsible for the rise of fundamentalist and anti-liberation forces.

They are speaking against independence, the Liberation War and the freedom fighters because the leading parties are now engaged in protecting their narrow partisan interests, he said.

Kazi Shahed Ahmed said the *fatwah* had become angry against the NGOs because those had involved the village women in the development process and awakened them against religious orthodox and exploitation.

Zillur Rahman Siddiqui said the anti-liberation forces were proceeding in a planned way to capture state power. "They have identified their enemies and have taken training to achieve their goal," he said.

He said, the BNP government often blames the opposition for obstructing development but it is silent about the fundamentalists.

Abed Khan said, the fundamentalists in the country had been inspired by the activities of similar forces in different parts of the world.

Speaking on the armed training allegedly received by Jamaat-Shibir fascist forces, he told the audience that there were 23 hideouts in the capital for their training.

Panna Kaiser suggested that fundamentalism could be resisted by educating and awakening the people.

Rounding up the discussion, Rahat Khan said the fundamentalists were themselves not practising Islam in their personal and social life. They were just misusing Islam for their political ends.

Upgraded system at BTB from today

Bangladesh Television will introduce a new system of news gathering, recording, programmes and their telecast from today, reports UNB.

The system, known as Beta-SP, has been installed in the Rampura television station with the help of Japanese television experts in a bid to modernise the country's television system in the face of competition from satellite television programmes.

The new system will be commissioned this afternoon on the occasion of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's visit to BTB for distribution of prizes among the children of the Natun Kuri competition.

Khulna BIT opens M Sc course

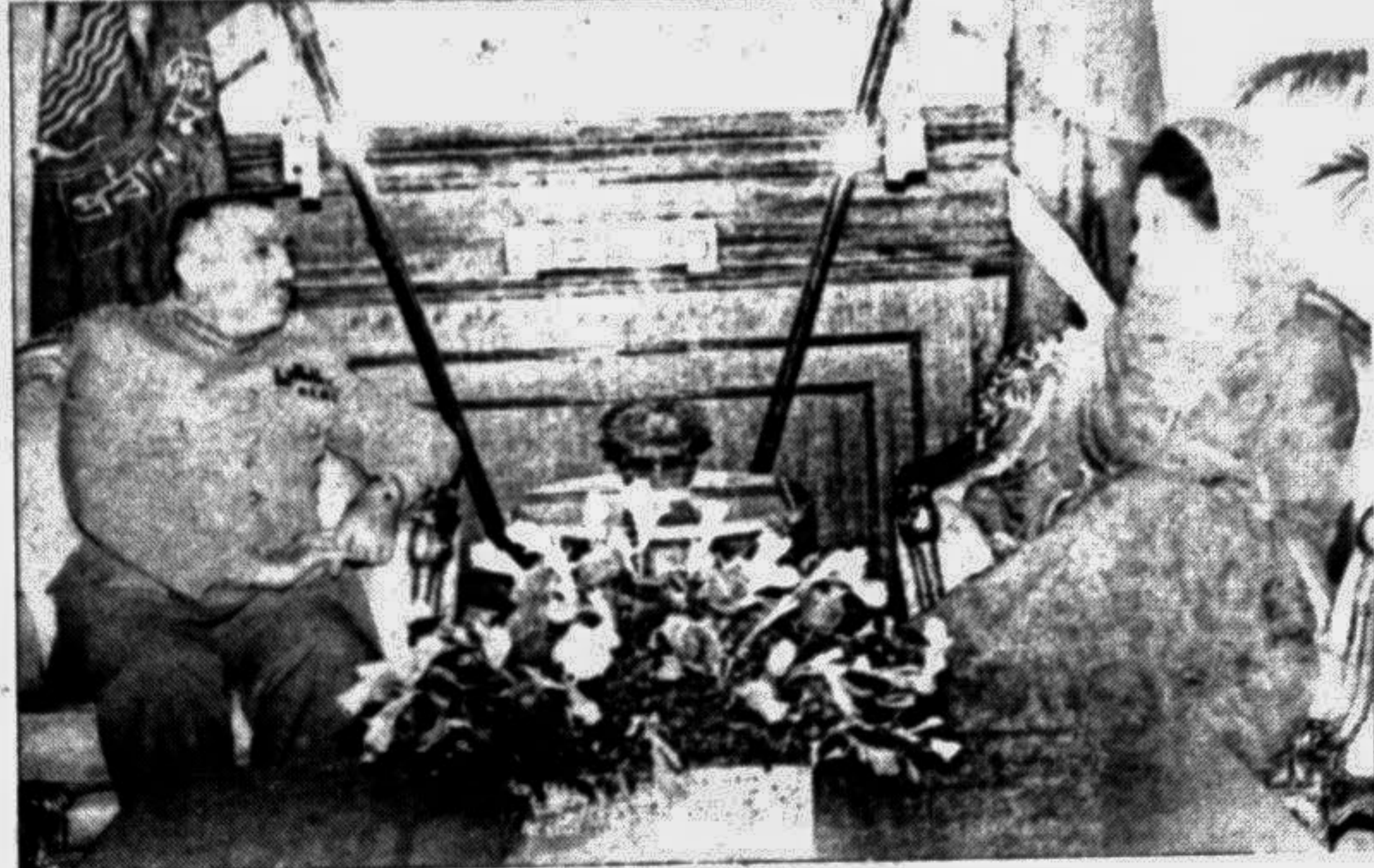
KHULNA, Aug 4: M Sc course has been opened at BIT College today (Thursday), reports UNB.

This is the second M Sc course in the country introduced in Bangladesh Institute of Technology. The M Sc course in Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) is the first in the country.

Prokrichi

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The Prokrichi demanded withdrawal of the suspension orders against the 12 physicians. Otherwise, it warned, doctors would not provide any medical service to the Health Secretary and the bureaucrats involved in issuing the order.



The visiting Pakistani Chief of Army Staff General Abdul Waheed called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office in the city yesterday. — PID photo

JCD, BCL announce programmes

By DU Correspondent

The pro-Awami League Chhatra League (M-I) has called a day-long strike at the Dhaka University tomorrow (August 6) to protest yesterday's terrorist activities of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal.

Meanwhile, blaming the BCL (M-I) for yesterday's violence, the JCD has also announced a demonstration programme in all educational institutions across the country tomorrow.

Both the BCL and JCD announced their programmes in separate press conferences held at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday afternoon.

Besides, the BCL announced a series of programmes to protest the attacks on teachers and terrorist activities on the DU campus.

The BCL programme includes country-wide demonstrations on August 7, a sit-in front of the Home Ministry on August 8 and a students' rally at the Noor Hossain Square near the GPO on August 10.

The BCL leaders have called on the students, intellectuals, cultural activists and all others to politically resist Khaleda Zia's "autocracy" to save the country.

"Yesterday's terrorist activities were 'pre-planned' the leaders said and alleged that the BNP was trying to jeopardise the one-point agitation of the Awami League through acts of violence and terrorism.

The BCL leaders said "The movement of the BCL could not be stopped by using armed terrorists, *mastans* and killers under police protection."

They urged all to resist the "JCD terrorists" in all the educational institutions.

Meanwhile, the JCD, in its press conference, alleged that the terrorist group of the BCL (M-I) was frequently harassing the teachers of the university for last few days and trying to create a volatile situation on the campus.

They alleged that the BCL activists, along with some outsiders, attacked the JCD rally at the Aparajeyo Bangla yesterday which was held demanding security of the teachers.

The JCD leaders also alleged that "those terrorists" attacked the office of Dr. Ershadul Bari, Dean of the Faculty of Law, on August 2 and violated the congenial atmosphere on the campus.

The JCD demanded trial of the persons involved in yesterday's violence.

Meanwhile, the JSD-backed Chhatra League (B-K) and Chhatra Oikya Forum have condemned the acts of violence on the Dhaka University campus.

Gunbattle at DU

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Mannan Chowdhury was assaulted in the presence of Vice Chancellor Emdadul Hossain. At about the same time, the armed group, allegedly belonging to the JCD, verbally abused the general secretary of the DU Teachers' Association (DUTA) and chairman of Journalism Department Dr A A M S Arefin Siddique.

Earlier, the armed group repeatedly ransacked the office chamber of Associate Professor Siddique in the Journalism department. The Chairman of the department filed on FIR with the Ramna thana.

Later in the afternoon, some 20 rooms of Sir A F Rahman Hall, Surja Sen Hall, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Hall, Mohsin Hall and Jasimuddin Hall were ransacked by an unidentified armed group. During these incidents, four BCL activists were assaulted.

Over two hundred rounds of gun fire and cocktail explosions rocked the campus. According to eye-witnesses, police entered the troubled Arts building premises only after the gunbattle ended at around 12:40 pm.

The clashes began when some BCL activists allegedly opened fire from the library premises on a JCD rally that was being held in front of the Aparajeyo Bangla, apparently without any provocation, JCD student leaders on the campus claimed.

However, BCL activists alleged that a group of armed outsiders in "plain clothes" entered the campus at around 11:30 am and started the skirmishes by opening fire pointing towards the JCD rally.

At that time, the BCL was holding a separate rally in front of the library building, they said.

According to witnesses, as the first gunshot was heard, the JCD rally dispersed and some armed activists started returning the initial fire. Rival activists also opened counter fire from the other side.

Panicking students were seen running helter skelter, seeking shelter as the ongoing classes were automatically suspended.

Gen Waheed meets Khaleda

The visiting Pakistani Chief of Army Staff General Abdul Waheed made a courtesy call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday morning, reports UNB.

A four-member Pakistani delegation led by General Waheed had arrived in Dhaka on Tuesday on a four-day goodwill visit to Bangladesh. The delegation lauded the economic breakthrough and development achieved under the leadership of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

The visiting army chief also referred the appreciation achieved by Bangladesh and Pakistan army in various UN peace keeping missions.

Begum Zia conveyed her greetings to Pakistani Premier Benazir Bhutto and said she expected to meet her at the Cairo Population and Development Conference next month. She also mentioned her forthcoming visit to Pakistan in November.

Chief of Bangladesh Army Staff Lt. Gen. Noor Uddin Khan, Principal Secretary to Prime Minister ANM Eusuf and PSO to Prime Minister M Subed Ali Bhuiyan, Pakistani High Commissioner in Bangladesh Anwar Kemal and Corps Commander of Pak Army Lt. Gen. Ghulam Muhammad Malik were present on the occasion.

Digester

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The handing over ceremony held today at the premises of the Chittagong Drydock Ltd was attended by Minister for Industries Zahir Uddin Khan as chief guest while State Minister for Industries Lutfur Rahman Khan was present as a special guest.

The function presided over by Industries Secretary Abul Hasnat Md Abdul Hai was also addressed by Wasek Al Azad, Chairman, BCIC, Nazmul Alam, Chairman, BSEC and J M Akbar, general manager of the Chittagong Drydock Ltd.

Speaking on the occasion Zahir Uddin Khan said the poor jute growers will be benefited by this newly devised pulp-producing digester.

Credit goes to our workers and policy makers who build this digester, he added.

The industries minister said appropriate and honest leadership could help our workers improve their skill and efficiency.

Achievements

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people at the grass-roots level on socio-economic developments would be broadcast by radio and TV, the proposal said.

It has suggested making documentary films by the DFP, the EPW and the PID and screening of these films in villages by the Mass Communication Department.

Besides, the plan provides for publication of books and booklets on the debate on the caretaker govt. issue; the Opposition's boycott of Parliament; three years of parliamentary democracy; new edition of the PM's profile; and the PM's speeches delivered on different occasions.

All these publications would be made both in English and Bangla so that those could reach the target groups at home and abroad.

Arrangements would also be made for noted journalists to write special articles and features and publish those in the newspapers.

Under the plan, an advisory committee headed by the Information Minister and comprising heads of the mass media and the media experts would be formed to guide, advise and suggest appropriate measures to project the achievements of the BNP government.

According to the sources, the Information Secretary has asked the officials to prepare a working paper on the suggestions made by the press wing of the PM's office. A meeting of the ministry officials and the heads of the concerned departments in this regard is also held very soon.

Taslima issue: Jamaat sees conspiracy in govt action

By Staff Correspondent

The Jamaat-e-Islami senses a sinister design in the government actions regarding Taslima Nasreen, including Wednesday's High Court episode, a party press release said yesterday.

The press release issued after a meeting of the central working council, said Taslima Nasreen was taken to the court under special police escort but until Wednesday, police had failed to find out her whereabouts during the past two months.

The council meeting was chaired by party chief Golam Azam.

"It is assumed that the government provided sanctuary to Taslima during the past 60 days," the release signed by the Jamaat's publicity secretary Abdul Kader Mollah said.

"If the government did not provide her shelter, how could she come to court under the protection of riot police and the BDR and safely leave the court premises after the hearing," the Jamaat asked.

"Did the government stage this drama to fool the people of the country?" it also questioned.

The Jamaat's high-power central council, however, said the party will not question the order of any court, which has every right to grant bail to any person.

Demanding an explanation from the government in this respect the Jamaat said the people of the country would not tolerate any disrespect to the Holy Quran and Islam.

Meanwhile, a UNB report adds: Several hundred fundamentalists staged street demonstrations in the city yesterday to protest the granting of bail to Taslima and warned that she cannot be saved by the courts.

The Islamic Chhatra Shibir, Islami Sasantantra Andolan and the Khelafat Majlis organised separate protest rallies and processions demanding arrest and punishment of the writer and enactment of an anti-blasphemy law.

While staging the demonstrations around Baitul Mukarram mosque and the National Press Club yesterday afternoon, the protesters accused the government of giving protection to the writer and raised various anti-government and anti-murad (apostate) slogans.

"Hang Taslima", "She cannot be protected by the granting of a bail," shouted the demonstrators. Truck-loads of policemen tailed the processions.

Fundamentalist leaders accused the government of keeping Taslima in hiding and later bringing her to court under police protection. "There was a secret entente between Taslima and the government", Islami Chhatra Shibir president Rafiqul Islam Khan alleged.

The Midnight File

Israeli jets bomb Hezbollah bases

SIDON, Aug 4: Israeli jets bombed Shi'ite Muslim guerrilla bases in southern Lebanon Thursday, heightening tensions ahead of US Secretary of State Warren Christopher's visit to the Middle East. There was no immediate report of casualties from the bases, which were left shrouded in dust and smoke. The first attack by four Israeli fighter bombers was on a base in the village of Ein Bouswar in Iqlim al Tuffah or Apple Province in southern Lebanon, said Lebanese security sources, reports AP.

Ghali blames member nations

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 4: Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali blamed member nations Thursday for providing less than one-tenth of the peacekeepers needed for Rwanda, despite nearly three months of urgent appeals. Delays by member nations and the UN bureaucracy "have contributed to the catastrophe which we now countenance", Boutros-Ghali told the Security Council in a letter, reports AP.

India will import more goods from Bangladesh

India will import more goods from Bangladesh in order to strike a balance in trade between the two neighbouring countries, reports UNB.

This was stated by PD Patodia, the leader of a visiting 18-member trade delegation, Bangladesh team to monitor Lankan polls.

By Staff Correspondent

The Sri Lankan Election Commission has selected a team of seven Bangladesh observers to monitor the country's upcoming parliamentary polls scheduled for August 16.

According to Sri Lankan High Commission officials here yesterday, the Bangladesh team would be part of a larger group of observers from around 12 countries, including those from other SAARC member states.

The Bangladesh team of observers includes Justice K M Sobhan, Barrister Istiaque Ahmed, Jamuluddin Ahmed, a former Deputy Prime Minister, Habibullah Khan, a former minister, Faruk Ahmed Chowdhury, a former Foreign Secretary, Reazul Karim, former High Commissioner to the United Kingdom and Barrister Amirul Islam.

The team is expected to leave for Colombo on Monday next and would stay in the Sri Lankan capital till after the elections, to file a report on their observations.

Hasina

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their voting rights and demanded parliamentary elections under a caretaker administration.

A party press release said the newcomers included vice-president of the BNP Ward No 43 Abdul Malek, Vice-President of the BNP Ward No 52 Abdur Razzak, Fakirul Traders' Association president Nazrul Islam, Tofazzal Hossain, Abhinoy Kumar Das, Abdur Rouf, Barkatullah, Amjad Hossain, Abdul Jalil Khan and Mohammad Taher.

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Editor: Mahfuz Anam
Printed & Published by A. S. Mahmud, Managing Director, on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd, 52, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000, from City Publishing House Ltd, 90 Kakrail, Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No: 11, Road No: 3, Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka-1205. PABX: 500092-4, Commercial: 500091 (Direct), Fax No: 88-02-863035, GPO Box No: 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA.

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