



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT ... With law enforcers in control of both ends of a street in Paltan, protesters throw brick chunks at police yesterday. A policeman kicks a protester at Malibagh. A wounded child brought to a Rampura hospital. BNP leader Ruhul Kabir Rizvi being taken away after arrest at the Jatiya Press Club. A Rab helicopter flies above Paltan where protesters fought pitched battles with BGB personnel, Ansar members and policemen. Armed with sticks, rods and locally made weapons, allegedly ruling party men return after giving a chase to protesters at Malibagh level crossing.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON, ANISUR RAHMAN, AMRAN HOSSAIN, AND COLLECTED



At least 66 more lives lost

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Uttara, Pragati Sarani, Kazipara and Mirpur saw some of the most violent clashes as student and non-student protesters fought pitched battles with the law enforcers.

The law enforcers fired live rounds, lobbed teargas shells and blasted sound grenades at the agitators who retaliated with brickbats, creating panic among the residents of different areas.

In an unprecedented scene in independent Bangladesh, law enforcers charged sound grenades and teargas shells on the demonstrators from the air, as Rab helicopters patrolled the Dhaka sky at low height, including in Mirpur 10 and 6, Mohammadpur, and Rampura bridge.

Panicked, many city residents stayed indoors and did not dare venture out. A Rab helicopter was also seen carrying water to extinguish a fire in Mohakhali area.

Fierce clashes were also reported from Narayanganj, Sylhet, Bogura, Brahmanbaria, Tangail, Barishal and Chattogram.

Dhaka was isolated from the rest of the country as road and rail communications were snapped.

The authorities suspended metro rail operation for an indefinite period from today. Rail communications also remained suspended yesterday, and will remain halted until further notice.

Hardly any long-distance bus left Dhaka.

Different government establishments, including metro stations at Kazipra and Mirpur, and BRTA office in Mirpur 13, were vandalised while a Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) office in Banasree and several police boxes in the capital were set afire.

Besides, at least six establishments of Dhaka North City Corporation in Uttara, Mohakhali, Rampura and Mohammadpur were set ablaze.

Police foiled BNP's rally supporting the student movement, and arrested Ruhul Kabir Rizvi Ahmed, party joint secretary, near the National Press club.

Earlier in the morning, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) imposed ban on any kind rally in the capital.

However, around 2:00pm it said political parties will be allowed to hold rally at in front of their central offices. This paved the way for Awami League to hold a rally in front of its party office in Bangabandhu Avenue against the ongoing "anarchy".

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader from the rally said the quota movement does not belong to students anymore, it has turned into a movement of the BNP-Jamaat.

"We have endured enough; our backs are up against the wall... We have to wage a united resistance against these BNP-Jamaat goons," he said.

Hasnat Abdullah, one of the main organisers, yesterday said their anti-discriminatory student movement has no relation and involvement with violence.

The demand for reformation of quota is universal. Anyone can extend their support to the demand of the protestors, said Hasnat, a Dhaka University student.

"But no one will be allowed to take advantage of our movement and use our banner to implement their ulterior political motive," he told The Daily Star yesterday evening.

Meanwhile, BGB has been deployed across the country to maintain law and order, says a BGB text message. BGB also says 52 BGB members were injured while on duty during the ongoing nationwide "complete shutdown" called by the quota protesters.

Several BGB vehicles were vandalised.

RAMPURA-BADDA

Rampura and Badda areas saw the fiercest clash yesterday as protesters clashed with police and BGB from early morning to dusk.

Police and BGB fired bullets at the protesters, mostly on the upper part of the bodies, raising the casualties, said witnesses.

For the second day, the communication through Rampura Bridge was halted due to violence.

Almost all the alleys of the road were blocked by the protesters, including many teenagers. They put trees and electric polls to make the blockade.

Around 12:00pm, the main road

from Mouchak to Bashundhara residential area was full with brick chunks.

Some protesters vandalised the CCTV cameras in front of houses and shops.

Around 3:30pm, the BGB shot bullets at the protesters near TV Centre area, killing a student on the spot while several others were declared dead at the hospital. Some others were critically injured by bullets.

Although the situation in Banasree calmed in the evening, hundreds of protestors gathered at Rampura bridge area as soon as Rab helicopters began charging sound grenades from the air.

MIRPUR

Roads and alleys of over two-kilometer areas between Kazipara and Mirpur 6 also saw violent clashes between protestors and police, aided by Awami league men.

Law enforcers fired heavily from shotguns and charged sound grenades and teargas canisters at demonstrators who hurled brickbats in retaliation, said witnesses.

At one point, the agitators ransacked and torched the offices of Dhaka North City Corporation and Bangladesh Road Transport Office, both in Mirpur. They also vandalised Metro Rail stations at Mirpur-10 and Kazipara, and Popular Diagnostic Centre in Mirpur.

Parts of the area were first engulfed in flames and then were covered by black smoke from smoldering structures, locals said.

Rab helicopters flew at low height in the area and lobbed sound grenades.

"One grenade fell near my house. I saw some flying pigeons falling to the ground," said a panicked resident of Mirpur-10 area.

Another Mirpur resident said she and her seven-year-old son were so panicked that they quickly took cover inside their room, and did not open the door until the heavy sound died down.

At least four people suffered bullet injuries, three of them critically, said another witness.

The clash broke out around 3:00pm when Police and BGB members along with ruling party activists carrying sticks, hockey sticks and sharp weapons

Will consider talks

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Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader must step down from the cabinet and their party for illegally using the law enforcers, they said.

Deputy inspectors general of police, commissioners of police, and superintendents of police of the areas where the students got killed must be fired.

Vice-chancellors and proctors of Dhaka University, Jahangirnagar University and Rajshahi University must resign, according to the demands.

Abdul Kader said policemen, who shot students, and the "goons" of Chhatra League and Jubo League, who carried out the attacks, have to be arrested and murder cases should be filed against them.

The family members of the students who have been killed and injured must be compensated, he said in the statement.

The statement also demanded a ban on student politics and said the student unions must be made effective in all educational institutions, including Dhaka University, Jahangirnagar University, Chittagong University, and Rajshahi University.

All educational institutions and

halls must be reopened immediately.

Those who are involved in the student movement must be given assurance that they will not be harassed.

Hasnat Abdullah, one of the main organisers of the quota reform protest, yesterday said the student movement against discrimination is not involved in setting fire and damaging vehicles.

The demand for reformation of quota is universal and anyone can extend their support to the protesters' demand, said Hasnat, also a Dhaka University student.

"But no one will be allowed to take advantage of our movement and use our banner to implement their ulterior political move," he said while talking to The Daily Star in the evening.

Hasnat said they disagreed with the government proposal of keeping 20 percent quota in public service.

He added that the demonstrators are demanding five percent quota for groups of people who have fallen behind. Through quality research, the government can only increase it by one or two percent.

He urged all protesting students to continue the demonstration avoiding any kind of violence.

Dozens of govt establishments

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Arsonists also set fire to Mirpur Indoor Stadium, Matsya Bhaban in Ramna, Drug Administration Bhaban in Tejgaon, a toll plaza of Dhaka Elevated Expressway in Mohakhali, an office of the Police Bureau of Investigation in Banasree, Dhaka North City Corporation regional office-3 at Mohakhali, regional office-1 in Uttara, regional office-5 in Mohammadpur, Uttara Community Centre and Shuchona Community Centre in Mohammadpur, Rampura pump house, an old building of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) in Mohakhali, Dhaka Wasa office at Hatirheel and an Ansar camp in Badda.

Similar incidents of arson attacks and vandalism were reported in Narayanganj, Narasingdi, Tangail, Savar in Dhaka, Chattogram, and Sylhet.

In Narasingdi, demonstrators attacked the district jail and broke open its gates, leading to the escape of many prisoners, said police.

Criminals torched the Madhabdi municipality office and two police outposts in Narasingdi Sadar upazila. The district council office at Bhelanagar of Sadar upazila also came under an attack.

In Savar, protesters set ablaze a police box, four buses and a truck, and vandalised a hospital, a DB office and five AL offices.

In Chattogram, demonstrators set fire to two traffic police boxes in Kazir Dewri and New Market and an AL office in New Market area.

In Sylhet, protesters vandalised a SUV of Prof Farid Uddin Ahmed, the vice-chancellor of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, at MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital yesterday.

In Narayanganj, demonstrators vandalised the regional passport office on the Dhaka-Narayanganj Link Road in Signboard area around 9:00pm on Thursday. Almost all the furniture and documents in the three-storey building, including about 8,000 passport booklets, were damaged in the fire.

Criminals also torched the district PBI office in Signboard area on Thursday night. Five vehicles parked at the office were burnt.

On Wednesday and Thursday, protesters set ablaze at least 30 establishments, including the main building of Bangladesh Television in the capital's Rampura, during clashes with BGB personnel and police in Dhaka and several other districts.

Russia downs 33 Ukrainian drones

AFP, Moscow

Russia downed 33 Ukrainian aerial drones overnight over Crimea and 10 naval drones that were heading for the peninsula, Moscow's defence ministry said.

"Air defence systems on duty destroyed and intercepted 33 aerial drones over... Crimea," the ministry said in a Telegram post, adding that

forces "in the Black Sea destroyed 10 naval drones that were heading towards the Crimean peninsula".

Sevastopol governor Mikhail Razvozhayev said earlier on Thursday that loud noises heard in the Crimean city were linked to the Russian army retaliating "against an attempted attack by a surface drone".

Late last month, Moscow accused Ukraine of carrying out a deadly

strike in Crimea using US missiles, killing at least four people, including two children, and injuring more than 150, according to the local authorities installed by Russia.

Two drones were also neutralised overnight in the Bryansk region of western Russia, according to the Russian defence ministry.

"There were no casualties or damage," local governor Alexander

Bogomaz said on Telegram Thursday.

Ukraine has stepped up its attacks on Russian territory this year, targeting both energy sites that it says supply the Russian army, as well as towns and villages just across the border and in Crimea.

Both sides have used drones extensively since the conflict began in February 2022.