



Hundreds of students of Government Suhrawardy College and Kabi Nazrul Government College yesterday stormed Dr Mahbubur Rahman Mollah College in the capital's Jatrabari and vandalised the institution. They also looted many valuables, including chairs, books, laptops and other electronics.

PHOTOS: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Prothom Alo Rajshahi, Bogura offices attacked

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of people attempted to create chaos in front of the Prothom Alo's head office in the capital's Karwan Bazar yesterday.

The situation was also chaotic with provocative speeches delivered against the Bangla daily in Chattogram, Sylhet, Barishal, Chandpur, Munshiganj, and Jahangirnagar University.

The newspaper's office in Bogura came under attack last night.

In the capital, chaos ensued outside the Prothom Alo's head office as a group of people chanted slogans and blocked roads, continuing the bedlam until around 4:45pm.

Police on Sunday evening detained five people from the same area. Later that day, the detainees were released on bond.

In Rajshahi, a group of people vandalised the Prothom Alo's regional office in the city's Kumarpara and set fire to its sign yesterday afternoon.

Under the banner of "Alem Olama and Tauhidi Janata, Rajshahi", they gathered at Shaheb Bazar Zero Point. They later marched towards the Prothom Alo office, tried to break in and threw brick chunks at it.

The attackers also burned copies of the Prothom Alo and The Daily Star in front of the office.

Mehedi Hasan, officer-in-charge of Boalia Police Station, said he was unaware of the sign being broken or set on fire.

However, after videos of the incident were sent to his phone, he did not receive calls from a journalist.

In Bogura, some unidentified people attacked the Prothom Alo's local office in the town's Jolshwaritola around 10:40pm.

According to witnesses, about 15 people on five-six motorbikes reached the office. They hurled brick chunks and stones at the office, leaving a window pane broken.

The attackers also vandalised the digital sign of the office.

Chaos was also observed in Chandpur, where a group of people gathered at Hasan Ali Government High School playground yesterday afternoon. They chanted slogans against the Prothom Alo and The Daily Star.

Agitators took out processions, formed human chains, and delivered provocative speeches against the two newspapers in Chattogram, Sylhet, Barishal, Chandpur and Munshiganj.

## Press freedom

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chaos by taking position on the road in front of the Prothom Alo's main office in the capital's Karwan Bazar.

"Later, law enforcers dispersed those individuals. However, such activities continued yesterday [Sunday] as well."

The association called upon the government to take stern action against mob justice that targeted different institutions, including media outlets.

It also urged all the parties concerned to refrain from activities that are contrary to the freedom of the media.

## Students to launch

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On October 22, the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement formed a four-member convening committee with Hasnat Abdullah, Arif Sohel, Abdul Hannan Masud and Umama Fatima as members.

The student platform and the Jatiya Nagorik Committee have so far announced 12 and 15 district-level committees respectively.

According to their plan, the new party will contest the upcoming national election and rope in heavyweight candidates who have the potential to win.

They have already started reaching out to potential candidates in each constituency.

"Our target is to field national figures as candidates, and the Jatiya Nagorik Committee is also working on how to create more national faces," a top leader of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee told The Daily Star.

"To achieve this, we are grooming leaders in each constituency. By following these strategies, we aim to participate in the upcoming elections and secure victories," he said.

They initially plan to announce a central convening committee of the party and gradually complete forming committees at district and upazila levels before the next election.

The leaders of the two platforms said they seek to break away from divisive politics and binary narratives that have dominated Bangladesh for decades.

Their party will focus on agenda-driven politics and addressing critical issues like unemployment, economic development, and national unity.

"We want a political discourse centred on how to improve the lives

## Won't tolerate attack

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"People have the right to assembly. If anyone has any specific complaint [against a media outlet], they can take legal actions. We call upon the people not to take part in any anarchic activity, and to refrain from doing anything that would taint the image of Bangladesh."

In a Facebook post, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam yesterday condemned the attack on the Prothom Alo's Rajshahi office.

"I condemn with the strongest terms the attack on the Prothom Alo office at Rajshahi. If you have complaints against the journalism of the Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, or any other media outlets, you can go to courts to seek legal redress. You can also hold peaceful protests. Protests against media outlets aren't new. It has been going on for centuries. But threats

## Plot afoot to create unrest

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the police wanted to prevent them without a direct confrontation."

Asif Mahmud said if police attacked the students, it could create an untoward incident. Now, however, the situation is under control.

Those who attacked the colleges will be brought to book, he added.

Asif also said the government is probing the weaknesses in the police force and will take necessary actions, including transfers.

The government is also in the process of recruiting about 1,400 sub-inspectors and 4,500 constables, he added.

In the past, he said, police would generally use rubber or live bullets in handling riots. They are now moving away from that approach. They will be

of the people and create jobs, moving away from the politics of division," said a leader of the Nagorik Committee.

He said they were stressing the need for a party rooted in "the spirit of the 1947, 1971, and 2024 movements".

They also want to ensure inclusivity, especially for women who constitute half the population.

"A truly functional democracy requires active participation of women at all levels, not just in passive roles," he said.

The new political force will uphold democratic values by ensuring accountability, even for itself, the leader said.

He assured that if the party deviates into authoritarianism or fascism, the Nagorik Committee will hold it accountable.

However, members joining the new party must sever ties with any existing political organisation and be willing to critique past wrongdoings of that party.

Nasiruddin Patwary, convener of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee, said that his organisation is primarily a platform for civil society, functioning as a pressure group.

"It will continue to operate the same way in the future," he told The Daily Star.

He acknowledged that they were considering forming a political party, but did not mention any particular plan.

"The key point here is that the people of Bangladesh want to see a political force led by the youth. There is a scope for this. Taking that into consideration, some of us, along with many others from outside, are considering forming a political party."

and intimidation of journalists or attacking media outlets will not be tolerated," he said.

Meanwhile, Bangladeshi Journalists in International Media (BJIM) and the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) have also expressed concerns over recent protests outside the offices of Prothom Alo and The Daily Star, in Dhaka and Chattogram.

BJIM is particularly troubled by the implications for the safety and security of journalists working at Prothom Alo and The Daily Star, according to a press release issued yesterday.

BJIM, an advocacy group for press freedom, urged protesters to express their concerns peacefully and constructively.

"Refrain from actions that could provoke or threaten any members of the press," it stated.

trained in a new approach as per the international standard.

The chief adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam said the interim government, following public expectation, has moved away from the protocol followed by the police in handling riots.

"None wants the police to even baton-charge demonstrators," he said.

Nahid called upon the people to bring forward their demands through proper channels instead of taking to the streets and creating public suffering.

In the aftermath of the July-August mass uprising, people have got new freedom and are making demands to claim their rights, but they need to do it constructively, he said.

## Mindless mayhem

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and broke most of the glass windows and doors.

As they were leaving the building, locals along with DMRC students clashed with them, said a resident named Amir Hossain.

The groups threw pieces of bricks at each other, leaving 70 to 80 people injured and damaging properties in the vicinity.

Many of the injured were treated at hospitals and clinics in Demra. Thirty-five students, mostly from Suhrawardy College and Kabi Nazrul College went to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for treatment. Three of them needed inpatient care.

Later in the day, DMRC Principal Obaidullah Nayan issued a statement requesting the authorities to ensure justice, students' safety, and recovery of looted assets and damaged documents.

He told reporters that the students took away 20-30 laptops, computers, damaged many certificates, laboratories, security cameras and five lifts. The damage done to the institution could be worth around Tk 60 to Tk 70 crore, according to him.

In the statement, Principal Nayan also alleged students of other colleges than Suhrawardy and Kabi Nazrul, and a group of outsiders entered the building to cause massive destruction.

Muktadir Mamun, a wounded DMRC student, said, "Everyone knew they would attack our college. Many policemen were only half a kilometre away. We called them, but they did not come."

Salah Uddin, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Wari division, denied the allegations of police's inactivity as false.

"We tried our best to stop the clash, but did not succeed fully, as several thousand students gathered and carried out the attack," he added.

Education Adviser Wahiduddin Mahmud said the interim government will accept any logical demand of the students, but no unjustified demand will be



Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus with the delegation of US Special Representative for International Labor Affairs and Department of Labor at his office in the capital's Tejaon yesterday.

PHOTO: P10

## BNP on same page

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"These evil forces, both inside and outside the country, are engaged in efforts to create misunderstandings among the pro-Bangladeshi forces," he said.

"But I strongly believe that if we remain vigilant, there will be no room for misunderstandings," he added.

Speaking from London, the BNP leader also said his party believes in reform, but it also believes that it is essential to hold free and fair elections without any bias within a reasonable timeframe.

"The interim government has already reconstituted the Election Commission. We believe this is a significant step towards forming an elected parliament and government, with representatives chosen through the people's vote."

BNP Standing Committee member Dr AZM Zahid Hossain, Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, and Joint Secretary General Shaheeduddin Chowdury Anee, among others, spoke at the programme.

## Govt will carry out

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Western nations.

The delegation was led by Thea Mei Lee, the deputy undersecretary of the US Department of Labor, and Kelly Fay Rodriguez, special representative for international labor affairs.

The US officials said their country, global labour rights groups, and top international brands that buy clothing and footwear from Bangladesh back Prof Yunus's move to reform labour laws and create worker-friendly conditions.

"All of these are wonderful testaments," said Rodriguez, referring to what the interim government has done for the labour sector in the past three and a half months, including the 18-point agreement signed between the government and the local unions.

The US officials called for union rights in the factories and reviews of wages every year to cushion millions of garment and footwear workers from inflationary pressures.