

Students to launch political party by next February

Anti-Discrimination Student Movement and Jatiya Nagorik Committee will jointly lead the process, say leaders of the two platforms



Photo: Md Rajib Raihan

Student leaders who spearheaded the July-August mass uprising are planning to launch a political party by early February 2025 and contest the next general election.

The new party will be centred on a balanced approach, avoiding leftist or rightist views. It will adhere to international standards and consider the reality of Bangladesh while addressing any issues.



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Leaders of the civic and student platforms the Jatiya Nagorik Committee and the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement will lead the new party.

However, the two platforms will not be dissolved. They will continue to work as "pressure groups".

Three top leaders of the two platforms shared their plan to launch the political party with The Daily Star. They did not want to disclose their identity since the matter was still at the planning stage.

They said the new party will have leaders from various other political parties and representatives from the civil society.

The leaders of the two platforms will not be directly involved, but some of them will participate in elections.

"Those who are interested in joining the political party from the two platforms will be incorporated into the party," one of the leaders said.

The two platforms are now forming district- and institution-level committees.

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 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."

Nasiruddin added the two main goals they are working towards are the elimination of the fascist system and the establishment of a new political arrangement.

"To achieve this, we are focusing on building understanding among the people and uniting young leadership, as well as strengthening communication within the organisation by forming new committees."