

Asia Pacific

Bangladesh students clash in job quota protests, at least 100 injured

By Reuters

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Students and job seekers shout slogans as they protest to ban quotas for government jobs at Shahbagh Square in Dhaka, Bangladesh, July 3, 2024. REUTERS/Mohammad Ponir Hossain/File Photo [Purchase Licensing Rights](#)

DHAKA, July 15 (Reuters) - More than 100 students were injured across Bangladesh on Monday in clashes between those protesting to end a quota system for government jobs and others loyal to the ruling party, police and witnesses said.

The protests mark the first significant demonstrations that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has faced since she won a fourth straight term in an election in January boycotted by the main opposition.

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Thousands of anti-quota protesters and members of the student wing of Hasina's Awami League hurled rocks and fought each other with sticks and iron rods at universities across the country, including Dhaka, police and witnesses said.

Students were injured on several campuses, police officials said.

The protesters called for marches and rallies to continue across the country to press their demands.

"This is more than just a student movement. To suppress this movement, incitement from the highest levels of government has been made. So, common people have to come to the streets," said Nahid Islam, the coordinator of the anti-quota protests.

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The protests began earlier this month after the High Court ordered the government to restore 30% job quotas for the descendants of freedom fighters. They have continued despite Bangladesh's top court suspending that order for a month last week.

The protests intensified on Sunday night after Hasina refused to meet the students' demands, stating that the issue was now before the court.

Hasina said those who oppose job quotas for relatives of freedom fighters are the 'Razakar', which collaborated with the Pakistani army during the 1971 War of Independence. Her comments led thousands of students to leave their dormitories on the Dhaka University campus at midnight to protest.

"An attempt is being made to transform the anti-quota movement into an anti-state one using the emotions of young students," said Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud. "The government will not allow an unstable situation to develop."

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