



News | Protests

At least six killed in Bangladesh student anti-quota protests

Demonstrators demand end to scheme that prioritises families of veterans of 1971 independence war.



At least six killed in Bangladesh student anti-quota protests

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At least six people have been killed in Bangladesh as young government supporters and police firing tear gas [clashed](#) with students protesting against a quota system for coveted government jobs, police say.

Tens of thousands of students joined nationwide protests for a second day after more than 100 people were injured on Monday in rallies that blocked major highways and rail links.

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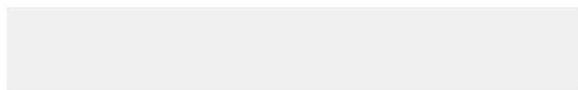
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They are the first significant protests against Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government since she won a fourth straight term in January.

The demonstrators are protesting against a 30 percent public sector job quota for family members of veterans who fought in the 1971 War of Independence as young people face high unemployment.

Riot police fanned out at university campuses across the country on Tuesday in an effort to quell unrest.

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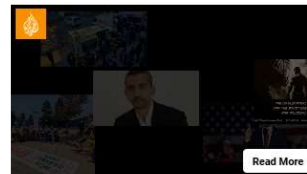
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Police said they used tear gas and rubber bullets in Rangpur in northwestern Bangladesh to break up demonstrations.

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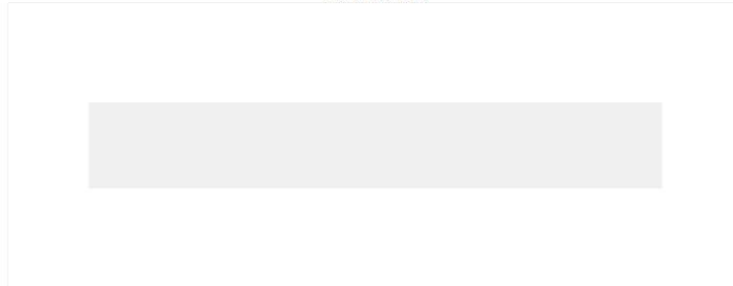
“We had to use rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse the unruly students who were hurling stones at us,” said Rangpur Metropolitan Police Commissioner Mohammad Moniruzzaman.

“We heard a protesting student died after he was taken to hospital. It was not immediately clear how he died,” he added.

Yunus Ali, director of the Rangpur Medical College Hospital, said a “student was brought dead to the hospital by other students”, adding: “His body had injury marks.”

Three more people were killed in the port city of Chittagong.

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“All three had bullet injuries,” Chittagong Medical College Hospital director Mohammad Taslim Uddin told the news agency AFP.

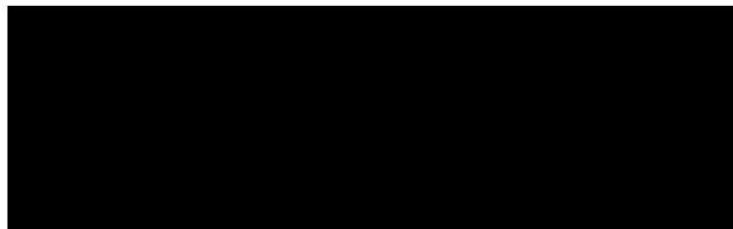
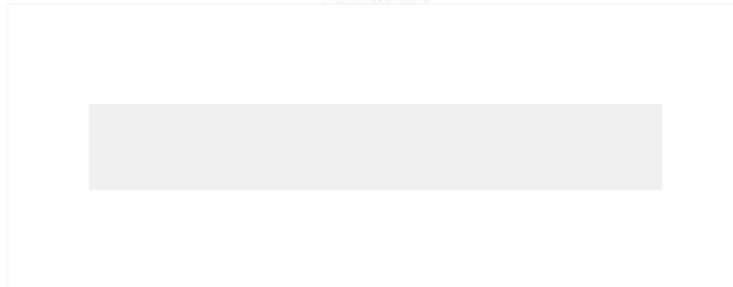
“Some 35 people were injured,” Uddin added.

Another two people were killed in Dhaka, police Inspector Bacchu Mia told AFP, taking the death toll to six.

At least 60 people were injured in the capital, he added.

As the unrest spread, the paramilitary Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) force was deployed in five major cities including Dhaka and Chittagong.

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On Tuesday, protesters gathered in front of the university's residence of the vice chancellor and accused the Bangladesh Chhatra League, a student wing of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's governing Awami League party, of attacking their "peaceful protests".

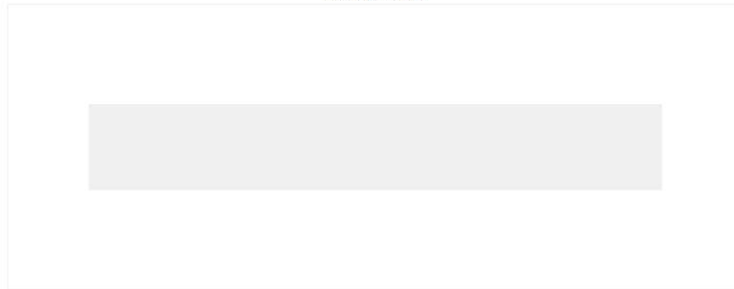
According to local media reports, police and the governing party's student wing attacked the protesters.

Tens of thousands of students took part in the nationwide protests on Tuesday after more than [100 people were injured](#) the day before. There were also clashes between protesters and students loyal to the Awami League in some areas, including in Dhaka, as students blocked major highways and rail links.

In Bangladesh, 56 percent of government jobs are reserved for various quotas. Women have a 10 percent reservation, 10 percent of the jobs are for people from underdeveloped districts, 5 percent for Indigenous communities and 1 percent for people with disabilities.

While job opportunities have increased in the private sector, many find government jobs stable and lucrative. About 3,000 of these posts are available each year to nearly 400,000 graduates.

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The protesters argue that the quotas are discriminatory and should be merit-based. Some said the current system benefits groups supporting Hasina.

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Hasina said on Tuesday that war veterans should receive the highest respect for their sacrifice in 1971 regardless of their current political ideologies.

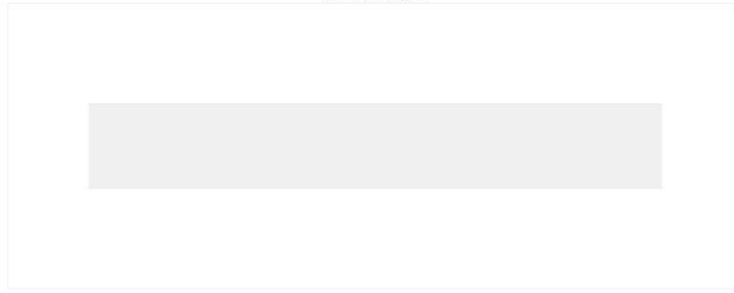
"Abandoning the dream of their own life, leaving behind their families, parents and everything, they joined the war with whatever they had," she said.

The prime minister also referred to those opposing the quotas as "razakar", a term used for those who allegedly collaborated with the Pakistani army during the 1971 war.

The quotas were stopped following a court order after mass student protests in 2018. But last month, the High Court ordered the quotas for veterans' families to be rein-

stated, angering students and triggering new demonstrations.

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Last week, the Supreme Court halted the High Court's order for four weeks. The chief justice asked protesting students to return to classes, saying the court would issue a decision in four weeks.

All schools and universities around the country were to be closed indefinitely, the Ministry of Education said late on Tuesday.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called on the government in Bangladesh "to protect the demonstrators against any form of threat or violence", said his spokesman Stephane Dujarric. "It is a fundamental human right to be able to demonstrate peacefully."

SOURCE: AL JAZEERA AND NEWS AGENCIES

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