

COMMENTARY / WORLD

An Arab Spring for Bangladesh?

Despite the crackdown, student protests could help restore democracy



Students in Bangladesh have faced a crackdown against protests demanding an end to the quota system for public jobs. Despite a scaling back of the system, more needs to be done to address their woes. | AFP-JIJI

BY M. NIAZ ASADULLAH
PROJECT SYNDICATE

SHARE/SAVE Jul 29, 2024

DHAKA - In recent weeks, the Bangladeshi government has cracked down violently on students demanding equitable access to coveted government jobs amid an unemployment crisis.

To contain the protests, authorities shut down all educational institutions, imposed a strict curfew and cut off internet access. Thousands of police officers and paramilitaries have been patrolling the streets and around 200 people have died.

Such unrest in one of Asia's most populous and promising emerging economies, which has made remarkable progress on development and political stability in the half-century or so since it gained independence, did not come out of nowhere. Bangladesh's youth uprising, with its echoes of the Arab Spring, illustrates how corruption, cronyism and inequality tend to accompany economic growth, especially under increasingly authoritarian regimes.



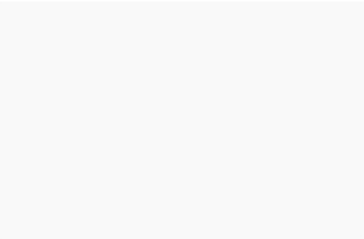
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