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Asia

Student killed amid violent anti-quota protests in Bangladesh



Students clash over quota system at Jahangir Nagar University at Savar outside Dhaka, Bangladesh, on Jul 15, 2024. (Photo: AP/Al-emrun Garjon)

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DHAKA: A university student was killed and dozens injured on Tuesday (Jul 16) in northern Bangladesh, police said, as they fired tear gas and rubber bullets at stone-throwing students protesting for a second day against a quota system for government jobs.

Tens of thousands of students took part in the nationwide protests after [more than 100 people were injured](#) on Monday. There were also clashes between protesters and students loyal to the ruling party in some places, including the capital Dhaka, as students blocked major highways and rail links.

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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 protesters are angry over [public sector job quotas](#), including a 30 per cent quota for family members of freedom fighters from the 1971 War of Independence, amid high youth unemployment.

Thousands of riot police fanned out at university campuses across the country in an effort to avert any incidents. In Rangpur in northwestern Bangladesh, they used tear gas and rubber bullets to break up the protests, police said.

"We had to use rubber bullets and teargas to disperse the unruly students who were hurling stones at us," Rangpur Metropolitan Police Commissioner

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Mohammad Moniruzzaman said.

"We heard a protesting student died after he was taken to hospital. It was not immediately clear how he died," he said.

JOBS

Stagnant job growth in Bangladesh's private sector has made government jobs, which offer regular wage hikes and other privileges, more attractive, said Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, chairman of Research and Policy Integration for Development.

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

Violence erupted on Monday when thousands of anti-quota protesters clashed with members of the student wing of the ruling Awami League party.

Protesters have planned more marches and rallies nationwide and demonstrations will continue until their demands are met, said Nahid Islam, the coordinator of the anti-quota protests.

TV footage showed heavy presence of police, wearing protective vests and helmets and armed with wooden sticks, outside the Dhaka University campus.

Protests began earlier this month when the High Court ordered the government to reinstate the 30 per cent job quota.

The Supreme Court suspended the order last week for a month but protests continued and they intensified after Hasina refused to meet the students' demands, citing ongoing court proceedings.

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Hasina labeled those opposing the quota as "razakar" - a term used for those who allegedly collaborated with the Pakistani army during the 1971 war - prompting more protests.

Despite manufacturing production having grown by an average of 10 per cent annually since 2011, employment in the sector fell between 2017 and 2023, Razzaque said, citing official statistics.

"Additionally, youth unemployment is high, with nearly 32 million young people not in education, employment, or training," Razzaque added.

Source: Reuters/ec