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WORLD NEWS

Internet is still down in Bangladesh despite apparent calm following deadly protests



Businessmen are not in peace. Daily laborers are also not in peace.

1 of 11 | Bangladesh remained without internet for a fifth day as the government declared a public holiday, maintaining tight control despite calm following a court order scaling back a controversial job allocation system that sparked protests. (AP video shot by Al-Emrun Garjon)

BY AL EMRUN GARJON AND JULHAS ALAM

Updated 11:45 AM GMT+6, July 23, 2024

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DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Bangladesh remained without internet for a fifth day and the government declared a public holiday Monday, as authorities maintained tight control despite apparent calm following a court order that scaled back a controversial system for allocating government jobs that sparked violent [protests](#).

This comes after a curfew with a shoot-on-sight order was installed days earlier and military personnel could be seen patrolling the capital and other areas.

The South Asian country witnessed clashes between the police and mainly student protesters demanding an end to a quota that reserved 30% of government jobs for relatives of veterans who fought in [Bangladesh's war of independence in 1971](#). The [violence](#) has killed more than a hundred people, according to at least four local newspapers. Authorities have not so far shared official figures for deaths.

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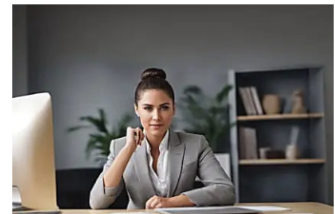
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There was no immediate violence reported on Monday morning after the Supreme Court ordered, the day before, [the veterans' quota to be cut to 5%](#). Thus, 93% of civil service jobs will be merit-based while the remaining 2% reserved for members of ethnic minorities as well as transgender and disabled people.

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On Sunday night, some student protesters urged the government to restore internet services. Hasnat Abdullah, a coordinator of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, told the Associated Press that they were withdrawing their calls for a complete shutdown, which they attempted to impose last week.

"But we are issuing an ultimatum for 48 hours to stop the digital crackdown and restore internet connectivity," he said, adding that security officials deployed at various universities should be withdrawn, student dormitories reopened and steps taken so students can return to their campuses safely. Abdullah also said they wanted the government to end the curfew and ensure the country was back to normal within two days.

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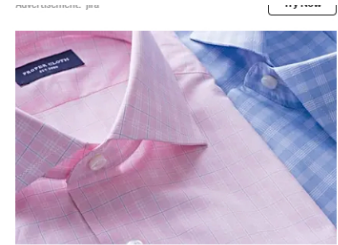
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Students have also demanded some university officials to step down after failing to protect campuses. Sarjis Alam, another coordinator of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, said that they would continue with their protests if all their demands weren't met. "We cannot step back from our movement like a coward," he added.

Another key organizer of the student protests, Nahid Islam, told reporters that the internet shutdown had disrupted their ability to communicate and alleged that authorities were trying to create divisions among protesters. "I am mentally traumatized ... our unity is being destroyed," he said.

The US Embassy in the capital Dhaka described Sunday the situation as "extremely volatile" and "unpredictable," adding that guns, tear gas and other weapons have been used in the vicinity of the embassy. They said the Bangladeshi army had been deployed and urged Americans to be vigilant, avoid large crowds and reconsider travel plans.

The protests have posed the most serious challenge to Bangladesh's government since Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina [won a fourth consecutive term](#) in January elections that the main opposition groups boycotted. Universities have been closed, the internet has been shut off and the government has ordered people to stay at home.



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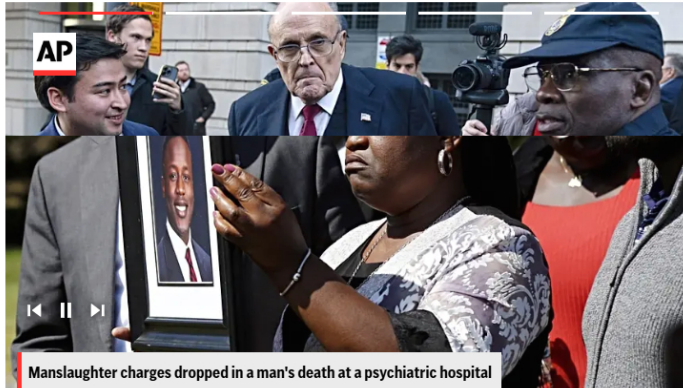
Protesters had argued the quota system was discriminatory and benefited supporters of Hasina, whose Awami League party led the independence movement, and wanted it replaced by a merit-based system. Hasina has defended the quota system, saying that veterans deserve the highest respect regardless of political affiliation.

The main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party has backed the protests, vowing to organize its own demonstrations as many of its supporters joined the student-led protests.

The Awami League and the BNP have often accused each other of fueling political chaos and violence, most recently ahead of the country's national election, which was marred by a [crackdown on several opposition figures](#).

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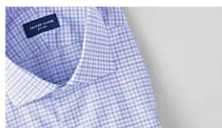
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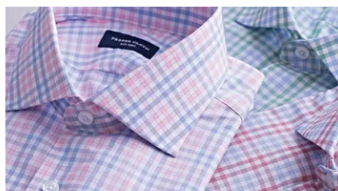
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