



Bangladesh partially restores telecom services after deadly job quota protests



Bangladesh has been hit by violent student protests against the new law on quota in jobs.

Bangladesh has partially restored telecommunication services while internet remains slow and social media suspended, following deadly protests against government job reservations. The Supreme Court's recent ruling scaling down job quotas has brought relative calm to the nation.

Bangladesh partially restored telecommunication services on Wednesday although internet connection was slow and social media remained suspended, days after deadly protests against reservations for government jobs killed almost 150 people.

The country has mostly been calm since Sunday when the Supreme Court scaled down reservations for various categories to 7%, overruling a high court verdict reinstating a 56% quota in government jobs that had been scrapped in 2018. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government said on Tuesday that it would heed the Supreme Court ruling.

As demonstrations against the quotas - which included a 30% reservation for family members of freedom fighters from the 1971 war of independence from Pakistan - tapered off, the government started easing the curfew imposed last week.

Restrictions will be relaxed for seven hours on Wednesday and offices will also be open from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., officials said.

Residents of the capital Dhaka could be seen out on the streets on Wednesday morning as they made their way to their offices, with public buses also plying in some places - in sharp contrast to the violent clashes in the city last week.

Protesting students have given the government a fresh 48-hour ultimatum to fulfil four other conditions of an eight-point list of demands, and said they will announce next steps once that ends on Thursday.

"We want the government to meet our four-point demand, including restoration of internet, withdrawal of police from campuses, and opening universities (which have been closed for a week)," protest coordinator Nahid Islam said.

The South Asian nation of 170 million was rocked by protests since the high court verdict last month, which left less than half of state jobs open on merit in a country where about 32 million young people are out of work or education.

Demonstrations intensified after Hasina refused to meet the protesters' demands and instead labelled them "razakar" - a term used for those who collaborated with the Pakistani army during the war.

Hasina this week blamed her political opponents for the violence and said the curfew would be lifted "whenever the situation gets better".

The main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party has denied any role in the violence.