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7–10 July 2024: The ‘Bangla Blockade’, and temporary suspension of the quota 108

Thousands of students from all major universities participated in the ‘Bangla Blockade’ initiative 1283 by boycotting classes1284 and blocking key highways and roads across the country.1285 Traffic was disrupted over the course of three days,1286 with a one-day pause on 9 July 2024. 1287 In Dhaka, student protesters blocked Shahbagh intersection, and other roads across the capital,1288 both on 7 July1289 (which brought traffic in Dhaka City close to a ‘standstill’1290) and on 8 July 2024.1291 The blockades caused severe disruption to traffic in the capital for the fifth and sixth day since the protests started.1292 On 10 July 2024, the ‘Bangla Blockade’ resumed with day-long blockades.1293 Shabagh intersection was blocked, for about eight hours, 1294 as well as other roads across Dhaka City.1295

Student protesters also blocked major highways across the country,1296 cutting of road traffic to and from Dhaka City.1297 Including those connecting the capital to areas along westbound routes (such as Dhaka–Archia, Dhaka–Pabna,1298 and Dhaka–Rajshahi),1299 eastbound routes (such as Dhaka–Mymensigh),1300 southbound routes (such as Dhaka–Chattogram highway, 1301 Dhaka–Barishal,1302 Dhaka–Kuakata,1303 and Dhaka–Khulna)1304 and northbound routes (such as Dhaka–Dinajpur,1305 and Dhaka–Rangpur).1306 Additionally protesters blocked highways connecting Sylhet to Sunamganj in the east,1307 and Kushtia to Khulna in the southwest1308 and Barishal–Kuakata,1309 as well as roads in other areas.1310

Train traffic was also disrupted with students blocking the Dhaka–Mymensingh railroad on 7 July 2024,1311 and several other rail tracks on 8 July 2024 – which disrupted train traffic for hours. On 8 July 2024, students blocked the Karwan Bazar level crossing in Dhaka City,1312 the Dhaka–Rajshahi railway,1313 and the Dhaka–Mymensing railway (for the third consecutive day). 1314 They reportedly also blocked Sholshahar station in Chattogram.1315 Consequently, rail tracks connecting Dhaka1316 and Rajshahi to the rest of the country were cut off.1317 Also on 10 July 2024, rail tracks were blocked across the country.1318

Hasina publicly commented on the protests for the first time on 7 July 2024. She denounced them, stating that they were no longer justified and a waste of time following the Supreme Court’s verdict.1319 Other senior government officials echoed this sentiment and implied that the protests were ‘infiltrated’ by the opposition in subsequent public statements.1320

Following two petitions,1321 the Supreme Court temporarily suspended the High Court’s verdict on the quota on 10 July 2024,1322 for one month.1323

On 10 July 2024, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) (an elite paramilitary force that has been accused of ‘serious human rights violations’1324) was deployed to contain protests, alongside the police.1325 According UN OHCHR, Hasina authorised military intelligence to carry out ‘secret negotiations’ with the leaders of the student movement.1326

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