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Shanghai port operations appeared to be returning to normal on Sunday evening after the city cut fees to placate truckers who had been protesting and striking since Wednesday.

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Lorry drivers at several ports around Shanghai have been protesting over what they say are unfair fees from container loading centres and complaining that the rising cost of diesel makes it impossible for them to make ends meet.

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The protests – which temporarily disrupted the flow of goods through some Shanghai ports – abated over the weekend. One trucker who asked not to be named said that the original plan was for the strike to last until Monday, adding that it could be extended if drivers' demands were not met.

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"Port operations are relatively normal today, and the lines of trucks have started to move," said one observer on Sunday evening. "I haven't heard of any violence today, although the number of trucks coming out for work is still a bit low."

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Chinese officials have made controlling inflation, which hit an almost three-year high of 5.4 percent in March, their top economic priority, and the protests last week have struck a raw nerve with Beijing struggling to contain food and fuel price rises.

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The Shanghai government's order, dated Saturday, calls on container shipping centres to cancel or lower a range of fees, including those for unloading containers, road tolls, and higher charges for night-time loading.

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The announcement, combined with the total media blackout in the Chinese press, underlines how hard the government is working to ensure that the protests are snuffed out before they can spread.

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Although the Shanghai statement – the first official comment from the authorities since the protests began – did not mention the strikes, it did acknowledge the difficulties posed by rising costs.

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"To promote the development of Shanghai's container shipping routes, and relieve the pressure that rising costs and fees have placed on transportation businesses, the city government has researched and agreed to new regulations on the fee-collecting behaviour of Shanghai's container shipping companies, to clean up all kinds of unreasonable fees," it said.

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Some drivers said they had heard about the city government's offer, while many complained they did not have enough information and vowed to continue the strike unless concrete results were achieved, according to news reports.

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In a nod to taxi drivers, who have also been complaining bitterly about rising fuel costs, the statement said that it was considering ways to lessen the cost burden on them and would announce concrete measures soon. Activists have said that taxi drivers might be considering a strike similar to the truckers' action.

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The decree, which was signed by four government departments, said new logistics fees should be borne by companies who are transporting goods, not by the transporters. Logistics centres might be eligible for government assistance if the new measures created financial hardship for them, the statement added.

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The strike appears to have temporarily disrupted the flow of goods through some ports in Shanghai, although members of the business community said on Sunday evening that things had returned to normal.

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At least one lorry was burned during the protests, as drivers targeted the vehicles of non-strikers.

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