

DAILY CURRENTS AFFAIRS (08 August 2024)

TOPICS COVERED

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2. Declare Wayanad landslides national disaster, says Rahul (GS Paper II: Polity)
3. Case filed against KTR for flying drone at Medigadda barrage (GS Paper I: Geography)
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Assam group opposes ban on cave worship in Meghalaya, threatens blockade of roads

GS Paper I:
Geography
GUWAHATI



Mawjymbuin, about 60 km from Meghalaya's capital Shillong, is a natural cave made up of sandstones. AVRILLA ISHA/GOOGLE MAPS

A hardline Hindu group in Assam has threatened blockades on arterial roads leading to Meghalaya if a ban on worshipping a 'Shivaling' in a geologically significant cave is not lifted.

About 60 km southwest of Meghalaya's capital Shillong, Mawjymbuin near Mawsynram is a 209-metre-high natural cave made up of calcareous sandstones. A major attraction in the cave is a Shivaling-like stone below water-dripping stalactites almost resembling a cow's udder.

The *dorbar shmong* (village council) of Mawsynram declined to let anyone worship or perform rituals at Mawjymbuin after an obscure Hindu group announced on August 1 that it would organise a pilgrimage, similar to the Kanwar

Yatra, to the cave on August 10 and 11.

The village council's ban irked another group, the Assam-based Kutumba Surakshya Parishad, which warned that the ban on worshipping at the cave would invite trouble for people of Meghalaya coming to Assam.

"The Meghalaya government should make proper arrangements for Hindus to worship the Shivaling during the sacred month of

Shravan apart from making the local village body withdraw the ban," the parishad's president, Satya Ranjan Borah said.

Blaming Christian organisations for "forcing" the village council to ban Hindus from performing their "religious duties" at the cave, he said members of his organisation would block the highways leading to Meghalaya if the State government failed to ensure a smooth pilgrimage.

Assam group opposes ban on cave worship in Meghalaya, threatens blockade of roads

- A hardline Hindu group in Assam is upset because a ban was placed on worshipping a 'Shivaling' in a cave in Meghalaya.
- This cave, located about 60 km from Shillong in Mawjymbuin near Mawsynram, is a natural formation made of sandstone and contains a Shivaling-like stone under dripping water that looks like a cow's udder.
- The local village council of Mawsynram decided not to allow any worship or rituals at the cave after a lesser-known Hindu group announced plans for a pilgrimage similar to the Kanwar Yatra on August 10 and 11.
- This decision angered another group from Assam, the Kutumba Surakshya Parishad, which threatened to block major roads leading to Meghalaya if the ban wasn't lifted.
- The group's leader, Satya Ranjan Borah, demanded that the Meghalaya government make arrangements for Hindus to worship at the cave during the sacred month of Shravan and asked the local village body to withdraw the ban.
- He accused Christian organizations of pressuring the village council to stop Hindus from practicing their religious activities and warned of road blockades if the pilgrimage isn't allowed to proceed smoothly.

Mawsynram

- **Mawsynram** is a village in the Indian state of Meghalaya, famous for being one of the wettest places on Earth.
- This small village receives an extraordinary amount of rainfall every year, making it a unique and fascinating location.
- **Record-Breaking Rainfall:**
 - Mawsynram holds the record for the highest annual rainfall, receiving over 11,800 millimeters (about 465 inches) of rain each year. This extreme rainfall is due to its location and the unique climatic conditions of the region.
- **Geographical Location:**
 - Mawsynram is situated in the East Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya, at an altitude of about 1,400 meters (4,600 feet) above sea level. It is located near the Indian-Bangladesh border, which contributes to its high rainfall.



- **Monsoon Influence:**

- The village experiences heavy rainfall primarily due to the Indian monsoon. During the monsoon season, moisture-laden winds from the Bay of Bengal are forced to rise as they hit the steep slopes of the Khasi Hills. This causes the moisture to condense and fall as rain.

Zero Hour

- **Zero Hour** is a term used in the Indian Parliament to refer to a specific time during a parliamentary session when Members of Parliament (MPs) can raise important issues without prior notice.
- It is an informal practice that allows MPs to bring urgent matters to the attention of the House.
- **Timing:** Zero Hour starts immediately after the Question Hour, typically around 12 noon, in both the Lok Sabha (House of the People) and the Rajya Sabha (Council of States).
- **Purpose:** Unlike other discussions or questions in Parliament that require prior notice, Zero Hour allows MPs to raise issues of urgent public importance without giving any advance notice. This makes it a flexible and powerful tool for addressing immediate concerns.

How Does Zero Hour Work?

1. **No Prior Notice Required:**
 - During Zero Hour, MPs can bring up any matter they consider urgent, such as public grievances, issues in their constituencies, or broader national concerns.
2. **Unscheduled Discussions:**
 - The topics raised during Zero Hour are not scheduled in advance. This gives MPs the opportunity to discuss issues that have arisen suddenly or require immediate attention.
3. **Limited Time:**
 - Since there is no fixed time for Zero Hour in the rulebook, the presiding officer of the House (the Speaker in Lok Sabha or the Chairman in Rajya Sabha) decides how much time will be allotted for it. Typically, it lasts for about an hour.
4. **No Formal Resolutions:**
 - Zero Hour discussions do not lead to any formal resolutions or decisions. The purpose is to highlight issues and bring them to the attention of the government and the public.

- The Kali River originates in the Western Ghats near the village of Diggi in the Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka.
- It flows westward through the dense forests and hilly terrain of the Western Ghats, eventually emptying into the Arabian Sea near the town of Karwar in Karnataka.

Case filed against KTR for flying drone at Medigadda barrage

GS Paper I: Geography

The Mahadevpur police have registered a case against Bharat Rashtra Samithi working president K.T. Rama Rao and others for allegedly flying a drone without permission at Medigadda (Laxmi) barrage of the **Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project** across the Godavari river in Telangana's Jayashankar Bhupalpally district during their visit to the site on July 26.

In a complaint, Vali Shaik, Assistant executive engineer, Ambatpally Irrigation sub-division, has said Mr. Rama Rao, along with the BRS leaders Gandra Venkataramana Reddy and Balka Suman, among



K.T. Rama Rao

others, visited the Medigadda barrage. He said he had apprised the higher authorities of the matter after watching the drone visuals of the BRS leaders' visit to the barrage. He sought action against the persons responsible for flying a drone over the barrage without permission.

distributed through an extensive canal network to reach farmlands.

2. Irrigation and Water Supply:

- The project is designed to irrigate over 18 lakh (1.8 million) acres of land in Telangana, transforming the agricultural landscape. It also provides drinking water to many towns and villages and supports water-intensive industries in the state.

3. Engineering Feat:

Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP)

- The **Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP)** is one of the largest and most complex irrigation projects in the world, located in the state of Telangana, India.
- It aims to harness and utilize the water of the Godavari River to irrigate vast tracts of farmland, provide drinking water, and support industrial needs in the region.

Key Aspects of the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project

- **Objective:** The primary goal of KLIP is to lift water from the Godavari River and distribute it across the arid regions of Telangana, ensuring water availability for agriculture, drinking, and industrial purposes.
- **Lift Irrigation Technique:** Unlike traditional gravity-based irrigation systems, KLIP uses a lift irrigation method, where water is mechanically lifted to higher elevations through a series of pumps and reservoirs.
 - This technique is essential due to the region's topography, where gravity flow is not feasible.
- **Scale and Components:** KLIP is a massive project involving the construction of barrages, reservoirs, pump houses, and a network of canals. It includes several key components:
 - **Medigadda Barrage:** This barrage is built across the Godavari River, serving as the primary point where water is lifted.
 - **Pump Houses:** Multiple pump houses, equipped with large pumps, lift water to higher elevations in stages.
 - **Reservoirs and Canals:** The lifted water is stored in reservoirs and

- KLIP is an engineering marvel, particularly due to the challenges posed by lifting such a large volume of water across multiple stages and distributing it over a vast area. It is considered one of the most ambitious lift irrigation projects ever undertaken.

The **Kali River** is a significant river flowing through the state of Karnataka in southern India.

- **Origin and Course:**
 - The Kali River originates in the Western Ghats near the village of **Kushavali in Karnataka's Uttara Kannada district**. The river flows westward, traversing a distance of approximately 184 kilometers before emptying into the Arabian Sea near the town of Karwar.
- **Geographical Significance:**
 - The river flows through dense forests and mountainous terrain, which are part of the Western Ghats, a **UNESCO World Heritage** site known for its biodiversity. The river's course supports a wide range of flora and fauna, making it an ecologically sensitive region.
- **Dams and Hydroelectric Projects:**
 - The Kali River is harnessed for hydroelectric power generation, and several dams have been constructed along its course. The most notable among them are the **Supreme Dam and Kadra Dam**, which contribute significantly to Karnataka's power supply.

The leader who lost touch with Bangladesh (08 August)

- Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's exit from power and the country was sudden and unexpected.
- Despite appearing in control until the student movement intensified, she had to step down and leave Bangladesh.
- Her departure hasn't calmed the situation; Bangladesh is experiencing chaos and violence.
- Many, including Hasina's party members, religious minorities, police, and border guards, have been targeted, resulting in deaths, injuries, and property damage.
- Police stations have been attacked, and weapons looted by religious radicals.
- This situation mirrors 1975, when Hasina and her sister Rehana sought refuge in India after their family was killed in a coup.
- The 1975 refuge was facilitated by Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who had a personal bond with Hasina's father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.
- The difference is that in 1975, Hasina was a housewife and daughter of a great leader, while now she is one of the world's longest-serving women leaders, having served four full terms as Prime Minister.

Development but also a disconnect

- Some might blame Hasina's downfall on astrology, but the real reason is her growing disconnect with the masses.
- Hasina's governance became more authoritarian over time, causing discontent.
- Despite this, she led Bangladesh through a decade of economic growth, with per capita income surpassing India's and significant infrastructure improvements.
- Human development indicators, particularly in women's education and health, also improved.
- Bangladesh nearly became the world's top garment exporter, and remittance incomes surged.
- The 6.15-kilometer bridge on the Padma River was a major achievement, boosting connectivity and GDP.
- Hasina believed economic development could offset the country's democratic deficits.
- Critics accuse her of rigging elections and turning Bangladesh into a one-party police state, with extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and arrests of the opposition.
- The lack of true democracy also weakened the Awami League, which failed to promote leaders with strong mass connections.
- This deficiency became evident during the recent anti-quota student protests.

Awami League's transformation, politics

- Awami League's leadership changed significantly over the last decade.
- Initially led by ideologically-driven middle-class leaders, it shifted to businesspersons securing leadership through bribery.
- These new leaders lacked grassroots connections and relied on bribing officials and hiring musclemen to win elections.
- This shift tarnished the party's image due to ties with organized crime and corruption.
- Sheikh Hasina started trusting business tycoons more than the old party guard.
- A notorious bank defaulter and money-launderer was made an advisor, becoming very influential.
- Corruption and the COVID-19 pandemic hurt Bangladesh's economic growth.
- Unemployment rose to 30 million in a population of 170 million.
- Foreign exchange reserves fell by 44% in three years, raising concerns about repaying loans.
- The Bangladesh Taka's value dropped 28% this year.
- Inflation and price rises, often due to extortion by ruling party-backed syndicates, created a volatile situation.

A mishandling

- High Court upheld quotas in government jobs on June 5, triggering student protests.
- Students wanted quotas abolished for a merit-based system.
- Ms. Hasina's government had agreed to scrap quotas (56% in total, 30% for 1971 freedom fighters' descendants) during 2018 protests.
- A case challenged the government's decision to scrap quotas.
- Ms. Hasina needed to assure students of challenging the High Court decision in the Supreme Court.
- Instead, she initially ignored the protests.

- Her comment, "If not for descendants of freedom fighters, should we create quotas for those of Razakars," upset students.
- Razakar is a derogatory term for those who supported Pakistan during the 1971 Liberation War.
- As protests intensified, Ms. Hasina ordered a brutal crackdown by police and Chhatra League.
- This approach backfired, leading to chaos.
- Ms. Hasina's loss of mass connection, once her strength, became her downfall.
- Despite her significant achievements, her inability to maintain the mass connect led to her unceremonious exit.

A closer look at bleeding up Jammu's counter-terror grid (08 August)

- Jammu region has been facing security challenges, especially in recent months.
- Security forces have suffered significant losses in their fight against terrorists.
- Terrorists are often backed by Pakistan and include new infiltrators.
- Weakened counter-terrorism grid attributed to troops being redeployed to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) after the Galwan incident in June 2020.
- Additional troops, including Special Forces teams, have been inducted to fill the void.
- Around 3,000 Army troops and 500 Special Forces have been deployed to the Jammu region.
- Assam Rifles troops have also been inducted to strengthen counter-terror operations.
- CRPF will replace two battalions of Assam Rifles in Manipur.
- The government's actions highlight the seriousness of the deteriorating security situation in Jammu, from Kathua to Poonch, including the Chenab valley.
- Inducting troops from outside the region has various implications for enhancing the counter-terrorism grid.

Establishing a grid

- **Counter-terror deployment grid involves units positioned to control vulnerable areas.**
- **The grid is based on threat assessments considering terrain, vulnerable spots, and local population's stance.**
- **Sub-units in the grid conduct tactical operations to hunt terrorists using people-friendly tactics.**
- **Operations rely on knowledge of the terrain and winning local support.**
- **The process is carefully planned, deliberate, and takes time.**
- **Sub-unit commanders build trust with locals through their actions to gain information on active terrorists.**

The challenges

- The local population in counter-insurgency/counter-terrorism is divided into three groups: one minority supports the state, another supports terrorists, and the majority is neutral.
- Security forces aim to keep the support of the pro-state minority and win over the neutral majority.
- The Indian Army uses Infantry or Rashtriya Rifles units in a grid system for counter-insurgency/terrorism.
- The grid in the hinterland supports counter-infiltration on the Line of Control, creating multi-tiered defenses.
- Newly-inducted troops face challenges in learning the area, understanding the local population, and gaining their trust.
- These challenges can be mitigated by integrating new troops with already deployed units rather than deploying them independently.
- New troops should be deployed as sub-units under their leaders, not just for increasing numbers.

Operation Dudhi

- Assam Rifles units have previously been deployed in Jammu and Kashmir, notably in the late 1980s and early 1990s.
- Operation Dudhi in 1991 by 7 Assam Rifles was highly successful, conducted mainly by the battalion's commanding officer and sub-units.
- Commanding officers need trust and control to conduct operations effectively.
- Recently, due to fewer operations, control often shifts beyond the battalion level, affecting seamless operation.
- New units should be deployed and tasked as integral bodies, with sufficient time to adapt, supported by existing command structures.
- Mathematical distribution and quick deployment can be counterproductive.
- Security forces need a long-term strategy, and expecting quick results is detrimental.

GS Paper II: Center State Relations

Under overlords

Court ruling on aldermen shows Delhi's vulnerability to Centre's dominance

The Supreme Court of India's verdict holding that the Lieutenant Governor (L-G) of Delhi exercises independent authority while appointing aldermen to the Delhi Municipal Corporation, underscores the utter vulnerability of the elected Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi to central overlordship. The judgment by a three-judge Bench rightly relies on the letter of the law governing Centre-Delhi government relations, as well as earlier judgments that sought to strike a balance between the elected regime and the appointed administrator. The final outcome of the latest round of litigation is not surprising, given that Delhi is a Union Territory, but it raises questions about the relevance of having an elected Assembly for Delhi. The Court held that the Lt. Governor's power to appoint persons with special knowledge in municipal administration is his statutory duty, and is not one that he should exercise on the basis of advice from Delhi's Council of Ministers. The power is an exception to the constitutional provision that says the L-G is bound by the aid and advice of Delhi's Council of Ministers on all matters in the State and Concurrent Lists, except for the subjects of public order, police and land. The Court has rejected the Delhi government's argument that municipal administration, being a State subject, the L-G could not have acted on his own.

Tracing the nature of the appointing power to the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957, as amended in 1993, a law enacted by Parliament, the Court noted that the Act identifies different authorities, each with distinct roles. While the Administrator was empowered to nominate 10 persons with special knowledge, the Speaker could nominate some legislators to serve on the Corporation by rotation. And that this showed that it was an independent statutory power. A Constitution Bench had sought in 2018 to lay down a framework to avoid escalation of issues arising from differences of opinion between the L-G and the Chief Minister. Such differences, as well as political acrimony between the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party at the Centre and the Aam Aadmi Party in Delhi, have been the principal driving force behind multiple conflicts and legal tussles over governing Delhi. However, in the ultimate analysis, it is the Centre that enjoys the final say. As the latest verdict on aldermen shows, the Constitution allows Parliament power to enact laws in respect of any matter on which the Delhi Assembly has jurisdiction, unlike other States which have an exclusive legislative domain. Parliament can also amend or supersede any law made by the Delhi Assembly. As legislative and executive powers are coextensive, this effectively means that the Delhi government can be undermined in any way the Centre wants.

Under overlords (08 August)

Court ruling on aldermen shows Delhi's vulnerability to Centre's dominance

- The Supreme Court of India ruled that the Lieutenant Governor (L-G) of Delhi has independent authority to appoint aldermen to the Delhi Municipal Corporation.
- This highlights the elected Government of Delhi's vulnerability to central control.
- The judgment is based on the law governing Centre-Delhi relations and previous judgments balancing the elected regime and the appointed administrator.
- The decision is not surprising since Delhi is a Union Territory, but it questions the relevance of having an elected Assembly for Delhi.
- The Court stated that the L-G's power to appoint people with special knowledge in municipal administration is his statutory duty and doesn't need to follow the advice of Delhi's Council of Ministers.
- This power is an exception to the constitutional rule that the L-G should act on the advice of Delhi's Council of Ministers on all matters in the State and Concurrent Lists, except public order, police, and land.
- The Court rejected Delhi government's argument that municipal administration, being a State subject, meant the L-G couldn't act independently.
- The Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957, amended in 1993, is a law made by Parliament.
- The Act assigns different roles to various authorities: the Administrator can nominate 10 persons with special knowledge, and the Speaker can nominate legislators to the Corporation by rotation.
- This indicates the appointing power is an independent statutory power.
- In 2018, a Constitution Bench tried to create a framework to avoid conflicts between the L-G and the Chief Minister.
- Political differences between the BJP at the Centre and the AAP in Delhi have caused multiple conflicts and legal battles over governing Delhi.
- Ultimately, the Centre has the final authority.
- The latest verdict shows that the Constitution allows Parliament to make laws on any matter the Delhi Assembly can legislate on, unlike other States which have exclusive legislative domains.
- Parliament can amend or supersede any law made by the Delhi Assembly.
- Legislative and executive powers being coextensive means the Centre can undermine the Delhi government in any way it wants.

A case of excesses (08 August)

Puja Khedkar's entry in civil service calls into question the recruitment process

- Puja Khedkar violated multiple laws and misled the UPSC recruitment process.
- She falsely claimed mental illness and visual impairment.
- She faked a community certificate and used a disability certificate to get selected, despite her actual rank being too low.
- A Pune hospital issued her a certificate for a 7% locomotor disability, which is not enough for benefits.
- Genuine disabled persons face many challenges to get certification, while she easily faked hers.
- She exploited her father's civil service position for undeserved benefits.

- She fabricated an OBC certificate and used multiple identities for tests.
- She falsely claimed her parents were divorced to bypass the creamy layer exclusion.
- Her actions were exposed when she flaunted perks not meant for her, such as installing a beacon on her luxury car and illegally using a Maharashtra government sticker.
- Her candidature is being cancelled.
- Qualification exams in the country have faced numerous controversies this year, including NEET UG, NEET PG, and CUET.
- Puja Khedkar's case is not an isolated incident; her fraud went undetected by UPSC.
- The government's oversight in detecting such fraud is inexcusable.
- There is a need for a thorough overhaul of the competitive examination system.
- Administrators and systems must be prepared to tackle new challenges and technologies.
- The government should also review the disability certification process to ensure genuine applicants are treated fairly.

Tribal vote trends reshape LS election results

Priyanka Jarkiholi's historic win in Chikkodi shows a broader trend in the 2024 Lok Sabha election, where tribal votes shifted significantly

DATA POINT

Sanjay Kumar, Vibha Attri and Jyoti Mishra

Priyanka Jarkiholi, a tribal woman, made history in the 2024 Lok Sabha election. Not only did she win as a Congress candidate from the unreserved Chikkodi Lok Sabha seat in the Belgavi district in Karnataka, but she also became one of the youngest parliamentarians in India. She secured 51.2% of the votes, defeating the incumbent MP and BJP candidate, Annasaheb Jolle by a margin of a little more than seven per cent votes (Actual vote count).

Chikkodi is a non-reserved seat with a tribal population of only five per cent, about 15% Dalit population, and nearly 10% Muslim voters. The constituency has a large proportion of OBC and upper caste voters. In a constituency with such demographics, securing 51% votes for a candidate from a tribal community especially – a woman – against a candidate from the dominant Lingayat community is a remarkable achievement. The votes polled by Ms. Jarkiholi indicate that she garnered significant support from a broad cross-section of communities, not just the Adivasi community.

Several prominent tribal leaders were elected to the 18th Lok Sabha, including Jasvantsinh Sumanbhai Bhabhor from Dahod in Gujarat, Parbhubhai Nagarbhai Vasava, from Bardoli Lok Sabha constituency in Gujarat, Faggan Singh Kulaste from Mandla Lok Sabha constituency in Madhya Pradesh, Jval Oram from Sundargarh Lok Sabha seat in Odisha and Murari Lal Meena from Dausa Lok Sabha seat in Rajasthan. These MPs, representing various States and parties, were elected from ST reserved constituencies. Against this backdrop, it is important to analyse the tribal factor in the 2024 Lok Sabha election. Did the tribal vote overwhelmingly in favour of one party,

or was it more fragmented across different parties?

Out of 47 Lok Sabha seats reserved for tribals, the BJP won 25 seats, six seats less compared to 2019. Its vote share remained more or less the same, i.e. 42.6% in the 2019 and 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Meanwhile, the Congress gained both in terms of votes and seats compared to the 2019 Lok Sabha election. The Congress polled 30.1% votes in 2024, nearly 1.5 points higher compared to its vote share in 2019. Compared to its tally of four ST reserved seats in 2019, the Congress won 12 ST reserved seats in 2024. These gains came at the expense of the BJP, which lost six seats, and other regional parties which altogether lost five of the ST reserved seats (Table 1).

The Congress indeed made gains among ST reserved seats both in terms of seats and votes, but these gains were not uniform across all States. In some States, the Congress received more votes amongst tribal voters compared to its rivals, but in others, it was less popular among tribal voters.

Findings from the post-poll Survey conducted by CSDS-Lokniti indicate, that tribal votes were largely in favour of the Congress in States like J&K, Goa, Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh. In several States, tribal votes were evenly split between the Congress and the BJP. For example, in Gujarat, both parties received 49% of the tribal votes, and the same was the case in Uttarakhand and Jharkhand. However, in States like Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan and West Bengal, the tribal vote was tilted in favour of the BJP, and, in Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal, there was significant support for the BJP amongst the tribal voters (Table 3).

Sanjay Kumar is Professor and co-director, CSDS-Lokniti
Vibha Attri and Jyoti Mishra are researchers at CSDS-Lokniti

Breaking down the ST vote

Tables 1 and 2 are based on election results from the Election Commission. Table 3 is based on the national election study 2024 conducted by the CSDS-Lokniti



Table 1: The table shows the performance of different parties in ST reserved constituencies

| Election Year | Congress | | UPA | | BJP | | NDA | | Others | |
|---------------|----------|---------|-----|---------|-----|---------|-----|---------|--------|---------|
| | Won | Vote(%) | Won | Vote(%) | Won | Vote(%) | Won | Vote(%) | Won | Vote(%) |
| 2014 | 5 | 27.5 | 7 | 31 | 27 | 36.4 | 27 | 38.5 | 13 | 30.5 |
| 2019 | 4 | 28.7 | 5 | 32.5 | 31 | 42.7 | 32 | 44.7 | 10 | 22.8 |
| 2024 | 12 | 30.1 | 16 | 35.1 | 25 | 42.6 | 26 | 44.8 | 5 | 20.1 |

■ Of the 47 Lok Sabha seats reserved for the STs, the BJP won 25 seats which is 6 seats less compared to its tally of ST reserved seats in 2019

Table 2: The table shows the performance of alliances in ST reserved constituencies across regions

| Region | Year | INDIA | | NDA | | Other | |
|-----------------|------|-------|--------|-----|--------|-------|--------|
| | | Won | Vote % | Won | Vote % | Won | Vote % |
| East | 2014 | 2 | 44.7% | 1 | 20.71% | 4 | 34.6% |
| | 2019 | 1 | 30.36% | 4 | 39.9% | 2 | 29.74% |
| | 2024 | 2 | 31.19% | 5 | 40.95% | 0 | 27.86% |
| Hindi heartland | 2014 | 2 | 37.8% | 16 | 49.42% | 0 | 12.79% |
| | 2019 | 3 | 41.11% | 15 | 50.56% | 0 | 8.33% |
| | 2024 | 7 | 45.55% | 11 | 47.36% | 0 | 7.09% |
| North east | 2014 | 5 | 42.16% | 1 | 19.06% | 1 | 38.78% |
| | 2019 | 1 | 27.45% | 4 | 34.89% | 2 | 37.65% |
| | 2024 | 2 | 27.52% | 3 | 38.78% | 2 | 33.71% |
| West | 2014 | 0 | 36.13% | 9 | 54.17% | 0 | 9.7% |
| | 2019 | 0 | 32.82% | 8 | 53.03% | 1 | 14.14% |
| | 2024 | 3 | 40.94% | 6 | 50.27% | 0 | 8.79% |
| South | 2014 | 2 | 30.98% | 1 | 33.73% | 3 | 35.29% |
| | 2019 | 1 | 32.27% | 3 | 35.94% | 2 | 31.79% |
| | 2024 | 4 | 43.38% | 1 | 37.27% | 1 | 19.36% |

■ Several prominent tribal leaders have been elected to the 18th Lok Sabha including Jasvantsinh Bhabhor from Dahod in Gujarat, Parbhubhai Vasava from Bardoli Lok Sabha constituency in Gujarat, Faggan Singh Kulaste from Mandla Lok Sabha constituency in Madhya Pradesh, and Jval Oram from Sundargarh Lok Sabha seat in Odisha

Table 3: The table shows how tribal voters voted in 2024 Lok Sabha election

| State | Proportion of tribal population | INDIA | NDA | Others |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|-------|-----|--------|
| Andhra Pradesh | 7% | 3% | 56% | 41% |
| Assam | 12.5% | 24% | 51% | 24% |
| Goa | 10.1% | 51% | 45% | 4% |
| Gujarat | 14.8% | 49% | 49% | 2% |
| Jammu and Kashmir | 12% | 76% | 17% | 7% |
| Karnataka | 7% | 46% | 54% | 0% |
| Madhya Pradesh | 21.1% | 24% | 71% | 5% |
| Maharashtra | 9.4% | 61% | 29% | 10% |
| Odisha | 22.9% | 23% | 40% | 37% |
| Rajasthan | 13.5% | 39% | 48% | 13% |
| West Bengal | 6% | 2% | 63% | 29% |
| Jharkhand | 27% | 36% | 38% | 26% |
| Chhattisgarh | 31% | 59% | 40% | 1% |
| Uttarakhand | 3% | 50% | 50% | 0% |

■ Post poll survey findings indicate that tribal votes were largely in favour of the Congress in States like J&K, Goa, Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh

What led to the fall of Sheikh Hasina?

GS Paper II: IR

Sheikh Hasina remobilised the Awami League and brought the party to power. She went on to oversee economic progress in Bangladesh, lifting millions out of poverty. But what went wrong for the most powerful Prime Minister Bangladesh has had in a generation?

WORLD INSIGHT

Stanly Johnny

Sheikh Hasina survived the carnage of August 15, 1975 by sheer chance. Ms. Hasina, who was then 28, happened to be abroad when almost all members of her family, including her father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding father of Bangladesh, were killed at their residence in Dhaka by a group of Army personnel. She then spent six years in exile in India. In the late 1980s, she remobilised the Awami League (AL), Mujib's party, which played a crucial role in bringing down the military dictatorship of Muhammad Ershad in 1990. Six years later, the AL, under her leadership, defeated the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) of Khaleda Zia, and Ms. Hasina became Prime Minister for the first time. She returned to power after an interregnum in 2009.

In the subsequent 15 years, Ms. Hasina oversaw economic progress in Bangladesh. The country of 170 million people saw millions being lifted out of poverty. Her government won international praise for hosting millions of Rohingya Muslim refugees who fled violence in neighbouring Myanmar. She set up a war crimes tribunal to hold those who aided the genocide of the 1970s accountable. She also won back-to-back elections, the latest victory being in January. Still everything she built came crashing like a sandcastle on August 5. The 'iron lady' of Bangladesh had to resign and leave the country. What went wrong for the most powerful Prime Minister Bangladesh had had in a generation?

Lack of political legitimacy

The trigger for the set of events that led to Ms. Hasina's downfall was an unpopular quota system for government jobs that was originally introduced by Mujib after the liberation of Bangladesh. More than 50% of government jobs in Bangladesh

were reserved for different sections, of which 30% were for the descendants of freedom fighters – meaning, Awami League workers. Ms. Hasina had done away with this system in 2018 after protests. In June 2024, the old system was reinstated by the Bangladesh high court. This triggered student protests, first on university campuses.

But Ms. Hasina had another problem – lack of political legitimacy for her government. In Bangladesh, the opposition and the government have historically had a hostile relationship. Ahead of the 2018 elections, Ms. Zia, the former Prime Minister and BNP chairperson, was jailed after a corruption conviction. Leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami, the radical Islamist party, were convicted and hanged by the war crimes tribunal for their role in the genocide. Opposition leaders were routinely harassed, and legal challenges were mounted against the Prime Minister's rivals. This led to the BNP, the main opposition party, boycotting back-to-back elections. Moreover, independent analysts flagged irregularities in the election process. Thus, the space for opposition politics shrank over the years.

But for large sections of Bangladesh's population, Ms. Hasina was a force of stability, who turned around the country's economy. Bangladesh witnessed sustained economic growth, showing a jump in GDP per capita and substantial improvement in social indicators. Poverty declined from 11.8% in 2010 to 5% in 2022, based on the international poverty line of \$2.15 a day, according to the World Bank.

However, the economic story faced challenges in recent years, first after the strike of COVID-19 and then the Russia-Ukraine war. GDP growth plunged to 3.4% in 2020, from 7.9% the previous year, according to the IMF. The economy, thus, is still in recovery mode. The Ukraine war led to a spike in oil and food prices. Inflation went up to 10%, and the country now has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in South Asia – at about 20%. As the economy slowed,

employment opportunities in the private sector shrank. Government jobs were seen a report of economic stability by the youth. And when the high court ordered the reinstatement of the quota system, it angered the already frustrated students. It is this anger which lit the fuse for Ms. Hasina's imminent downfall. And the opposition, which had been living under Ms. Hasina's tight grip for over 15 years, joined in.

The iron lady's mistakes

Ms. Hasina erred in understanding the depth of the students' anger. She also miscalculated the strength of her political opponents. She called the protesters 'razakars', a derogatory term which was used to refer to those who helped Pakistani troops during the 1971 liberation war. This inflamed passions. And Ms. Hasina made the mistake which authoritarian rulers always make – bank on excessive force to quell an uprising. She unleashed both police personnel and AL activists on the protesters, who were also violent. In July, some 200 people were killed, mostly protesters, in clashes.

After the first round of protests, the Bangladesh Supreme Court scaled back the quota system, setting the reservation cap for the descendants of freedom fighters at 5%. While the students had won a major victory, they were not ready to call off the protests. On August 4, they called for another round of protests with a new demand – Sheikh Hasina should go. They also demanded accountability for the deaths of over 200 of their comrades. The AL then called for a counter-mobilisation of its members.

Dhaka, a megacity of 10 million people, was set for a major showdown. More than 100 people were killed in the ensuing violence in a single day. The government curbed access to communication networks and ordered a curfew. Students urged for more protests on August 5.

By that time it was evident that Ms. Hasina's position had been substantially weakened. The military said it would guard its constitutional obligations but won't use force against protesters.

According to a Reuters report, Army chief Waker-uz-Zaman, after holding a meeting with senior Generals, informed the Prime Minister the night before she quit that his soldiers would not be able to enforce the curfew she had called for. Ms. Hasina's fate was sealed.

In the afternoon on August 5, when protesters started moving towards her official residence, the Awami League leader who was in power for 15 years resigned and left the country for India.

Chaos or order?

Ms. Hasina is the second leader in South Asia who has now been forced out of power by mass protests.

In July 2022, Sri Lanka's elected President Gotabaya Rajapaksa was forced to resign and leave the country amid massive protests triggered by an economic meltdown. The island country, however, saw an orderly political transition. The country's political class backed Ranil Wickremesinghe, a former Prime Minister, as the new President. Sri Lanka is now preparing for a Presidential election later this year, even though the country is yet to recover from the economic crisis.

But the situation in Bangladesh looks gloomier. The Army chief has announced an interim government, which is to be headed by Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus, a key demand from the students. The President has dissolved parliament. The BNP has demanded elections in three months. However, it is not clear what role the Army, which had in the past directly ruled the country, would play during the transition. The interim administration would also find it difficult to bring in order after the chaos of the past month. There are already reports of widespread violence against Hindus, Ahmedia Muslims and AL functionaries.

Bangladesh's polity stands broken.

Ms. Hasina may be out of Bangladesh, but the AL still has a presence in the country. Moreover, the economic woes are looming large over the next government. Bangladesh definitely has some tough days ahead.

THE GIST

Sheikh Hasina, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, remobilised the Awami League (AL) which played a crucial role in bringing down the military dictatorship of Muhammad Ershad in 1990.

The main problem was the lack of political legitimacy for Ms. Hasina's government. In Bangladesh the opposition and the government have historically had a hostile relationship. Ahead of the 2018 elections, Ms. Zia, the former Prime Minister and BNP chairperson, was jailed after a corruption conviction.

Ms. Hasina erred in understanding the depth of the students' anger. She also miscalculated the strength of her political opponents. She called the protesters 'razakars', a derogatory term which was used to refer to those who helped Pakistani troops during the 1971 liberation war. This inflamed passions.

What led to the fall of Sheikh Hasina?

- **Survival and Exile:** Sheikh Hasina survived an attack in 1975 that killed her family because she was abroad. She spent six years in exile in India.
- **Political Comeback:** In the late 1980s, Sheikh Hasina revitalized the Awami League (AL) and helped end the military dictatorship in Bangladesh. She became Prime Minister in 1996 and again in 2009.
- **Economic Progress:** During her time in power, Bangladesh saw significant economic growth, with millions lifted out of poverty. Her government also received international praise for hosting Rohingya refugees and holding war criminals accountable.
- **Controversial Quota System:** The reinstatement of an unpopular quota system for government jobs, which favored descendants of freedom fighters (mainly Awami League supporters), led to widespread student protests in 2024.
- **Lack of Political Legitimacy:** Sheikh Hasina's government faced criticism for suppressing opposition, jailing political rivals, and facing accusations of election irregularities. This eroded political legitimacy.
- **Economic Challenges:** Bangladesh's economy was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war, leading to slower growth, higher inflation, and increased youth unemployment.
- **Student Protests:** The reinstatement of the quota system angered students, who were already frustrated by the lack of job opportunities, sparking widespread protests.
- **Imminent Downfall:** The combination of economic challenges, political repression, and student protests contributed to the weakening of Sheikh Hasina's grip on power, leading to her eventual downfall.

The iron lady's mistakes

- **Miscalculation by Sheikh Hasina:** Sheikh Hasina underestimated the anger of the students and the strength of her political opponents. She called the protesters "razakars," which worsened the situation.
- **Use of Force:** She relied on excessive force to suppress the protests, leading to clashes where around 200 people, mostly protesters, were killed.
- **Partial Victory for Protesters:** The Bangladesh Supreme Court reduced the quota for descendants of freedom fighters to 5%, but students continued protesting, demanding Sheikh Hasina's resignation and accountability for the deaths.
- **Escalation of Violence:** On August 4, the situation intensified with a call for more protests, leading to a major confrontation in Dhaka where over 100 people were killed in a single day.

- **Military's Neutral Stance:** The military decided not to use force against the protesters. The Army chief informed Sheikh Hasina that they would not enforce the curfew, leading to her resignation on August 5.
- **Sheikh Hasina Resigns:** Facing mounting pressure, Sheikh Hasina resigned and left for India as protesters moved towards her official residence.
- **Interim Government:** An interim government led by Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus was announced, and parliament was dissolved, with the BNP demanding elections within three months.
- **Uncertain Future:** The situation in Bangladesh remains unstable with reports of violence against minorities and Awami League members, and the country's economic challenges still loom large.
- **Comparison to Sri Lanka:** Unlike Sri Lanka's orderly transition after mass protests, Bangladesh faces a more chaotic and uncertain political future.

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