

The Fallout of Bangladesh Events: Minority Rights and India-Bangladesh Relations

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What's in today's article?

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- Minority communities in Bangladesh

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Why in News?

- On November 25, Chinmoy Krishna Das, spokesperson for the Bangladesh Sammilito Sanatani Jagaran Jote, was arrested in Dhaka while traveling to Chittagong. He was charged with sedition for allegedly disrespecting Bangladesh's national flag during an October 25 rally and was subsequently sent to police custody.
- Clashes led to the death of a government law officer, sparking communal incidents, including the desecration of three temples. Rumors blaming the lawyer's death on supporters of a Vaishnavite monk fueled tensions.

Minority communities in Bangladesh

- Bangladesh has an ancient Hindu and Buddhist population, and in recent decades has also acquired a thriving Christian community.
- These minorities were united under the Bangladesh Hindu Bouddho Christian Oikyo Parishad (BHBCOP) during Khaleda Zia's tenure as Prime Minister in 1991.
- Analysts have highlighted increasing discrimination and atrocities against religious minorities over the years.
- Despite appeals, successive governments have failed to address these issues, fueling frustration among younger community members and paving the way for leaders like Chinmoy Krishna Das.

Charges against Das and stand of different stakeholders

• Charges against Das

- Chinmoy Krishna Das, former leader of Pundarik Dham and previously associated with ISKCON, gained prominence after the Sheikh Hasina government fell on August 5.
- Amid reports of attacks on minorities and Sufi shrines, he held major rallies advocating for minority rights in Dhaka, Chittagong, and Rangpur, drawing attention and support from political leaders.
- A case against him was filed, alleging that a saffron flag was raised above the Bangladesh national flag during a Chittagong rally, which was seen as an insult.

• ISKCON Bangladesh's stand

- At a press conference, held recently, Bangladesh ISKCON Secretary-General clarified that activist monks, including Chinmoy Krishna Das, had been removed from their positions and their actions do not represent ISKCON.
- He emphasized that ISKCON Bangladesh had no involvement in the assistant public prosecutor's murder, calling any such connection "wrong."

• Concerns Over Minority Rights

- Mr. Yunus, Chief Adviser of Bangladesh, emphasizes that his government, led by activists and human rights advocates, is committed to fairness and has no intention of discriminating against minority groups.
- However, recurring attacks on temples and places of worship highlight the government's failure to restore law and order and maintain harmony in a pluralistic society.

- **Concerns over Constitutional Reforms in Bangladesh**

- The BHBCOP has raised concerns about the Yunus government's push for constitutional reforms.
- The Attorney General of the interim government has taken up the validity of the 15th amendment of the Bangladesh Constitution of 2011 that re-inserted 'secularism' in the statute.
 - 'Secularism' was first incorporated in the Bangladesh Constitution in 1972.
- The Attorney General stated that socialism and secularism do not align with the demographic reality of a nation where 90% of the population is Muslim.
- These remarks have fueled fears that the government may seek to dismantle Bangladesh's secular framework.

- **India-Bangladesh Tensions Over Minority Rights**

- A diplomatic exchange erupted after India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) criticized the arrest and denial of bail for Chinmoy Krishna Das, calling it "unfortunate," and expressed concern over attacks on minorities in Bangladesh.
- The MEA urged Bangladesh's interim government to ensure the safety of Hindus and other minorities.
- In response, Bangladesh accused India of misrepresenting facts, stating that the remarks were "contrary" to the friendly relations between the two nations.

Impact on border states on India

- **Protests in India Over Threats to ISKCON in Bangladesh**

- ISKCON, with a significant support base in West Bengal and Tripura, has seen followers protest against threats to the organisation in Bangladesh.
- Demonstrations were held outside the Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in Agartala, condemning attacks on Chakmas in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.
- A more aggressive protest occurred outside the Deputy High Commission of Bangladesh in Kolkata, where protesters burned an effigy of Muhammad Yunus, the Chief Adviser of Bangladesh's interim government.

- **Rising Communal Tensions and Fears of Exodus**

- Heightened communal tensions and online exchanges between majority and minority communities in Bangladesh have sparked fears of a potential exodus of minority communities to bordering Indian states.

Impact on India-Bangladesh ties

- **Strained India-Bangladesh Relations Under the Yunus Government**

- The interim Yunus government is seen as a setback for India's Bangladesh policy, given Ms. Hasina's warm ties with India.
- Bangladesh has criticized India for harboring the former PM, and Ms. Hasina's public remarks against the Yunus government during her exile in India have complicated India's diplomatic stance.
- While India adheres to a formal non-intervention policy, Ms. Hasina's vocal presence has added to its diplomatic challenges.

- **Impact on India-Backed Projects**

- India-backed initiatives, including the Adani Group's Godda power plant project, have been affected.
- The interim government has placed the project under review and plans to hire a consultancy agency to assess its feasibility, further straining bilateral cooperation.

- **Internal Challenges for the Interim Government**

- The Yunus government faces internal instability, with poor ties between Mr. Yunus and Donald Trump and the resurgence of Jamaat-e-Islami, a banned anti-India political party, which is now gaining international prominence.
 - These issues contribute to the uncertainty surrounding the government's future.
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Q.1. Why was Chinmoy Krishna Das arrested, and what are the charges?

Das was arrested for alleged disrespect to Bangladesh's national flag during a rally. The case, filed by a BNP leader, claimed a saffron flag was raised above the national flag, fueling tensions.

Q.2. What are the implications of the Yunus government for India-Bangladesh relations?

The Yunus government's policies have strained ties with India. Issues include delays in India-backed projects, criticism of harboring Ms. Hasina, and diplomatic challenges arising from minority rights concerns.

Source: [What will be the fallout of Bangladesh events?](#)

[The Hindu](#)

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