Sheikh Hasina Death Verdict: Bangladesh's Political Crisis Explained

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Sheikh Hasina Death Verdict Latest News

- Bangladesh's former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been sentenced to death by the International Crimes Tribunal for crimes against humanity committed during the 2024 student-led protests.
- Living in India since her government collapsed in August 2024, Hasina was convicted for ordering the killing of 12 unarmed protesters in Dhaka and Ashulia on August 5, 2024. Five of the victims were burned after death, and one was allegedly burned alive.
- She also received a life-term sentence for inciting violence, directing the use of lethal weapons, and authorising attacks using helicopters and drones.
- The verdict has triggered intense political reactions across Bangladesh and is expected to shape the run-up to the February 2026 national elections.

International Crimes Tribunal

- The International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) is a special Bangladeshi court established in **2009** by then PM Sheikh Hasina to try individuals accused of committing atrocities during the 1971 Liberation War.
- Hasina had promised during the 2008 election campaign to bring “war criminals” — especially those who allegedly collaborated with Pakistan — to justice.
- Once set up, the ICT aggressively prosecuted many individuals, often from the Jamaat-e-Islami, the country’s largest Islamist political party.
- However, the tribunal faced strong criticism from international rights groups. Human Rights Watch, in 2012, described the trials as “deeply problematic”, raising concerns about political bias, judicial independence, and fairness.

Hasina’s Fate: Exiled, Convicted, and Politically Isolated

- Former PM Sheikh Hasina, now living in India since August 5, has dismissed her death sentence as politically motivated.
- The verdict, tied to her brutal 2024 protest crackdown that killed 1,400 people, seals her political future for now.
- Her return to Bangladesh appears impossible, effectively removing her from national politics.

Awami League in Leadership Crisis

- Hasina left Bangladesh without establishing a successor, creating deep uncertainty within the Awami League.
- The party, currently banned from elections, is struggling without a clear strategy or leadership, and many leaders feel abandoned amid widespread public hostility.

Yunus’s Rise: Interim PM and Symbol of Justice

- Interim leader **Muhammad Yunus**, who returned during the 2024 chaos, has positioned himself as a reformist figure.
- He welcomed the verdict as a signal that “no one is above the law.”
- While the Army and political parties grow impatient over delayed elections, the ruling strengthens his image as a leader delivering justice and stabilising the nation.

BNP’s Position: Seeking Political Revival

- The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) hailed the verdict as justice served.
- After decades of political marginalisation and legal battles, BNP sees an opportunity to regain power in upcoming elections.
- However, internal challenges remain—particularly how Khaleda Zia will project her exiled son Tarique Rahman as the party’s PM candidate.

Jamaat-e-Islami’s Unexpected Strategy

- Jamaat-e-Islami, gaining momentum after major student union victories, has surprisingly demanded Hasina's **return from India**—a move aimed at pressuring New Delhi and strengthening its nationalist credentials.
- The party aims to emerge as a powerful force in the 2026 election, either allying with BNP or becoming the primary opposition.

India's Calculated and Cautious Stand on the Hasina Verdict

- New Delhi responded by saying it has *"noted the verdict"* issued by the International Crimes Tribunal of Bangladesh against former PM Sheikh Hasina.
- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) refrained from condemning or endorsing the ruling, signalling a carefully calibrated position.

Commitment to Bangladesh's People — Not Its Current Regime

- India emphasised its commitment to the "best interests of the people of Bangladesh" — focusing on peace, democracy, inclusion, and stability.
- The wording is significant: India did not echo support for the Bangladesh government but referenced the broader population.
- The term "inclusion" implicitly signals India's preference for allowing the Awami League to participate in the coming elections.

Shelter for Hasina, No Extradition Signals

- India continues to shelter Sheikh Hasina — as it did earlier from 1975–1981 after Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's assassination.
- Despite growing calls within Bangladesh for Hasina's extradition, India has not yielded.
- Delhi views the case as political and has legal grounds to deny extradition on concerns of fairness and the political nature of the charges.

Non-Interference: Framing It as Bangladesh's Internal Issue

- While India sees Hasina as a long-time ally who curbed radicalism and supported strong bilateral ties, it does not want to intervene in Bangladesh's domestic political battles.
- The MEA's restrained response signals that Delhi considers the developments an internal matter for Bangladesh.

Strategic Calculus: No Gain in Sending Hasina Back

- Delhi believes that extraditing Hasina would not improve its standing with Bangladesh's current political establishment.
- Therefore, turning her over offers no strategic benefit. Under these circumstances, India remains the safest refuge for her.

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