

# EXPRESS VIEW ON BANGLADESH ELECTIONS: SHEIKH HASINA, AGAIN

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Bangladesh

The victory of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League in Bangladesh's parliamentary election was all but guaranteed after the main opposition party, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), decided to stay away from the polls. The party's leader, Khaleda Zia, is ailing and under house arrest on corruption charges, which her supporters claim to be politically motivated.

The government had rejected the BNP's demand for a neutral authority to oversee the polls. Zia's party has accused the Awami League of propping up dummy Opposition candidates and alleged that more than 20,000 BNP members were arrested in the run-up to elections. The government has disputed these allegations. But a barely 40 per cent turnout in the polls — it was about 80 per cent in 2018 — should be indication enough for the PM that she begins her fourth consecutive term in office in a deeply troubled political landscape.

Hasina's legacy has to a great extent been shaped by Bangladesh's economic success in the last decade and a half, fueled by infrastructure, poverty alleviation and energy projects. She has also dealt with militancy with a firm hand, often inviting accusations of high-handedness. Post-pandemic, however, the country has been hard hit by [inflation](#).

The taka has depreciated by over 40 per cent against the US dollar and Bangladesh has negotiated loans with the World Bank, IMF and Asian Development Bank.

Already notorious for poor standards on freedom of speech, the Hasina regime is seen to have become more authoritarian in the strained economic circumstances. It has been criticised for weaponising the judiciary and resorting to mass arrests of political opponents. Those affiliated with the ruling party — especially its youth wing, the Jubo League — appear to enjoy impunity for violent attacks. In the run-up to elections, the US imposed visa restrictions on a large section of Bangladesh's political class and bureaucracy in order to "restore the democratic system".

Hasina has skilfully balanced ties with Bangladesh's powerful neighbours — India and China. It has joined the Belt and Road Initiative, attracted Chinese investments in infrastructure projects and is among the major importers of Chinese weapons. At the same time, Hasina's crackdown on anti-India elements has eased [Delhi](#)'s security concerns in the East. With the situation in Myanmar deteriorating, the partnership between the two countries that share a 4,100 km long border is crucial to peace in South Asia. But the Hasina regime must also realise that without meaningful democracy, political stability will remain precarious.

**END**

Downloaded from [crackIAS.com](http://crackIAS.com)

© **Zuccess App** by [crackIAS.com](http://crackIAS.com)