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Bangladesh's 13th Jatiya Sangsad Elections — India's Neighbourhood Stakes

8 February 2026

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WHY IN NEWS

Bangladesh's Election Commission announced the 13th Jatiya Sangsad (national parliament) elections for February 12, 2026 — the first election after the ouster of PM Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government in August 2024 — with 2,034 candidates from 51 parties and 275 independents contesting under Muhammad Yunus's interim government.

BANGLADESH'S PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM — STRUCTURE

Jatiya Sangsad (literal translation: National Assembly or People's Parliament) is Bangladesh's **unicameral legislature** — a single-chamber parliament of **350 seats**:

300 directly elected constituency seats (First-Past-the-Post system)

50 reserved seats for women (distributed proportionally among parties based on their share of the 300 constituency seats)

Electoral system: Bangladesh uses a simple first-past-the-post system for the 300 constituency seats.

Voter eligibility: Citizens aged 18+. The Election Commission of Bangladesh (established under the 1972 Constitution) is the constitutional body overseeing elections.

Government formation: The Prime Minister is typically the leader of the party commanding the confidence of the Jatiya Sangsad. Bangladesh is a **parliamentary republic** with a largely ceremonial President (elected by members of parliament).

WHAT PRECEDED THIS ELECTION — AUGUST 2024 TO PRESENT

The political context of this election is extraordinary. In **August 2024**, PM **Sheikh Hasina** — who had led the **Awami League** government since 2009 — was forced to resign and flee the country amid a student-led mass protest movement. The protest, initially against a controversial quota system for government jobs, escalated into a broader movement against Hasina's increasingly authoritarian governance.

Key events:

July–August 2024: Mass student protests against the job quota system; security crackdown; escalating violence

August 5, 2024: Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled to India (where she has remained in exile)

August 8, 2024: Dr. Muhammad Yunus — Nobel Peace Prize winner (2006) and founder of Grameen Bank — was invited to lead an **interim government** as Chief Adviser

The interim government promised to hold free and fair elections after electoral reforms

THE 13TH JATIYA SANGSAD ELECTION — FEBRUARY 12, 2026

Election details:

Date: **February 12, 2026**

Candidates: **2,034** from **51 political parties** + **275 independents**

Major parties: Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami (post-ban reversal), multiple smaller parties

Awami League: Banned from participating following August 2024 events; Hasina remains in India

Electoral significance:

First election without direct Awami League participation in over two decades

BNP (led by Khaleda Zia's party structure) and Jamaat-e-Islami are the main contestants

Mohammad Yunus's interim government has sought to ensure a neutral electoral environment

INDIA'S STAKES IN BANGLADESH'S ELECTION

India's interests in Bangladesh are multidimensional and significant.

Economic linkages:

Bangladesh is **India's largest trade partner in South Asia** — India-Bangladesh bilateral trade exceeds **USD 12 billion**

The **Land Customs Stations (LCS)** and **Integrated Check Posts (ICPs)** on the India-Bangladesh border are among the busiest in India's land trade

India's northeast connectivity depends partly on **transit access through Bangladesh** (Kolkata–Agartala highway via Bangladesh reduces distance from 1,600 km to 560 km)

Bangladesh buys electricity from India — approximately 1,160 MW of imported power from India, making India Bangladesh's largest electricity supplier

Security linkages:

India has long relied on Bangladesh cooperation on **security of northeastern India** — particularly against insurgent groups that previously operated from Bangladeshi territory

Sheikh Hasina's government was considered a close security partner; her departure creates uncertainty

Illegal migration from Bangladesh remains a contested issue in Indian domestic politics, particularly in West Bengal and Assam

Diaspora dimension:

Bangladesh hosts approximately **750,000–800,000 Hindu minorities** who have faced sporadic communal violence since August 2024

Their safety is monitored closely by India's MEA

China factor:

China is Bangladesh's **largest import source** and a major infrastructure investor (Padma Bridge rail link, industrial parks)

A BNP-led government might recalibrate Bangladesh's China policy, but economic dependencies are deep

India's preference is for a stable, predictable Bangladesh government regardless of party — one that maintains the 2015 Land Boundary Agreement framework and continues security cooperation. The election outcome will significantly shape India's neighbourhood policy in the east for the coming years.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Jatiya Sangsad (350 seats — 300 constituency + 50 reserved for women), 13th election (February 12, 2026), 2,034 candidates, 51 parties, Sheikh Hasina (fled August 5, 2024), Muhammad Yunus (Nobel Prize 2006, Grameen Bank founder, Chief Adviser of interim govt), BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh-India bilateral trade (USD 12 billion+), Bangladesh imports 1,160 MW from India.

India's neighbourhood policy; India-Bangladesh bilateral relations; political transition in Bangladesh; connectivity through Bangladesh (northeast India); security cooperation (insurgency); minority protection; China's footprint in Bangladesh.

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BANGLADESH PARLIAMENT — JATIYA SANGSAD:

Type: **Unicameral**; Total seats: **350** (300 constituency + 50 reserved for women)

Electoral system: **First-Past-the-Post** (FPTP) for 300 seats

Reserved seats: Proportionally distributed based on constituency seat share

POLITICAL TIMELINE:

August 2024: Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled; Muhammad Yunus became Chief Adviser (interim govt)

February 12, 2026: 13th Jatiya Sangsad election

Candidates: **2,034** from **51 parties** + **275 independents**

MUHAMMAD YUNUS:

Nobel Peace Prize: **2006** (for Grameen Bank and microcredit work)

Grameen Bank: Founded **1983**; pioneered group-based microcredit for rural poor

SHEIKH HASINA:

Awami League leader; PM: **2009–2024**; fled to India: **August 5, 2024**

INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONS — KEY DATA:

Bilateral trade: **USD 12 billion+** (India's largest South Asian trade partner)

India's electricity export to Bangladesh: **~1,160 MW**

Kolkata–Agartala via Bangladesh: **560 km** (vs 1,600 km via India); saves 1,040 km

Land Boundary Agreement: **2015** (resolved 68-year-old border enclaves)

Farakka Barrage treaty: **1996** (Ganga water sharing, 30-year treaty)

CHINA IN BANGLADESH:

Largest import source for Bangladesh

Key projects: Padma Bridge rail link, various SEZs, deep sea port at Matarbari

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Teesta Water Treaty: Long-pending; India-Bangladesh unresolved dispute (West Bengal's objection)

BBIN (Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal) Motor Vehicles Agreement: Bangladesh's participation pending

BNP = Bangladesh Nationalist Party (founded by Gen. Ziaur Rahman, now led by Khaleda Zia's faction)

Sources: NewsOnAir — All India Radio, Next IAS

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