

Current Affairs

Students protestors ended the long rule of autocratic Sheikh Hasana. Critically evaluate the political earthquake in Bangladesh. Also analyze its possible fallout.

Introduction:-

On 5 August 2024, the 15 years long rule of autocratic Sheikh Hasana was ended. There were multiple factors behind her ouster and revival of de-jure democracy in Bangladesh, but the prominent one was the mass student mobilization. As a renowned British philosopher **J.S. Mill** stated in his book "**Considerations on Representative Government**", the establishment of democratic governments in countries those had been subject to colonial rule, thus have limited experience of self-rule, is a difficult and challenging task. The same scenario occurred in Bangladesh to restore a de-jure democracy and to acquire fundamental liberty and rights. The political turmoil faced by Bangladesh as a repercussion of long-held grievances would result in

regional and national adverse implications.

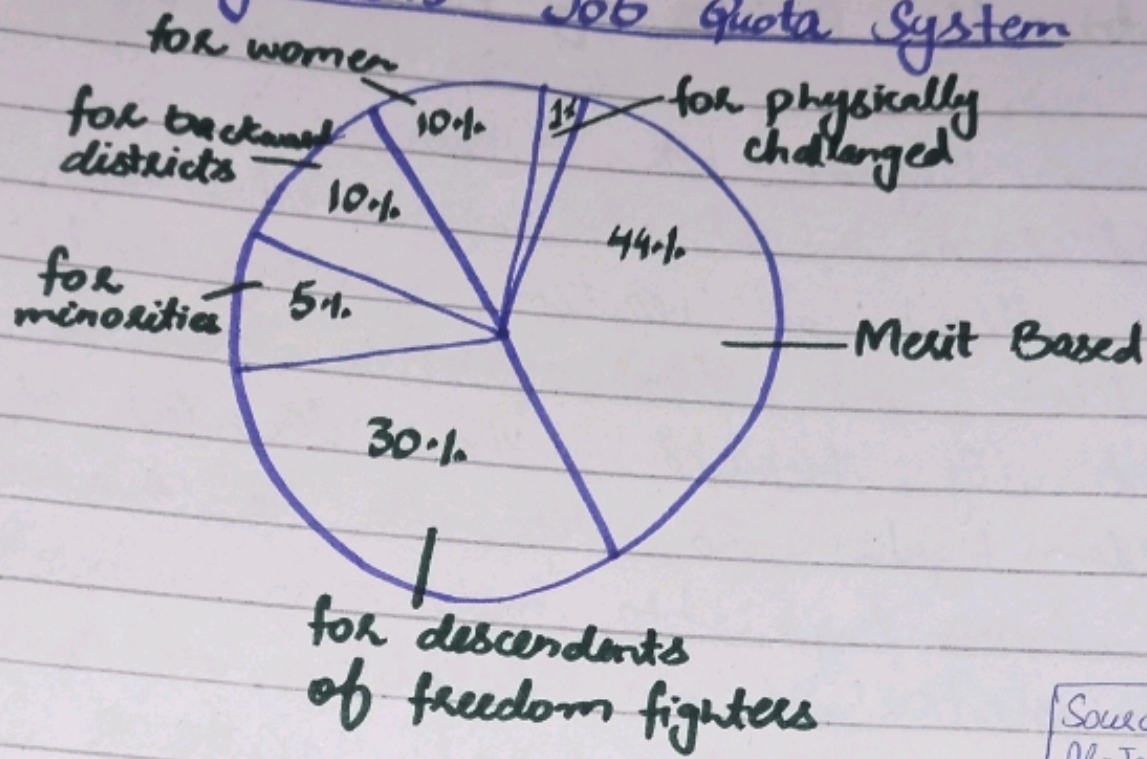
Reasons Behind Political Turmoil in Bangladesh

The political upheaval of Bangladesh in August 2024 had multiple reasons behind it which led to students uprising and ultimately a political movement in Bangladesh started. The reasons behind the mass student mobilization are given below:

1- Re-establishment of Quota-System:

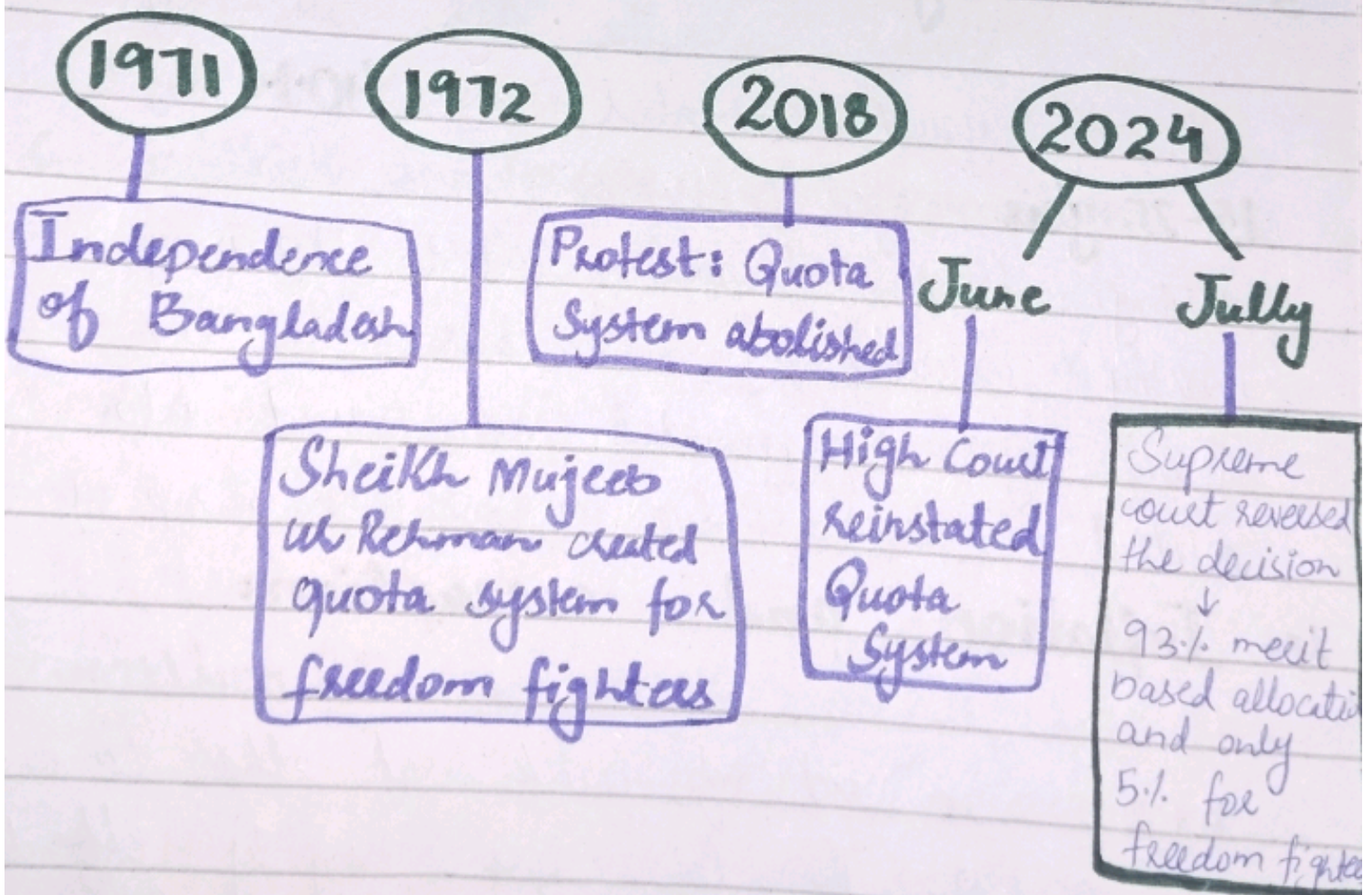
The long held grievances over the Quota system is the major reason of political uprising. In June 2024 High court reinstated the special quota system that had been abolished since 2018 mass mobilization. According to this, 30% of the government jobs quota allocated to the descendants of the 'Freedom fighters' while only 44% quota was left for merit based allocation. These freedom fighters represent only 0.12 - 0.20% of total Bangladesh population.

Bangladesh's Job Quota System



Source:
Al-Jazeera

Historical timeline of Quota System



2- Autocratic Policies of Hasina Wajeed:

Due to repressive policies of Hasina Wajeed, her 15 years rule is considered as an autocratic government. She was alleged of nepotism, extrajudicial murders, and forced disappearances. She intentionally favoured the descendents of freedom fighters, who were also the members of Awami League, to make an autocratic administration and to consolidate her power. While her attitude toward opposition was also represented her political concerns.

3- Massive youth unemployment:

The high unemployment rate of youth, estimated as 40% of 15-25 year aged population, was also a driving force toward protest. Up-rising, mostly initiated by students on the quota system, aggravated and turned into political movement due to the higher unemployment.

4- Inflation and corruption:

As the 32 million people were out of work at the time of protest. The life was highly affected due to inflation and corruption. The

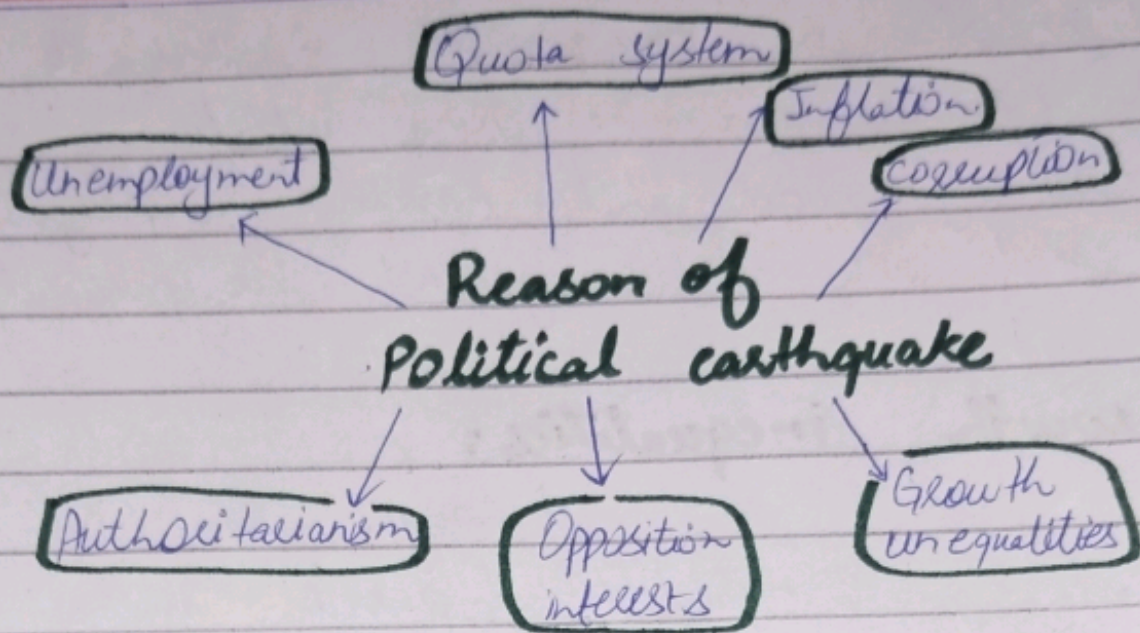
inflation rate in Bangladesh hovered at **10.1 per annum**. The rising inflation, corrupt governance and massive unemployment prepared a suitable ground for political movement.

5- Growth inequalities:

Although the GDP growth of Bangladesh improved in the past 10 years, ^{with} the reduction in poverty from **11.8%** in 2010 to **5.1%** in 2022. But the growth was not equal. The wealthier **10%** population hold **40%** of the whole income while the poorer **10%** population hold the **1%** of the total income.

6- Political interests of opposition:

During the Sheikh Haseena's rule, almost all the opposition political leadership suffered. In January 2024, when the elections hold in Bangladesh, Awami league leader Haseena won without contestation because all the parties were banned and leaders were imprisoned. This undemocratic move of Haseena provoked the opposition to favour political mobilization against her.



Possible fallouts of Political Earthquake in Bangladesh

The repercussions of the political upheaval in a country are not limited to that nation. It has regional impacts also. Likewise, the political earthquake in Bangladesh not only impacted the internal interest but also affected the regional interest, notably Indian interests.

1- Increase Economic Pressure:

Due to the internet Blackout and curfew, Bangladesh economy suffered. Haseena's government dealt heavy handedly with the protestors. That's why he cut off internet supply and imposed curfew

all over the country. Bangladesh 'Ready-made Garment industry' that account of 80-1. of the yearly exports disrupted. According to Business man analysts \$10 billion lost due to curfew and internet blackout.

2- Humanitarian crises:

In the violent protest and ferocious encounter with the army costed around 300-400 lives, more than 1000 injured and 11000 protestants, mostly students - arrested. Amnesty international and many other humanitarian crises watchdog organizations pointed out the intensive crackdown on the rights of freedom of expression and peaceful protest.

Regional implication:

1- India might have lost its trusted ally:

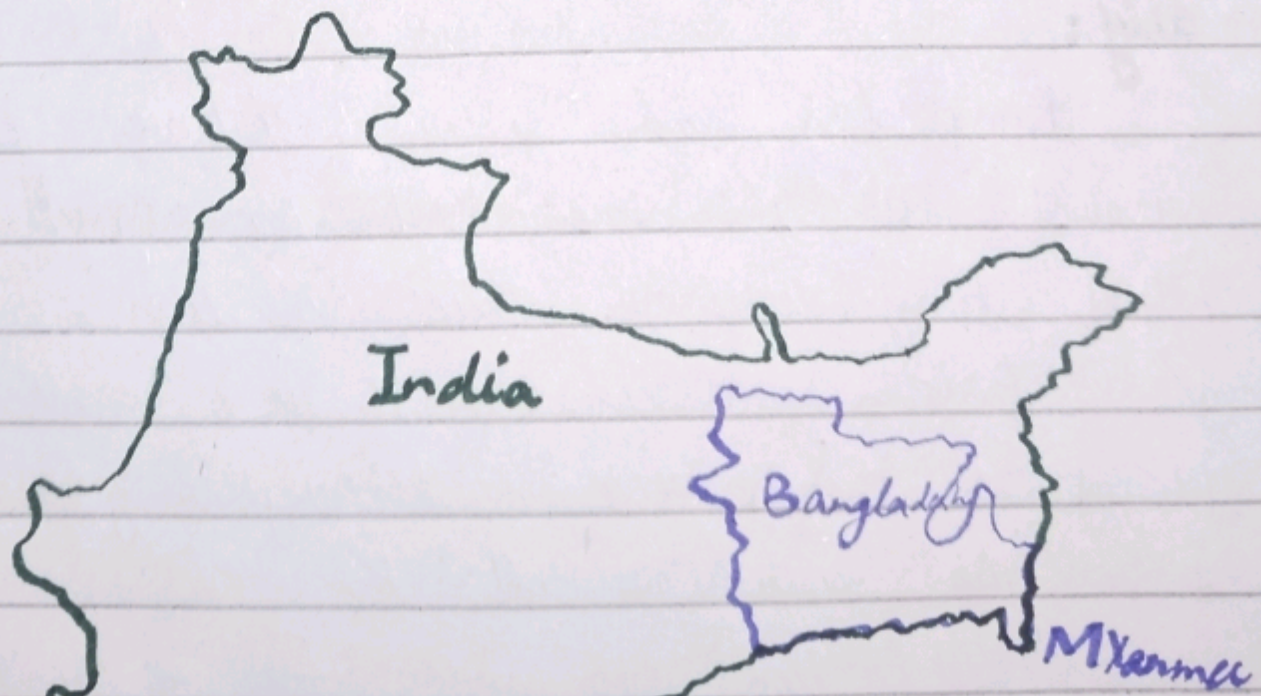
Bangladesh and India relations had been remained friendly since 1971, when India helped Bangladesh in their liberation movement from Pakistan. Hasseena's 15 year rule played a major role in strengthening ties between two countries. But the Hasseena's ouster and her fled to India for asylum

created a bone of contention between two countries. Expedition treaty signed by two countries ensured that a perpetrator must be returned to the concerned country.

And Haseena alleged for 51 criminal cases including 49 extrajudicial murder.

2- Indian border security in danger:

New Delhi relied upon her to crackdown on Islamist group. India called her for help to start a counter-terrorism campaign in the northwest region of Bangladesh, that was considered as safe heaven for terrorist. India blamed these northwest territories to create insurgency in the northern states of India.



Bangladesh has the long border with India that's why has had full support and counter terrorism operation cleared the threats from Bangladesh to India. In 2017 the leader of largest Bangladeshi military group Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam had been executed.

3- Anti-Indian sentiment in Bangladeshi public: Discourage the economic interest of Indians investors

India provided asylum to the Sheikh Hasena and Indian Minister of Foreign Affairs called the political uprising "the internal matter of Bangladesh". This arose the anti-Indian sentiments in Bangladesh. On the other hand, Bangladesh served as an attractive market for consumer goods. While Bangladeshi citizens boycotted the Indian products.

4. Water Crisis between India and Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a lower riparian country and India is an upper riparian nation. Bangladesh 54 rivers passed through the India. India government is planning

to construct **Tipaimukh dam** on the **Barak river**. This dam will impact the water flow in Suema and Kushiara river, which would increase the rift between two countries. Beside this, the uncontrolled flow of river water, which is the result of irresponsible control of water channels in India, caused severe floods in northern Bangladesh. In recent flood, **4.5 million people affected** and **13 people lost their lives**.

With the fall of pro-Indian government, the relations between India and Bangladesh are all on the track of discontentment.

5- Emergence of similar nation wide movements:

The second liberation movement of Bangladeshi students inspired the people around the world to fight for their rights and end authoritarianism. Fall of Assad's regime in Syria by the rebels' action is a notable example of such incidents. The PTI supporters' protest on the call of their leader is somehow parallel

to Bangladeshi students protest.

Critical Analysis:

The protest led by students in Bangladesh caused the ouster of Hasina from the government and Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus became the prime minister of interim government. This political shift has positive and negative repercussions. With the anti-Indian government, the relations between China and Bangladesh as well as Pakistan would improve. Chinese influence in Bangladesh was countered and affected by Indian excessive involvement, historically. It is believed that Beijing and Dhaka ties are going to be increased because China is interested to make Dhaka a vital link in its 'string of pearls'. Contrarily, India's relations are not much strong as they were to be.

Conclusion:

The political upheaval in Bangladesh that led to the end of Hasina's authoritarian rule had multiple reasons behind the door including quota system, inflation, unemployment

authoritarianism, opposition interests and growth inequalities. These causes made the protest a political movement. This political uprising changed the nation order and its relations with the other nations. Thus the regional order also changed.