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1. How Noah Lyles won the greatest ever Olympic 100m race**Why in News?**

The Olympics had never seen such a rush at the finish line of a 100 m final. In the end, US track and field star Noah Lyles leaned forward at the perfect time to be just 0.005 seconds faster than Jamaica's Kishane Thompson to win a gold in a photo finish. All eight sprinters, bunched together for most of the race, finished with sub-10 second timings. People have run faster races in the past, but no race has been as close as this one.

**A close bunch**

For collective brilliance, Sunday's race was absolutely the greatest 100 m final of all time, as for the very first time in history, all eight men clocked sub-10 second timings under legal wind conditions. According to World Athletics, "a 100 m sprint time will only be considered 'wind legal' if the wind speed is 2m/s or less".

Jamaica's Oblique Seville finished last, but his 9.91 seconds timing would have been good enough for a third place finish at the Tokyo Olympics, three years ago. Defending champion Marcela Jacobs of Italy finished fifth with a timing of 9.85 seconds, good enough for a second place in the Beijing Olympics when Usain Bolt set the then Olympic record 9.69 second timing.

All in all, sprinters from the fourth to eighth place recorded best-ever times in a 100 m race.

Photo finish for gold

In real time, the race was too close to call. Both Lyles and Thompson were credited with a time of 9.78 seconds, which flashed on TV screens across the world. On air, commentators felt that Thompson had won the race by a whisker, but broadcast cameras are simply incapable of giving an accurate picture for such close finishes.

This is where the fully automated timing and photo finish system, which records the timings of all athletes, comes in. This comprises three things:

* The starter's pistol, resembling a modern-day gas lighter, triggers a flash of green light and a sound mimicking the crack of a gun from small speakers behind athletes' starter blocks. It also kickstarts the timing device.

* Sensors are embedded on the starting block to catch false starts. They measure the pressure of an athlete's foot on the block, 4,000 times a second. World Athletics rules deem a reaction time of less than a tenth of a second as a false start because the human mind cannot react to the starter's pistol faster than this.

* At least two cameras on either side of the finish line provide a composite image of the sprinters. World Athletics requires these cameras to be able to take a minimum of 1,000 images per second. Omega, the official time-keeper of the Olympics, has been using cameras that take 40,000 images per second at the finish line in Paris, up from the 10,000 images per second taken during the Tokyo Games.

The photo finish cameras at the finish line found Lyles to have just edged out Thompson, despite overhead cameras showing that Thompson's foot crossed the line ahead of Lyles. This is because the athlete's torso has to cross the finish line to be counted, not his head, arms, neck, or feet.

Relevance: GS Prelims

Source: Indian Express

2. How Sheikh Hasina's ouster may impact India-Bangladesh ties

Why in News?



Bangladesh has been a key ally to India since Sheikh Hasina came to power in 2009. From eradicating anti-India terrorist groups which operated out of safe havens in Bangladesh to facilitating greater economic, social, and cultural ties, Hasina's tenure has fostered a healthy relationship between New Delhi and Dhaka.

Her exit could jeopardise this — affecting growing trade ties, restricting the movement of people and goods, and stalling a potential free trade agreement (FTA) between the two countries.

Bi-lateral trade

In trade terms, Bangladesh is India's biggest partner in the subcontinent, and India is Bangladesh's second biggest partner in Asia after China. Their total bilateral trade amounted to \$13 billion in the financial year 2023-24, according to the Union Ministry of Commerce.

Bangladesh is the biggest export destination for India's cotton, accounting for 34.9% of India's total cotton exports (some \$2.4 billion in FY24). Other major Indian exports to Bangladesh are petroleum products and cereals. India's top import from Bangladesh are readymade garments,

amounting to \$391 million in FY24. In recent years, Bangladesh has emerged as a major global hub for textiles.

In October 2023, India and Bangladesh began discussions on an FTA during a meeting of the Joint Working Group on Trade in Dhaka. An FTA would reduce or eliminate customs duties on goods traded between India and Bangladesh, and ease norms to help promote further trade and investments.

Infra & connectivity

Infrastructure and connectivity has been a growing part of India-Bangladesh ties, according to the Minister of External Affairs. India has extended three lines of credit to Bangladesh since 2016 amounting to \$8 billion for the development of road, rail, shipping and port infrastructure. In November 2023, two joint projects – the Akhaura-Agartala cross-border rail link and Khulna-Mongla Port rail line – were inaugurated.

The latest Akhaura-Agartala link, which provided an alternate route from mainland India to the Northeast, was the sixth cross-border rail line between the countries. This has cut down the travel time (by train) between Agartala and Kolkata from 31 hours to 10 hours and was expected to boost tourism, trade, and people-to-people exchanges between the two countries.

A disruption in Indo-Bangladesh ties could thus restrict India's access to the Northeast, which will be connected to mainland India only through the narrow "Chicken's Neck" — only 22 km at its narrowest — between West Bengal and Assam.

Besides rail, there are currently five operational bus routes between India and Bangladesh, including connections from Kolkata, Agartala and Guwahati to Dhaka. In 2023, the countries had agreed to operationalise the agreement for the usage of the Chittagong and Mongla ports to ease the movement of cargo between mainland India and the Northeast.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Bilateral Relations

Source: The Indian Express

3. As Sheikh Hasina flees, what does it mean for India? Six preliminary takeaways from Bangladesh's crisis

Why in News?

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has resigned and the Bangladesh Army will be forming the interim government with the help of political parties.

Hasina vacated her residence in Dhaka and left the country for an undisclosed location in India, as protesters came out on the streets of Dhaka defying curfew orders.

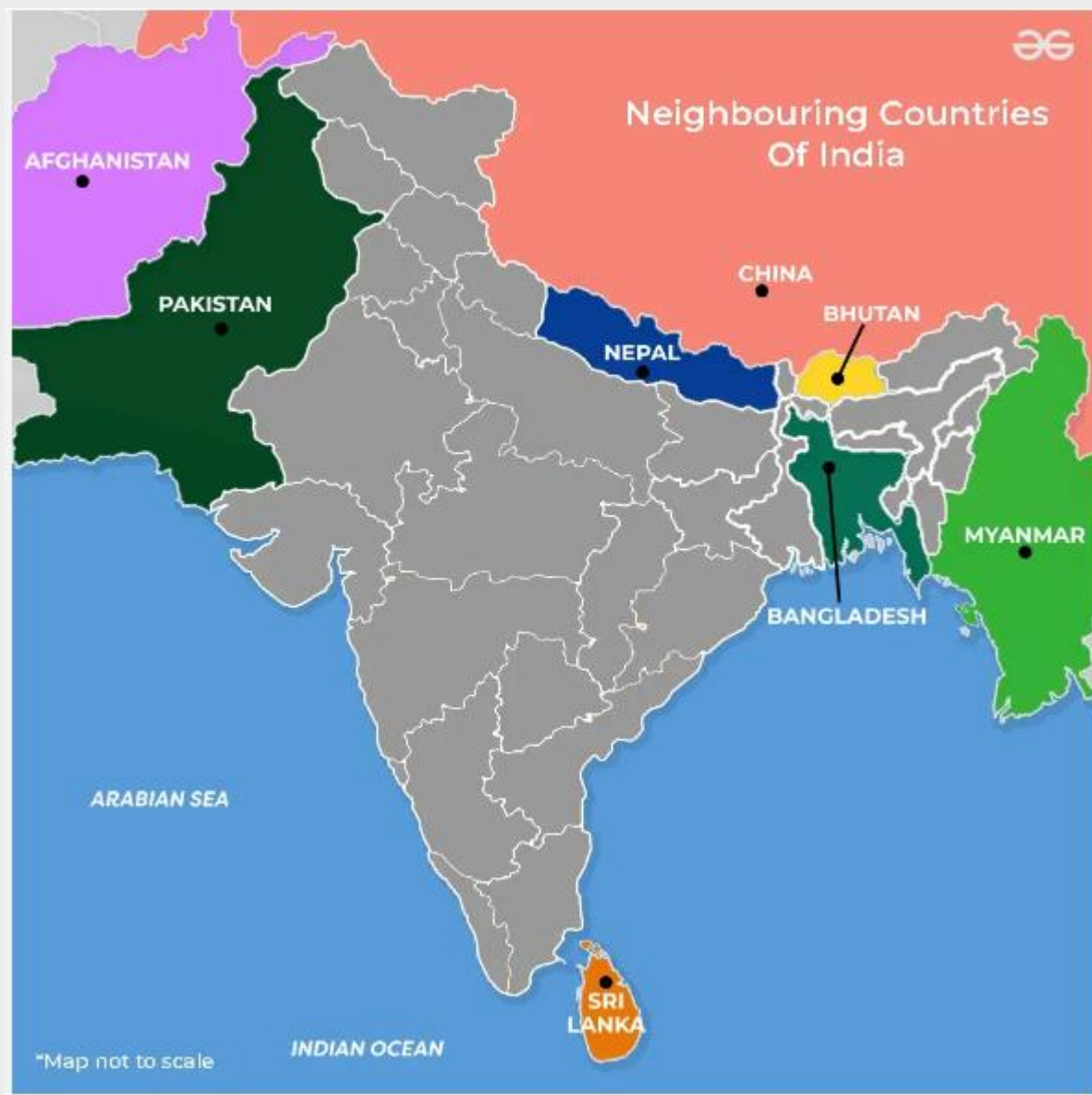
In a televised address, the Bangladesh Army chief General Waker-uz-Zaman said they will be forming the interim government with the help of political parties.

Within hours of people pouring out on the streets with sticks, protesters were seen entering the Prime Minister's official residence in Dhaka.

The scenes were similar to the ones seen in Afghanistan in 2021 and Sri Lanka in 2022 — in these countries too, the leader had left for safer locations. While the circumstances and motivations in Bangladesh are very different from those two countries, there will be an inevitable sense of déjà vu.

So, what does this mean for Bangladesh, India and the world?

The situation is extremely fluid, and these are a few preliminary takeaways.



FIRST, the situation in Bangladesh:

The country has been reeling under protests for the last month over the job quota system, and the protests had been the biggest since Hasina was re-elected for the fourth consecutive term since 2008.

She had led the country through economic growth but had also cracked down on the Opposition, media and the civil society.

This had made her unpopular, and the youth coming out on the streets was the tipping point. Her departure poses a challenge for Bangladesh's economy, which is yet to recover from the Covid pandemic and is slated to become a developing economy in the next couple of years.

SECOND, what does her exit mean for India?

Her departure after a 17-year tenure means that India has lost a trusted partner in the region. Hasina has been a friend to India, and New Delhi has worked closely with her on countering terrorist groups operating out of Bangladesh.

The partnership brought the two countries closer together, and New Delhi had given aid and assistance to Dhaka for a range of projects.

THIRD, New Delhi has been naturally supportive towards her.

By being careful with its comments and insisting that the weeks of turmoil in Bangladesh was its internal matter, New Delhi has given her tacit support — her openly undemocratic ways notwithstanding.

The West has been questioning Hasina's crackdown against civil society, the opposition, and the media, and has been calling for an end to her authoritarian style of functioning. India's backing of her, despite allegations of rigging in elections, has been a bone of contention between India and the West.

FOURTH, it follows that New Delhi will now be working to insulate itself from her unpopularity.

If she does land in India, it would mean New Delhi will have to work towards ensuring her safety, and would face some questions from the new regime in Dhaka about giving refuge to an unpopular leader.

There is a real risk of blowback from the Bangladeshi people as well — during the years of Awami League rule, the Bangladeshi opposition has viewed India as backing Hasina, and the West as being on their side.

FIFTH, New Delhi will be concerned about who will be in power in Dhaka now.

What attitude they will take towards India will be critical. In the past, when Opposition parties led by BNP-Jamaat or the Army have ruled the country, India has had an unpleasant experience — with anti-India terror outfits operating across the India-Bangladesh border.

This situation could well arise again, and New Delhi cannot afford to have another front open when the LoC and the border with Pakistan is hot again, and the Indian Army is in a long standoff with the PLA in eastern Ladakh. The Myanmar border is also extremely volatile, and the source of unrest and strife in India's Northeast.

SIXTH, the role of the Army Chief will be crucial.

Ahead of his address to the nation, General Waker held a meeting at the military headquarters, at which two important leaders of the main opposition Jatiya Party were invited, according to the Bangladeshi daily Prothom Alo.

The Jatiya Party was formed by a retired chief of the Bangladesh Army, General Hussain Mohammed Ershad, in 1986. As Army chief, Gen Ershad had seized power through a coup d'état in 1982, and ruled as chief martial law administrator until December 1983.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Bilateral Relations

Source: Indian Express

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