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BGD41983.E

17 September 2003

Bangladesh: Information on the Freedom Party, including their present status and treatment by the ruling BNP

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Information on the Freedom Party further to that provided in BGD38471.E of 1 March 2002 was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

An article in the Calcutta-based *The Statesman* expresses concern over the existence of Islamic terrorist groups such as Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen and Sahadat-e-al-Hikma in Bangladesh and the threat they pose to India's national security (5 Sept. 2003). The article notes that some of the top officials in the Sahadat-e-al-Hikma organization include Freedom Party activists (*The Statesman* 5 Sept. 2003). According to *The Statesman* ,

the Freedom Party ... was floated in the mid-80s by the assassins of Sheikh Mujib at the instance and with the support of General Ershad [former president]. The Hikma convener, Kaissar Hossain Siddiqi, has revealed that Dawood Ibrahim, the underworld mafia don and the mastermind of the 1993 Mumbai blasts, has funded the [Sahadat-e-al-Hikma] outfit (ibid.).

No other mention of the Freedom Party, or its current status, is made in the article.

The Freedom Party, mentioned in a 23 October 2002 report in the Dhaka-based *The Independent* , comments on an "army drive against terrorism." While certain groups in Bangladesh expressed concern over the government's motivation for the drive and the potential for human rights abuses during it, the central coordinating committee of the Freedom Party stated that the drive against terrorism was "'a timely, positive and epoch-making decision'" by the ruling BNP coalition government (*The Independent* 23 Oct. 2002).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

The Independent [Dhaka]. 23 October 2002. "Army Drive Against Terrorism Lauded, Concern Over HR Violation." (Dialog)

The Statesman [Calcutta]. 5 September 2003. "Danger Dawns in the East." (Dialog)

Additional Sources Consulted

Dialog

IRB Databases

Internet sites, including:

Amnesty International

Bangladesh Election Commission

Dhaka.org

Human Rights Watch

The Independent

Political Parties of the World 2002

Political Resources on the Net: Bangladesh

South Asia Monitor

South Asia Terrorism Portal

Virtual Bangladesh

World News Connection

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