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Bangladesh: Information on the Jatiya Party, including its leaders, factions, youth wings and activities; treatment of members and supporters by authorities (2008-July 2011)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Background

The Jatiya Party (National Party) is a political party that is also known as the Jatiya Dal (*Political Parties of the World* 2009, 46; *PHW* 2011, 111) or the Jatiyo Party (Jatiyo Party n.d.). The party was officially established in 1986 (*Political Parties of the World* 2009, 46; *PHW* 2011, 111) on the principles of "nationalism, democracy, Islamic ideals and progress" (*Europa* 2010, 801). It united several existing organizations that supported Hussain Mohammad Ershad (also spelled Hossain Mohammed), who came to power in a military coup in 1982 and established himself as President of Bangladesh in 1983 (*ibid.*, 786, 801; *PHW* 2011, 108, 111). The party has since produced several splinter groups, with the original organization continuing under the name of Jatiya Party (JP)-(Ershad) (*ibid.*, 111) or Jatiya Dal-Ershad (*Political Parties of the World* 2009, 46). According to *Political Parties of the World*, the Election Commission of Bangladesh renamed the Jatiya Dal-Ershad the Jatiya Party for the 2008 elections (*ibid.*).

Factions and Leadership

The original branch of the Jatiya Party continues to be led by its founder, Ershad, who declared himself chair for life at the party's seventh National Council in 2009 (*PHW* 2011, 111). Sources identify the Secretary General as Ruhul Amin Hawlader (*ibid.*; *The Daily Star* 4 Aug. 2011; *The New Nation* 26 Apr. 2011).

A splinter group, the Jatiya Party (Manju), was formed in 1999 by party dissidents led by the country's former prime minister and Jatiya Party Vice-Chair Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury as well as Anwar Hossein (or Hossain) Manju, a cabinet minister who had remained in his position despite the JP-(Ershad)'s decision in 1998 to leave the coalition government of which it had been a part (*PHW* 2011, 111, 113). Sources identify Manju as leader of the party (*ibid.* 113; *The Daily Star* 7 Aug. 2011) and Sheikh Shahidul Islam as Secretary General (*PHW* 2011, 113).

Another faction, the Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP), was originally formed in 2001 as the Jatiya Party (M-N) after its leaders, M. A. Matin and Naziur Rahman Manjur [also spelled Manzur (*Political Parties of the World* 2009, 46)] (*PHW* 2011, 113). In the lead-up to the October 2001 parliamentary elections it became known as the Jatiya Party (Naziur), although since then it is usually referred to as the BJP (*PHW* 2011, 113).

The BJP splintered into two factions in 2005: one wing, led by Manjur, was renamed the Bangladesh Jatiya Party-BJP in 2008 (*ibid.*; *Political Parties of the World* 2009, 46). The Chair of the Bangladesh Jatiya Party-BJP, Andalib Rahman, is also a Member of Parliament, and the Secretary General is Shamim Al- Mamun (*PHW* 2011, 113; *Europa* 2010, 801). The second wing, under the leadership of M. A. Matin, ran in

the 2008 elections as the Bangladesh Jatiya Party (PHW 2011, 113). It is sometimes referenced as BJP (Matin) (ibid.; *The Financial Express* 26 May 2011). Sources identify Matin as chair of the Bangladesh Jatiya Party (PHW 2011, 113) and Abu Naser Mohammad as secretary general (ibid.; *The Financial Express* 26 May 2011).

Youth and Student Wings

Electoral reforms announced in 2008 mandated the disbanding of front organizations for political parties, including student organizations (UNB 7 Aug. 2008) and overseas units (Freedom House 2011). According to the United States (US) Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2010*, the formal separation of auxiliary student wings from political parties occurred in 2010, although some politicians from the major parties have continued to encourage student organizations to participate in rallies and demonstrations (8 Apr. 2011, Sec. 1a).

The United News of Bangladesh (UNB) reported in October 2008 that the JP-(Ershad) had disbanded six of its twelve front organizations, including its student, labour, lawyer, and youth wings (9 Oct. 2008). However, sources in 2009 and 2010 continued to identify the party's youth wing as Jatiya Juba Sanghati (*The Daily Star* 11 Apr. 2009) or Jatiya Juba Sangha (*The Financial Express* 26 Nov. 2010). The *Financial Express* identifies the President of Jatiya Juba Sangha as Liakat Hossain, the Senior Vice-President as Alamgir Shikder and the General Secretary as Aminul Islam Jhantu (ibid.).

In 2009, Dhaka-based newspaper *The Daily Star* identified Jatiya Chhatra Samaj as the student wing of the Jatiya Party (Manju) (9 May 2009).

Activities of JP-(Ershad) (2008-July 2011)

In the 2008 parliamentary elections, the Jatiya Party under Ershad campaigned with the Awami League in the Grand Party Alliance, which won a majority of the 300 seats in Parliament (PHW 2011, 111; *Political Parties of the World* 2009, 43). The Awami League is led by Sheikh Hasina Wajed, who has been party president since 1981 (Bangladesh Awami League n.d.a) and who was sworn into office as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh in January 2009 (PHW 2011, 107; *Europa* 2010, 787, 790). The Jatiya Party itself won seven percent of the vote (PHW 2011, 111) and 27 seats in the election (ibid; *Political Parties of the World* 2009, 46; *The Daily Star* Jan. 2009). The Jatiya Party (Manju) also allied itself with the Awami League in the same election but did not win any seats (PHW 2011, 113). The Bangladesh Jatiya Party-BJP ran as a member of a four-party opposition alliance led by the Bangladesh National Party (UNB 28 May 2010; *The Daily Star* Jan. 2009). It won one seat in the election (*Political Parties of the World* 2009, 46.). The Bangladesh Jatiya Party under M. A. Matin did not win any seats (PHW 2011, 113).

Several sources indicate that disagreements exist between the JP-Ershad and the Awami League-led government (*The New Nation* 9 Mar. 2011; *Daily The Pak Banker* 14 Mar. 2011; UNB 12 Apr. 2011). Party Chairman Ershad has criticized the government's management of the economy and of law and order (*Daily The Pak Banker* 14 Mar. 2011; *The New Nation* 9 Mar. 2011). He has also expressed the opinion that the Awami League is not giving the Jatiya Party "any value" for its support in the coalition government (ibid.). The Bangladeshi newspaper *The New Nation* indicates that Ershad has opposed the banning of religion-based political parties and supports keeping Islam as the state religion in the Bangladeshi constitution (26 Apr. 2011). The United News of Bangladesh stated that Ershad has also opposed the government's draft Women Development Policy on the grounds that it conflicts with Islamic tenets (12 Apr. 2011). In April 2011, JP-(Ershad) party leaders threatened to "launch vigorous movement to bring down the government" if corruption charges filed against Ershad in the 1990s were not dropped (UNB 20 Apr. 2011). In June 2011, Ershad was acquitted by a Dhaka court in a money laundering case filed in 1995 (*The Daily Star* 20 June 2011). Ershad has stated that his party will run in the next parliamentary elections as an independent party (UNB 6 June 2011; *The Daily Star* 4 Aug. 2011).

Activities of Other Jatiya Party Factions (2008-July 2011)

Information on the activities of the Jatiya Party (Manju), the Bangladesh Jatiya Party-BJP and the BJP (Matin) was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. It includes the following:

The leader of the Jatiya Party (Manju), Anwar Hossain Manju, was convicted in four criminal cases and imprisoned in May 2009 (*The Daily Star* 9 May 2009; bdnews24.com 3 June 2009). The same month, 13 leaders of Jatiya Chhatra Samaj, the student wing of the Jatiya Party (Manju), held demonstrations and ransacked local government offices to demand his release; they were sued for their actions and two activists were reportedly arrested (*The Daily Star* 9 May 2009). The Bangladeshi online newspaper *bdnews24.com* reported that Manju was freed on bail in June 2009 (3 June 2009). In 2011, Dhaka-based newspaper *New Age* reported that unlike Ershad, Manju was not "disappointed" in the performance of "the ruling Awami League-led alliance" (26 Mar. 2011).

The United News of Bangladesh reported in May 2010 that BJP leader Andalib Rahman had reaffirmed his party's participation in "anti-government" activities led by the country's main opposition party, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (28 May 2010).

Treatment of Members and Supporters

In July 2011, a local Jatiya Party leader was stabbed and seriously injured after another Jatiya Party candidate he supported won a seat in a district election; the attack was reportedly perpetrated by supporters of the defeated candidate (UNB 16 July 2011). No corroborating or additional information on the treatment of Jatiya Party members could be found by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

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 for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Internet sites, including: Amnesty International; Banglapedia; European Country of Origin Information Network; Human Rights Watch; *The Independent*; Odhikar; *News BNN*; United Nations - Integrated Regional Information Networks, Refworld.

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