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Responses to Information Requests

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15 August 2014

BGD104933.E

Bangladesh: Roles and responsibilities of the executive members of the local branches of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal (Bangladesh Nationalist Youth Party) (2010-August 2014)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Information about the roles and responsibilities of executive members of local branches of the BNP and Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response; however, the following information may be useful.

1. BNP Organizational Structure and Executive Committee Structures

An article titled "Political Parties in Bangladesh: Ideology, Structure and Role in Parliamentary Democracy," by Abu Salah Md. Yousuf [1], published by the *International Journal of South Asian Studies* [2], provides an organogram describing the organizational structure of the BNP (Yousuf July-Dec. 2010, 421). A copy of the organogram is attached to this Response.

The Constitution of the BNP, posted on the Dhaka City BNP website, describes the organizational structure of the party and indicates that the "National Party will be extended from ward ... to national stage" [3] (BNP 8 Dec. 2009, Sec. 6(a)). A copy of the Constitution of the BNP is attached to this Response. Section 6 of the BNP Constitution also lists the executive positions by committee at each level of the party (ibid., Sec. 6). The BNP Constitution describes the structure of the union-level council and executive committee as follows:

(3) Union council and union executive committee The union council will be formed with the members of all ward executive committees under a union. This council will elect a union executive committee from its members with maximum 71 members including one president, three vice presidents, one general secretary, two joint secretaries, one organizing secretary, two assistant organizing secretaries, one publicity secretary, one office secretary and one treasurer for two years. The *upazila* or *thana* committee will approve this committee. (ibid., Sec. 6(b)(3)).

In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a US-based professor of political science, who is a specialist in Bangladeshi politics, and who has conducted field studies and published research on democracy, governance and political issues in Bangladesh, indicated that "all executive committees, at all branch levels, from national to union-level, are generally structured following the same hierarchy" (Professor 14 Aug. 2014).

2. Roles and Responsibilities of Executive Committee Members

2.1 National Executive Committee

According to the Constitution of the BNP, the responsibilities and duties of the National Executive Committee are as follows:

- a. Controlling and co-coordinating the duties and responsibilities of different committees at different stages of party
- b. Recommending of punitive measures against officials and members of the committee if necessary
- c. Implementing of party programmes and for this accepting proposals and giving directions
- d. Resolving internal conflicts among committees on legitimacy
- e. Discourage any one from the holding of the post of president or secretary at different stages of the party.
- f. Monitoring, controlling and coordinating activities of associate organizations of party
- g. Observing other duties and responsibilities on directions of the national standing committee. (ibid., Sec. 6(b)(11))

2.2 Local Executive Committees

A senior researcher at the Chr. Michelsen Institute [5], who specializes in democratization and political parties in Africa and Bangladesh, provided the information in the following paragraph. According to the Senior Researcher, the BNP is not "sufficiently organized" to have executive committees at the local level in every *zila* [district], *upazila* [sub-district] and union (11 Aug. 2014). He expressed the view that "on paper most local branches are organized [with executive committees] but in reality only a few bigger ones are functioning like this" (ibid.). He indicated that larger branches are organized with a number of different types of executive positions, but smaller branches may work with only a president and general secretary (ibid.). Similarly, the Professor indicated that the BNP is supposed to have committees at every level "theoretically"; however, they "do not necessarily have them at every upazila branch" and do not have them in every union (Professor 14 Aug. 2014). He also indicated that at the union level "there is a lot of variation in terms of the sizes of executive committees" and that not all positions are filled, but that "most of the important positions are always filled" (ibid.).

A May 2014 document titled "Political Parties and Democracy in Bangladesh," posted on the website of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Bangladesh [4], which presents the findings of a CPD study on internal party democracy in four electoral parties in Bangladesh, including the BNP, indicates "in practice parties do not follow their own rules" regarding party constitution stipulations that committee leaders must be elected at the national and sub-national levels, and to associate organizations (CPD 17 May 2014, 6, 26-28). See Response to Information Request BGD104178 for information on BNP associate organizations, including the Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal. According to the CPD, the BNP was reportedly "functioning with ad-hoc committees both at district and upazila levels" (ibid., 29). The Professor similarly indicated that "most" district level committees are not directly elected by party members, but are often chosen by the central committee, and that below the district level, at the upazila and union level, executive committees are formed in an ad hoc manner (Professor 14 Aug. 2014).

The Senior Researcher indicated that it is "impossible" to describe the different roles and responsibilities of local executive members, as the party is not "explicit" in describing these roles (11 Aug. 2014). The Professor indicated that as with other parties in Bangladesh, the BNP hierarchy at the local level is "determined/selected based on a number of considerations, including name recognition in the locality, ability to mobilize resources, commanding support of [the] rank and file, and the blessings of Central leaders" (Professor 14 Aug. 2014). The Professor described the responsibilities of the organizing secretary and the publicity secretary as follows:

Organizing Secretary: The organizing secretary is perceived by BNP members, informally, as the third most influential position in the executive hierarchy, after the President and the General Secretary. Their role is to be the first point of contact between local party activists and the executive committee. They are responsible for being in contact with party organizers who mobilize activists to participate in BNP events and demonstrations. The Organizing Secretary is essentially responsible for outreach activities to mobilize local support for the party.

Publicity Secretary: This is a relatively lower level position within the branch and is seen as a training ground for the person to develop experience within the party and become connected to local party activists. Their role and responsibilities would be to publicize events, contact local media for BNP activities or demonstrations, and be a spokesperson for the executive committee at the union level. (ibid.)

Corroborating information for these descriptions could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The Senior Researcher stated that, to his knowledge, one person can occupy several positions in an executive at the local level (*ibid.*). However, the Professor indicated that "usually" someone would only hold one position because the party wants to develop the "political capital" within the executive, and that someone holding two posts might be perceived to be favoured (14 Aug. 2014).

2.3 Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal (Bangladesh Nationalist Youth Party)

According to the Professor, regarding the executive committee structure of the Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal, The [Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal] is a completely separate organization from the BNP, and it has completely separate executive committees from the BNP structure and leadership. The [Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal] structures its executive committees in a similar way to the BNP, however there is no overlap between the two organizations, as there is a practice of "graduation" of activists from the [Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal] who then move into the BNP. The executive committees have the same positions and responsibilities as those of the BNP. (Professor 14 Aug. 2014)

According to the Senior Researcher, the executive committee structure of the Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal is "even more informal" than the BNP (Senior Researcher 11 Aug. 2014). Further information about the executive committees of the Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. For information on the BNP, its leaders, factions, associate organizations, and treatment of members by authorities, please see Response to Information Request BGD104178. For information about BNP membership documents, please see Response to Information Request BGD103519.

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.

Notes

[1] Abu Salah Md. Yousuf is a research fellow at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) (Yousuf July-Dec. 2010, 411). The BIISS is a "statutory and autonomous institution" established by the government of Bangladesh; it is focused on "promoting research and deliberation on international affairs, security and developmental issues" (BIISS n.d.).

[2] The *International Journal of South Asian Studies* is a biannual journal published by the Society for South Asian Studies at Pondicherry University, Puducherry, India (Yousuf July-Dec. 2010).

[3] Bangladesh is divided into 7 divisions, 64 districts [zilas], 488 upazila [sub-districts, also called *thana*], and 4550 unions, according to the government of Bangladesh's "National Portal of Bangladesh" website (Bangladesh n.d.).

[4] CPD Bangladesh is an independent think tank that organizes "multi-stakeholder consultations," conducts research on issues of "critical national and regional interests," and that disseminates "knowledge and information on key developmental issues" (CPD n.d.a). It has collaborated with the CMI on a research programme that includes studying political parties and governance in Bangladesh (CPD n.d.b.).

[5] The CMI is an "independent development research institute" based in Norway (CMI n.d.).

References

Bangladesh. N.d. "Welcome to the National Portal of Bangladesh." <<http://www.bangladesh.gov.bd/?q=en>> [Accessed 24 July 2014]

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS). N.d. "Welcome to BIISS." <<http://www.biiss.org/>> [Accessed 12 Aug. 2014]

Bangladesh Nationalist Party. 8 December 2009. *Constitution*. <http://dhakacitybnp.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=54&Itemid=62&lang=en> [Accessed 12 Aug. 2014]

Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD). 17 May 2014. Rounaq Jahan. "Political Parties and Democracy in Bangladesh." <<http://cpd.org.bd/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Political-Parties-and-Democracy-in-Bangladesh-Centre-for-Policy-Dialogue-CPD.pdf>> [Accessed 12 Aug. 2014]

_____. N.d.a. "Profile." <<http://cpd.org.bd/index.php/about-us/profile/>> [Accessed 13 Aug. 2014]

_____. N.d.b. "CPD-CMI." <<http://cpd.org.bd/index.php/research/cpd-cmi/>> [Accessed 13 Aug. 2014]

Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI). N.d. "About CMI." <<http://www.cmi.no/about/>> [Accessed 12 Aug. 2014]

Professor. 14 August 2014. Telephone Interview with the Research Directorate.

Senior Researcher, Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI), Norway. 11 August 2014. Correspondence with the Research Directorate.

Yousuf, Abu Salah Md. July-December 2010. "Political Parties in Bangladesh: Ideology, Structure and Role in Parliamentary Democracy." *International Journal of South Asian Studies*. Vol. 3, No. 2.

<<http://qbase.co.in/pu/sites/default/files/ijsas09032011.pdf#page=92>> [Accessed 12 Aug. 2014]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact the following individuals and organizations were unsuccessful within the time constraints of this Response: Asia Foundation; Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies; Bangladesh Nationalist Party – Central Committee, Central Committee spokesman, Dhaka City branch, Moheshpur Upozila branch, Jatiyatabuli Jubo Dal, Germany, Poland, UK Committees; Centre for Policy Dialogue (Bangladesh); Election Working Group; JANIPOP National Election Observation Council; National Democratic Institute in Bangladesh; Professor, South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University; SHUJAN; Transparency International Bangladesh.

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, a professor at the London School of Economics, a professor of politics and government at Illinois State University, and the Canadian High Commission in Dhaka were unable to provide information for this Response.

Internet sites, including: Asia Foundation; Bangladesh – Election Commission, Local Government Division, National Portal, Parliament; Bangladesh Chronicle; Bangladesh National Directory; Bangladesh Nationalist Party – Central Committee, Chittagong City, Dhaka City, Germany, Japan, Moulvibazar Upazila, Poland, Shibchar Upazila, UK; BDNews24; Carter Center; Center for Policy Dialogue (Bangladesh); Chandipur Municipality; Daily Observer; Democracy Watch Bangladesh; *Dhaka Courier*; *Dhaka Tribune*; ecoi.net; Europa World; Factiva; Freedom House; Human Rights Watch; Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance; JANIPOP National Election Observation Council; National Democratic Institute in Bangladesh; *Political Handbook of the World*; SHUJAN; South Asia Terrorism Portal; TahriqueRahman.net; UN – Integrated Regional Information Network, Refworld.

Attachments

Yousuf, Abu Salah Md. July-December 2010. "Diagram 2: Organisational Structure of BNP" in "Political Parties of Bangladesh: Ideology, Structure and Role in Parliamentary Democracy." *International Journal of South Asian Studies*. Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 421. <<http://qbase.co.in/pu/sites/default/files/ijsas09032011.pdf#page=92>> [Accessed 12 Aug. 2014]

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