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Bangladesh: The Jatiya Party; its factions and subgroups, including its youth wing; leadership; activities; and treatment of members of the party (2004-2006)

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Background

The Jatiya [or "national" (Australia July 2006; *Political Parties of the World* Jan. 2005, 50)] Party [also known as the "Jatiya Dal" (*Europa World Year Book 2005* 2005, 718)] is a political party that was officially established in 1986 by Hossain Mohammad Ershad (ibid.; Banglapedia n.d.), a former military leader and president of Bangladesh (*Political Parties of the World* Jan. 2005, 50; BBC 20 Apr. 2006). In 1999, a split in the party occurred (*Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006* Dec. 2005, 92-93) and three main factions were formed (UNB 11 Feb. 2006; see also *Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006* Dec. 2005, 92-93): the (parent) Jatiya Party (Ershad); the Jatiya Party (Manju) [also referred to as the Jatiya Party (Monju) (LCG Bangladesh n.d.)]; and the Jatiya Party (Naziur) [also referred to as the Jatiya Party (Naziur-Firoz) (Australia July 2006; *Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006* Dec. 2005, 92), the Jatiya Party (N-F) (Bangladesh Election Committee n.d.a), and the Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) (*Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006* Dec. 2005, 92)] (*Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006* Dec. 2005, 92-93; see also Bangladesh Election Commission n.d.).

Jatiya Party Factions

The party, led by Ershad and commonly referred to as the Jatiya Party (Ershad) (*Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006* Dec. 2005, 93; Australia July 2006), is Bangladesh's fourth largest party in parliament (ibid.; Xinhua News Agency 9 Feb. 2006; Bangladesh Election Committee n.d.a), having won 14 of 300 seats in the country's October 2001 elections (ibid.; Australia July 2006). All 14 of the political party's seats were reportedly won in the Rajshahi Division (*Political Parties of the World* Jan. 2005; LCG Bangladesh n.d.).

Although the Jatiya Party (Ershad) had allied itself with the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) in 1998 when both parties were in the opposition, this alliance was broken shortly before the 2001 elections (*Political Parties of the World* Jan. 2005, 50). During these elections, the Jatiya Party (Ershad) ran as part of the Islami Jatio Oikya Front [or "Islamic National Unity Front" (*Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006* Dec. 2005, 93)] (ibid.; Bangladesh Election Committee n.d.a). Bangladesh's next elections are expected to take place in January 2007 (Reuters 8 June 2006; BBC 20 June 2006).

The Manju faction of the Jatiya Party was formed in 1999 by party dissidents led

by Anwar Hossain Manjur and Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury (*Europa World Year Book 2005* 2005, 718; *Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006* Dec. 2005, 93). The Jatiya Party (Manju) holds one seat in parliament since the 2001 elections (ibid.; Bangladesh Election Commission n.d.; Banglapedia n.d.).

According to *Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006*, the Jatiya Party (Naziur-Firoz) was created in 2001, and was named after its leaders Naziur Rahman Manjur (Dec. 2005, 92) and Kazi Firoz Rashid (*Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006* Dec. 2005, 92; see also *Europa World Year Book 2005* 2005, 718). In the 2001 elections, the Jatiya Party (Naziur-Firoz) formed a coalition with the BNP (*Political Parties of the World* Jan. 2005, 50; Australia July 2006), along with Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikyo Jote (IOJ) (ibid.; *Country Reports 2005* 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 3), two religious fundamentalist parties (*Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006* Dec. 2005, 92). The Jatiya (Naziur-Firoz) won four seats in the 2001 elections (ibid.; Bangladesh Election Commission n.d.).

One source consulted makes reference to the "Ganotantrik Jatiya Party," which is reportedly led by Ershad's ex-wife, Bidisha Ershad (UNB 27 Feb. 2006). No further information on the Ganotantrik Jatiya Party could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Front Organizations

Sources consulted by the Research Directorate also make reference to various "front organizations" of the Jatiya Party (Ershad) (Jatiya Party UK n.d.; UNB 21 Nov. 2005; ibid. 20 Nov. 2005a; ibid. 22 Oct. 2004; ibid. 1 June 2004). One such organization is the Jatiya Jubo Shanghati (Jatiya Party UK n.d.), the youth wing of the Jatiya Party (Ershad) (UNB 20 Nov. 2005a). According to a 20 November 2005 news article by United News of Bangladesh (UNB), a Dhaka-based news service (Asianet n.d.), the president of the Jatiya Jubo Shanghati is Liakat Hossain Khoka (UNB 20 Nov. 2005a). There is also reportedly a youth wing of the Jatiya Party (Naziur) (ibid. 1 June 2004). No information could be found on a Jatiya Party (Manju) youth wing among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

There is also a student front, Jatiya Chhatra Samaj, associated with the party's Ershad faction (UNB 21 Nov. 2005; ibid. 20 Nov. 2005b). Other organizations associated with the Jatiya Party (Ershad) include the Jatiya Mohila Party (UNB 22 Oct. 2004; Jatiya Party UK n.d.), the Jatiya Sramik Party (ibid.; *The Independent* 10 Mar. 2003), the Jatiya Krishak Party (Jatiya Party UK n.d.; *The Independent* 29 Dec. 2003), the Jatiya Shechyya Sebak Party; the Jatiya Shankskritik Party; the Jatiya Ainjibi Federation, and the Jatiya Olama Party (Jatiya Party UK n.d.).

Leadership

The Ershad faction of the Jatiya Party is led by Hossain Mohammad Ershad (Reuters 8 June 2006; *Europa World Year Book 2005* 2005, 718; *Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006* Dec. 2005, 92). The party's senior vice chairperson is Begum Raushan Ershad (ibid., 93), the president's wife (ibid. 92), while the party's secretary general is Ruhul Amin Howlader (ibid.,93; *Europa World Year Book 2005* 2005, 718; UNB 5 Nov. 2004).

The Jatiya Party (Ershad) has a presidium with over 40 members (UNB 11 Feb. 2006; Jatiya Party n.d.a), including Ershad (ibid.); in addition, the party has an advisory board made up of 16 advisors (Jatiya Party n.d.b). A list of names of Jatiya Party (Ershad) advisors and presidium members can be found on the party's official Website at <<http://www.jatiyaparty.org>>.

The Jatiya Party (Manju) chairman has been identified as Anwar Hossain Manju (Banglapedia n.d.; *Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006* Dec. 2005, 93). According to *Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006*, another leader of the faction is Sheikh Shahidul Islam (ibid.).

The Jatiya Party (Naziur-Firoz) is led by Naziur Rahman Manjur (Banglapedia n.d.; *Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006* Dec. 2005, 92). *Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006* identified M.A. Matin as the party's chief advisor and Kazi Firoz Rashid as its secretary general (ibid.).

For a complete list of names of Jatiya Party (Ershad), Jatiya Party (Manju), and Jatiya Party (Naziur-Firoz) Members of Parliament (MPs) and their districts, please consult the Bangladesh Election Committee Website at <<http://www.bd-ec.org/stat/Parliament%20Election%202001%20Results%20and%20Statistics/MP%20at%20a%20glance.pdf>> or the LCG Bangladesh Website at <<http://www.lcgbangladesh.org/parliament/allmps.php>>.

Membership

Information on the membership of the Jatiya Party and its factions could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Activities

Information on the activities of the Jatiya Party was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

According to the *Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006*, in 2004, Ershad attempted to reunite the Jatiya factions; however, the Jatiya Party (Manju), among others, was unwilling to take part in the reunification (Dec. 2005, 93).

In 2006, both the ruling Bangladesh National Party (BNP) and the main opposition party Awami League (AL) are reportedly seeking to form an alliance with the Jatiya Party (Ershad) before the 2007 elections (Reuters 8 June 2006). Information on whether the Jatiya Party (Ershad) has actually formed an alliance with one of the two parties could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However Ershad has been a critic of both parties, stating that they have "failed miserably to govern the country in the last 15 years" (UNB 19 June 2006). Ershad has also criticized the government's record in fighting terrorism (UNB 5 Nov. 2004; see also UNB 20 Nov. 2005a).

In sources from 2004 to 2006, there were reports of the Jatiya Party (Ershad), including its student front (UNB 27 Mar. 2004) and youth front (UNB 20 Nov. 2005a) participating in political rallies (ibid.; PTI 1 Jan. 2006; UNB 5 Nov. 2004; ibid. 27 Mar. 2004). According to a 1 January 2006 news article by The Press Trust of India, a major non-profit news agency in India (PTI n.d.), a Jatiya Party (Ershad) rally in downtown Dhaka ended in a clash between Jatiya Party (Ershad) activists and Communist Party of Bangladesh supporters (PTI 1 Jan. 2006). The violence caused damage to shops and vehicles, and led to the death of one person and the injury of approximately eighty others (ibid.). Information on the exact cause of the conflict was not provided in the article.

Treatment of Members

From 2004 to 2006, there were reports of Jatiya Party leaders and supporters being killed (AFP 9 Mar. 2006; PTI 9 Mar. 2006; ibid. 27 Oct. 2005; UNB 2 Jan. 2005; ibid. 1 June 2004). In June 2004, the president of the Jatiya Party (Naziur-Firoz) youth

front was killed in a gun attack in Dhaka (ibid.). No information on the perpetrators of the attack could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. In October 2005, two Jatiya Party (Ershad) supporters were killed in a bomb attack carried out by unidentified men in the Narail district (PTI 27 Oct. 2005). In March 2006, the illegal Maoist group Janajuddha (AFP 9 Mar. 2006) killed a local leader of the Jatiya Party (Naziur-Firoz) in a bomb attack in Khulna (ibid.; PTI 9 Mar. 2006).

According to *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004*, Zia International airport officials prevented Jatiya Party (Ershad) leader Ershad from taking a trip abroad in February 2004 (28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 2.d). Ershad was later allowed to travel following talks between Jatiya Party (Ershad) leaders and government officials (ibid.).

In November 2005, the Jatiya Party (Ershad) student front was "chased out of" the campus at Dhaka University by supporters of the political party JSD [Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Australia July 2006)] student front and other "left-leaning" organizations (UNB 21 Nov. 2005; ibid. 20 Nov. 2005b). According to the JSD student league leader, cited in a 20 November 2005 UNB article, the activities of the Jatiya (Ershad) student front are banned on the Dhaka University campus (20 Nov. 2005b).

No further information on the treatment of Jatiya Party members could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

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 additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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