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## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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Bangladesh: Organization called Bangladesh Awami Sechcha Sebak League (BASL) (Secha Sebak, Sechchasebak, Sechcha Sebok, Sechchasebok, Sechchashebak); its links with the Awami League (AL); its leaders; its political program; the specific problems its members have with the authorities and other political groups; if applicable, how these problems compare with those of AL members

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Little specific information on the Bangladesh Awami Sechcha Sebak League (BASL) could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints for this Response.

However, we know that the Bangladesh Awami Sechcha Sebak League (BASL), or volunteers' league (*The Daily Star* 3 Dec. 2001), is apparently one of the organizations affiliated with the Awami League (AL) (UNB 31 Mar. 2003; Bangladesh Awami League May 2003). Its leaders include convenor Mokbul Hossain and Bahauddin Nasim, one of the League's joint convenors (*The Independent* 17 June 2003; Bangladesh Awami League May 2003; UNB 31 Mar. 2003). Bahauddin Nasim is the former assistant political secretary to Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina (*The Daily Star* 2 Sept. 2002; UNB 30 Oct. 2001) and was one of Sheikh Hasina's special assistants for nearly a decade (ibid. 1 Mar. 2003a). An article from the 21 December 2002 issue of the Dhaka daily *The Independent* mentioned another joint convenor, Jahangir Biswas. Biswas is reportedly the League's joint convenor for Dhaka City (NFB 10 Nov. 2002).

In December 2001, a court sentenced BASL convenor Alhaj Mockbul Hossain to one month's detention (*The Daily Star* 3 Dec. 2001). While no specific charge was brought against him, a police document authorizing his arrest under the Special Powers Act, 1974 stated that Mockbul Hossain and his "accomplices" had allegedly been involved in land grabbing and plans to attack government, semi-government and non-government organizations during a one-day strike (*hartal*), which had occurred the day before his arrest (ibid.).

In March 2002, some 45 former student leaders who had led a pro-democracy movement after 1975 protested against the arrest of Bahauddin Nasim, BASL joint secretary (UNB 1 Mar. 2003a). According to the former student leaders, this arrest was indicative of a conspiracy against Sheikh Hasina and the other AL leaders and activists (ibid.). Bahauddin Nasim had been arrested at the Dhaka Airport, while preparing to go abroad (ibid. 1 Mar. 2002b). He was reportedly accused of attempting to murder the then opposition leader, Khaleda Zia, in 2001 and of carrying unauthorized American dollars while preparing to make a trip to the United States (ibid.; *The Daily Star* 18 Sept. 2002).

In November 2002, the police reportedly broke up a rally organized by the BASL (NFB 10 Nov. 2002). Rally organizers were demanding the release of BASL leaders Bahauddin Nasim and Nirmal Goswami, as well as AL leaders (ibid.). At least 13 BASL members were injured during the police operation (ibid.).

In December 2002, the BASL organized a meeting at Awami League headquarters to discuss measures to be taken following the detention of several AL leaders, including Bahauddin Nasim (*The Independent* 21 Dec. 2002).

In June 2003, the BASL was one of a number of organizations, including the AL, Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), Mahila Awami League, Juba Mahila League, Sramik League and Krishak League, that participated in a joint rally in front of AL headquarters to protest against the assassination of Shaiful Rashid Palash, general secretary of the BCL's Dhaka City North unit (ibid. 17 June 2003). A police official speculated that Palash "might have been killed following intra-party conflict or extortion-related matters" (ibid.). However, the victim's family denied this version of the facts and said that he was shot by political opponents who, shortly before his death, had demanded a substantial amount of money from his elder brother (ibid. ).

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

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\_\_\_\_\_. 1 March 2002b. "Criminal Investigation Department Started Interrogating Awami Sweccha Sebak League Leader Bahauddin Nasim Who Was Arrested from the Airport While Going Abroad on Thursday Midnight." (Dialog)

#### Additional Sources Consulted

#### **Internet sites, including :**

Amnesty International

*Country Reports 2002*

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

World News Connection (WNC)

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