

BANGLADESH

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**POLITICAL PARTIES OF ASIA AND THE
PACIFIC
A Reference Guide**

SIDE 31-41, DER
MANGLER I BILAG

1992

(24)

62

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Direktoratet for Udlændinge
Dokumentations- og Informationsafd.
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Political Parties of Asia and the Pacific

Electoral system

Prior to 1991, the president was elected by universal suffrage for a five-year term and was executive leader of the country. Now he is appointed by the parliament (*Jatiya Sangsad*) with powers reduced to a titular role. The *Jatiya Sangsad* consists of 300 of directly elected members, and 30 women members who are appointed by the other members.

Evolution of the suffrage

Universal suffrage, introduced in Bangladesh during its period as East Pakistan, was maintained under the 1972 Constitution. The minimum voting age is 18.

PARTY BY PARTY DATA

There are believed to be well over 100 political parties in Bangladesh, many consisting of only a handful of individuals. Many are factions which have broken off from another party.

Awami League (AL)

Address. 23 Bangabandha Avenue, Dhaka.

Leadership. Sheikh Hasina Wazed (pres.); Begum Sajeda Chowdhury (gen. sec.).

Orientation. Moderate socialist, secular, nationalist, pro-Indian and pro-Soviet.

Founded. 1949.

History. Founded as the Awami (People's) Muslim League by left-wing Bengali nationalists opposed to the right-wing orientation of the Muslim League after the 1947 partition, the party headed coalition governments in what was then East Pakistan in 1956-58 and was represented in Pakistan governments in 1956-57 and in 1958. In 1957 a leftist faction, led by Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani and opposed to the leadership's alleged failure to condemn Pakistan's Western-oriented foreign policy, broke away to form the National Awami Party.

In elections held in 1970 the League won 151 of the 153 East Pakistan seats in the Pakistan National Assembly on the basis of a six-point charter presenting the demands of Bengali nationalism. Under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman it headed the successful movement for independence from Pakistan and became the ruling party in Bangladesh from 1971. In January 1975 Mujibur introduced a presidential form of government and moved to a single-party system by creating the Bangladesh Peasants' and Workers' Awami League (Bangladesh *Krishak Sramik Awami League* (BKSAL)), within which all existing political tendencies were required to operate.

After the overthrow and murder of Sheikh Mujibur in August 1975, the League was temporarily banned

and its new leader, Abdul Malek Ukil, was imprisoned in April 1977. Meanwhile, the 1976 Political Parties Regulation had enabled the League to resume political activity under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur's daughter, Sheikh Hasina. It was the strongest of the five parties of the Democratic United Front which unsuccessfully campaigned for Gen. Mohammed Ataul Ghani Osman in the June 1978 presidential elections, which were won by Gen. Zia of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

In the February 1979 parliamentary elections the League won 40 of the 300 elective seats, while in the November 1981 presidential elections the League's candidate, Kamal Hossain, was officially credited with 25.35 per cent of the vote. He challenged the result on the grounds of alleged irregularities and the League boycotted the swearing-in of the victorious BNP candidate.

Following the military coup of March 1982 and the suspension of political parties, the League was in the forefront of the campaign for a return to democracy and the 1972 Constitution, participating in the launching of a 15-party opposition alliance in January 1983 and also, from September 1983, in the broader Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD), which included the main current of the BNP and its allies. Leftist elements of the League, led by its then general secretary Abdur Rassaq, broke away in July 1983 to form the Peasants' and Workers' Awami League.

Over the next two years the MRD maintained pressure on the Ershad regime for a resumption of constitutional rule, achieving partial success when the ban on political activity was lifted in January 1986 and par-

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liamentary elections were called for May 1986. However, the MRD formations split on whether adequate concessions had been made by the government, with the Awami League and seven allied parties deciding to contest the elections (on a joint list of candidates), whereas the BNP and other opposition groups declared a boycott of the electoral process.

Allegations of widespread irregularities in the conduct of the elections were endorsed by the League, whose share of the 300 elective seats was eventually determined at 76. Although its elected members were sworn in, the League and other opposition groups boycotted the opening of the new Parliament on July 9, 1986, in protest against the slow progress of democratization, and set up a "people's parliament", of which Sheikh Hasina was elected leader. The League then joined with the BNP-led alliance in boycotting the presidential elections held on Oct. 15.

Conciliatory gestures by Ershad's government persuaded the League and other opposition parties to attend Parliament in late January 1987, but they quickly resumed their boycott in protest against government moves to institutionalize the political role of the armed forces.

Over the following months the League participated in a series of mass demonstrations and general strikes in support of a call for Ershad's resignation, culminating on Nov. 10, 1987, in the "siege of Dhaka" in which the opposition sought to immobilize the government by assembling some 2,000,000 supporters in the capital.

Sheikh Hasina was placed under house arrest on Nov. 11, emerging a month later to condemn the state of emergency declared by Ershad on Nov. 27 and to reiterate the League's demand for his immediate resignation. The League also announced that, together with other opposition parties, it would boycott the parliamentary elections which the government had called for March 1988, claiming that they would be a "farce" as long as Ershad remained in power.

Since the overthrow of Ershad, the Awami League has been the main opposition group to the ruling BNP; it gained 32 per cent of the vote in the 1991 elections, the same percentage of the vote as the BNP, but only 85 seats as compared with the 138 of the BNP. (Later it won three of the six re-poll seats.)

Structure. The Awami League is a mass party directed by a 12-member presidium elected by the party council. It has integral women's, peasants', workers', students' and youth organizations.

Membership. 1,025,000. (est.).

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)*Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Dal*

Address. Sattar House, 19/A, Road No. 16, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka 9.

Leadership. Begum Khaleda Zia (ch.); Prof. A. Q. M. Badruddoza Chaudhury (vice-ch.); Abdus Salam Talukdar (gen. sec.).

Orientation. Centrist, Islamic, democratic and nationalist. The party favours multiparty democracy, presidential government and a mixed economy.

History. The BNP was formed by the then President, Gen. Ziaur Rahman (Zia) on the basis of the *Jatiyatabadi* Front which had successfully campaigned for his election in June 1978. Headed by the Nationalist Democratic Party, the Front also included factions of the Muslim League, the National Awami Party, the Popular Unity Party, the Labour Party and an organization representing the Hindu minority. Other factions of most of these constituents continued to operate as independent parties.

In the parliamentary elections of February 1979 the BNP obtained 49 per cent of the votes and a two-thirds majority of seats on a platform of inscribing faith in Islam into the Constitution and pursuing social justice rather than socialism. Martial law and the state of emergency were lifted in the course of 1979. However, Zia was assassinated on May 30, 1981, in an apparent attempted military coup and was succeeded by the Vice-President and senior BNP vice-chairman, Justice Abdus Sattar. In presidential elections held in November 1981, Abdus Sattar, the BNP candidate, was elected, being officially credited with 65.8 per cent of the votes. Begum Khaleda Zia (widow of the late President) succeeded Sattar as leader of the mainstream of the BNP in January 1984.

After the military takeover of March 1982, the BNP and six allied formations in September 1983 joined with the Awami League and its associated parties to launch the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD), whose subsequent pressure on the Ershad regime produced a partial resumption of legal political activity from January 1986 and the calling of parliamentary elections for May 1986. In the event, however, the MRD formations became divided over whether adequate concessions had been made by the government, with the result that BNP and its allies boycotted the elections, whereas the Awami League and its major associated parties decided in favour of participation.

Shortly after the May 1986 elections the BNP resumed co-operation with the Awami League in press-

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ing for speedier progress towards democratization, with both groups and their allies boycotting the October 1986 presidential elections. Over the next 12 months the BNP was in the forefront of a series of mass demonstrations and strikes calling for President Ershad's resignation, culminating in the "siege of Dhaka" on Nov. 10, 1987, in which the opposition sought to immobilize the government by assembling some 2,000,000 supporters in the capital. On Nov. 27 President Ershad declared a state of emergency. On her release on Dec. 11 from one month's house arrest Begum Khaleda Zia reiterated the party's demand for the immediate resignation of the government and announced that the BNP would not participate in the new parliamentary elections called for March 1988.

In July 1988, a group of dissidents led by a former secretary general, A. K. M. Obaidur Rahman, formed a rival faction.

In the parliamentary elections which followed the overthrow of Ershad, the BNP won a substantial victory (in terms of seats rather than percentage of the vote), and Begum Zia became the country's first woman Prime Minister. By-elections in September of the same year gave the party an absolute majority.

Structure. The BNP is based on a number of sectional organizations for women, students, youth, peasants, workers, volunteers (*Jatiyatabadi Sechchasebak Sangathan*) and cultural pursuits.

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB)

Address. 21/1 Purana Palton, Dhaka 2.

Leadership. Saifuddin Ahmed Manik (pres.); Nurul Islam Nahid (gen. sec.).

Orientation. An orthodox pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninist party, the CPB advocates secularism and "scientific socialism" taking account of the economic backwardness of Bangladesh. It pursues a policy of supporting "pro-people patriotic governments" to achieve economic self-reliance and social progress.

Founded. 1948.

History. Originally the East Pakistan section of the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP), itself descended from the Communist Party of India, the party was illegal for most of its early history, although it had several members elected to the East Pakistan Assembly in 1954 as candidates of a four-party United Front. Driven underground by the promulgation of martial law in October 1958, the CPP virtually ceased to exist as an organized force in West Pakistan and was further weakened by the breakaway of its pro-Chinese wing in the mid-1960s. In 1968 the pro-Soviet wing in the

East formed the independent Communist Party of East Pakistan, which became the Communist Party of Bangladesh after independence in 1971.

Under the 1971-75 Awami League government the CPB became legal. It unsuccessfully contested four seats in the 1973 elections, subsequently forming an alliance with the League and the pro-Soviet wing of the National Awami Party to combat terrorism and corruption. Banned again in 1977, it was legalized in 1978 but was still constrained under a December 1978 decree which banned all parties which received foreign financial assistance, were affiliated to any overseas organization, propagated views detrimental to the sovereignty or security of the state or maintained an armed underground organization. The party did not present candidates under its own banner in the 1979 elections. In April 1980 the party's then general secretary, Mohammed Farhad, and 52 other leading CPB members were arrested for sedition, although Farhad was released on bail on July 29, 1980.

In the wake of the March 1982 coup, the CPB joined the 15-party alliance of left-wing opposition groups headed by the Awami League and participated actively in the campaign for the restoration of democracy. It was one of the eight parties of this alliance which decided to contest the May 1986 parliamentary elections on a joint slate of candidates, its eventual seat tally of six (including one independent who later joined the CPB) marking the first time that the party had secured national parliamentary representation in its own name.

Thereafter the party remained closely allied to the Awami League in the continuing campaign for a full restoration of democracy, and joined other opposition parties in declaring a boycott of new parliamentary elections called for March 1988.

The party won five seats in the 1991 elections.

Structure. Organized on "democratic centralist" lines, the CPB has a congress as its highest body, a central committee and a presidium.

Membership. 2,500 (est.).

Freedom Party

Address. House No.48, Road No. 15/A, Dhanmondi Residential Area, Dhaka.

Leadership. Lt.-Col. Sayed Faruq Rahman (chair); Lt.-Col. Khandaker Abdur Rashid (dep. leader).

Orientation. Islamic, conservative, opposed to Awami League.

Founded. August 1987.

History. Rahman and Rashid were two of the three

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principal leaders (the "majors") of the August 1975 coup in which the Awami League government was overthrown and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and members of his family were killed. Following their own overthrow in November 1975 they were allowed to seek exile in Libya. Rahman returned to Bangladesh in 1985 and, after a period of detention, was a candidate in the October 1986 presidential elections, officially coming third with just over 1,000,000 votes.

Following the formation of the Freedom Party, clashes took place between its supporters and those of the Awami League, whose leader, Sheikh Hasina Wajed, had consistently demanded that the "majors" should be brought to trial for her father's murder.

Islamic Assembly (JIB)

Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh

Address. 505 Elephant Road, Bara Maghbazar, Dhaka, 1217.

Leadership. Abbas Ali Khan (Acting Amir - ch.).

Orientation. Islamic fundamentalist.

Founded. 1941.

History. Founded by Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, the JIB opposed the creation of a separate Muslim state from British India as being contrary to the basic principles of Islam, while at the same time it was anti-Hindu and anti-Indian. After partition in 1947 the organization's main strength was in West Pakistan, and it was led in East Pakistan by Golam Azam. Opposed to the secularism and Bengali nationalism of the Awami League, it campaigned actively against the Bangladesh independence movement in 1970-71 and was banned following the creation of the new state, Golam Azam being deprived of his citizenship for alleged collaboration with the Pakistani forces.

Following the overthrow of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in August 1975, the JIB regained legal status in 1976 and became an active component of the Islamic Democratic League. Divisions in the latter led to the relaunching of the JIB as an independent organization in 1979 under its present leadership. After the March 1982 Ershad takeover, the JIB maintained its distance from the main opposition alliances, although it made similar calls for the restoration of democratic rule. In the May 1986 parliamentary elections it fielded 76 candidates, of whom 10 were elected.

From 1978 on the JIB was led by Azam, who had returned secretly from Pakistan. In December 1991 Azam's election as Amir was met with widespread calls for his trial over his leadership of the JIB, which, since he was a foreign national, was illegal. After a

"mock-trial" attended by more than 100,000 people in the capital, the government agreed in April 1992 to bring formal charges.

Muslim League

Address. Allahwala Building, 109 Motijheel C/A, Dhaka.

Leadership. Alhaj Kazi Abdul Kazer (pres.); M. A. Matin (gen. sec.).

Orientation. The League is a conservative party standing for "Muslim nationalism", parliamentary democracy, a welfare state which retains traditional sociopolitical institutions, and the separation of the judiciary from the government administration.

Founded. 1947.

History. Having supported Pakistan in the independence struggle, the League was banned on the establishment of an independent Bangladesh in 1971. It returned to legality in 1977 but was further weakened the following year when its dominant liberal wing joined President Zia's newly formed Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Moreover, a number of other breakaway groups were formed, several of them calling themselves Muslim League.

An alliance between the Muslim League and the Islamic Democratic League (IDL—later known as Islamic Unity Movement) won 20 seats in the 1979 election.

The Muslim League led by Alhaj Kazi Abdul Kazer presented 103 candidates in the May 1986 parliamentary elections, four of them being successful.

National Awami Party (Muzaffar) (NAP—Muzaffar)

Address. 20 Dhanmondi Hawkers Market, Dhaka 5.

Leadership. Muzaffar Ahmed (pres.); Pankaj Bhattacharya (gen. sec.).

Orientation. The pro-Soviet NAP stands for progressive nationalism, democratic socialism and observance of religious rites. Its immediate programme advocates a corruption-free mixed economy, job-creation measures, unemployment benefit and radical land reform in favour of peasants.

Founded. 1957/1967.

History. Founded in 1957 by Awami League dissidents, the NAP in 1967 itself split into a larger pro-Soviet party led by Muzaffar and a pro-Chinese party led by Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani. The former opposed the Pakistan government of Ayub Khan and also favoured autonomy for East Pakistan, taking an active part in the 1971 independence struggle and

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thereafter adopting a position of "constructive opposition" to the Awami League government of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

In the 1973 parliamentary election the party obtained some 1,600,000 votes but no seats; in that of 1979 it secured nearly 500,000 votes and one seat. Following the Ershad military takeover of March 1982, it joined the 15-party opposition alliance led by the Awami League and was one of the eight opposition organizations which contested the May 1986 parliamentary elections, presenting 10 candidates and winning two seats. Those elections were also contested by a group known as the NAP (Bhashani/United) whereas various other factions descended from the original NAP, including several calling themselves NAP (Bhashani), did not participate.

Membership. 500,000.

National Party

Jatiya Dal

Address. 104 Road No. 3, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka/1A; Road No. 79, Gulshan, Dhaka.

Leadership. Mohammed Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury (acting ch.); Shah Mozazzam Hossain (gen. sec.).

Orientation. The National Party claims to seek the promotion of national unity on the basis of the following five fundamental principles: (i) independence and sovereignty; (ii) faith in Islam combined with respect for all religions; (iii) Bangladeshi nationalism; (iv) democracy; and (v) social progress aimed at economic emancipation.

Founded. Jan. 1, 1986.

History. Moves to create a political base for Lt.-Gen. Hossain Mohammed Ershad following his seizure of power in a bloodless military coup on March 24, 1982, led initially to an announcement in November 1983 by the President installed by Ershad, Justice A. F. M. Assanuddin Chowdhury, that a new People's Party (*Jana Dal*) had been created, fusing various elements of both the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the two main opposition groups. The following month Ershad declared himself to be President and Chowdhury became "convener" of the People's Party, but prospects of early democratic elections receded amid deadlock between the regime and the opposition parties on the means of ending martial law. In June 1984 the People's Party was joined by the then Prime Minister, Ataur Rahman Khan, leader of the National League.

In July 1985 the People's Party became the principal component of a broader pro-government National

(*Jatiya*) Front, which also included the United People's Party, the Democratic Party and breakaway factions of the BNP and the Muslim League. On Jan. 1, 1986, the Front was converted into the National Party, it being disclosed that all government ministers had joined the new party. It was stated that President Ershad, while at that stage having no formal position in the party, had nevertheless inspired its formation.

In the May 1986 parliamentary elections the National Party presented candidates for all 300 elective seats and, after re-runs, by-elections in August and shifts of party allegiance, secured 180 seats, added to which it took all 30 of the seats reserved for women. Having resigned his post as Chief of Army Staff on Aug. 28, 1986, President Ershad on Sept. 1 announced his decision to join the National Party and the following day was elected chairman. On Sept. 17 he was nominated as the party's candidate for the presidential elections scheduled for Oct. 15, 1986, and was duly elected with (according to official results) 83.6 per cent of the votes (the main opposition parties having declared a boycott).

In late 1987, the main opposition parties launched protests to force Ershad's resignation, whereupon he declared a state of emergency. After the 1988 election victory his government was paralyzed by renewed agitation in October 1990 with student activists in the forefront. His declaration of a state of emergency failed to restore order as opposition groups defied curfews, and academics and civil servants joined the protesting students. Violent clashes with the security forces ensued. Opposition leaders rejected his offers of concessions, and without the backing of the military, Ershad was forced to resign in December 1990.

Ershad and many of his supporters were arrested and put on trial, but the party continues to operate under new leadership. On Jan. 1, 1991, a spokesman said that the party would contest the coming parliamentary elections, and that it "begged forgiveness" from the people adding that "if we have done anything wrong, we are ready to rectify ourselves". They won 35 seats and over 10 per cent of the vote in the 1991 general election, including Ershad's own seat in his home district of Rangpur.

Structure. Directed by a 57-member national committee, the National Party is based on numerous affiliated organizations, including the National Student Society (*Jatiya Chhatra Samaj*), National Youth Solidarity (*Jatiya Jubo Sanghati*), National Women (*Jatiya Mahila*), National Peasants (*Jatiya Krishak*), National Workers (*Jatiya sramik*) and National Volunteers

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(*Jatiya Sechehasebak*).

National Socialist Party (Rab) (JSD-Rab)

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Rab)

Address. 115 Fakirapook, Dhaka.

Leadership. Nur-e-Alam Ziku (pres.); Humayun Kabir (gen. sec.).

Orientation. Advocating "scientific socialism", the party maintains that Bangladesh has a ruling capitalist class which is connected with imperialism and is maintaining a "monopolistic grip" on power through "controlled democracy" and "fascism". It seeks to use the democratic process to achieve "bourgeois democracy" as a step towards the establishment of socialism. It also regards the armed forces in developing countries as having a legitimate role to play in the struggle for national independence from imperialism.

Founded. October 1972/January 1984.

History. The JSD was formed by a breakaway group of young militants of the then ruling Awami League dissatisfied with the latter's "non-scientific socialism". Its founders were Abdur Rab and Shajahan Siraj, then both student leaders of the underground Bangladesh Communist League; Sirajul Alam Khan was also influential in creating the new party. It quickly gained a substantial urban following for its militant opposition to the Awami League government, which suppressed the party and its Revolutionary People's Army (*Biplobi Gana Bahini*) in 1975 after an alleged attempt to seize power.

The JSD in August 1975 welcomed the overthrow of the Awami League government (but not the murder of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman) and played a prominent role in the November 1975 military and popular uprising which brought Gen. Zia to effective power. Zia (who assumed the presidency in April 1977) nevertheless disowned the JSD, whose leaders were arrested and subsequently sentenced in July 1976 on charges of attempting to overthrow the government, one of them being executed.

In October 1977 the JSD was officially dissolved, but from November 1978 it was again allowed to operate. Over 300 JSD members were released from prison in February 1979, when the party took part in parliamentary elections, winning nine of the 300 seats. The JSD's military wing was again accused of involvement in political murders in the first half of 1981. In the November presidential elections the JSD candidate, Maj. M. A. Jalil, forfeited his deposit.

Following the Ershad military takeover in March 1982, factional strife within the JSD intensified, lead-

ing in January 1984 to the formation of a breakaway party by three of its most prominent leaders (Abdur Rab, Sirajul Alam Khan and Maj. Jalil); while Shajahan Siraj and his followers maintained what they claimed to be the historic JSD. The JSD-Rab participated in the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy and joined the Awami League and some other opposition parties in contesting the May 1986 parliamentary elections, fighting 138 of the 300 elective seats; four of its candidates were elected. Thereafter the JSD-Rab joined the opposition boycott of Parliament and was prominent in the campaign for Ershad's resignation, while at the same time acknowledging that the armed forces had a significant political role to play in an under-developed country like Bangladesh.

National Socialist Party (Siraj) (JSD-Siraj)

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Siraj)

Address. 23 D. I. T. Road, Malibagh, Dhaka/ 11, Bangabandhu Avenue, Dhaka.

Leadership. Shajahan Siraj (pres.); A. B. M. Shajahan (gen. sec.).

Orientation. Advocating "scientific socialism", the party contends that Bangladesh is under the domination of capitalism, imperialism and fascism; it regards electoral participation under "bourgeois democracy" as one method of advancing towards its eventual goals.

Founded. October 1972.

History. This organization claims to represent the original JSD following the formation of the breakaway JSD-Rab in January 1984 [see previous entry, where the earlier history of the JSD is summarized]. It participated in the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy campaigning against the Ershad government and also in the eight-party alliance (headed by the Awami League) which decided to present a joint list of candidates in the May 1986 parliamentary elections. Of the 14 JSD-Siraj candidates, three were elected.

Thereafter the party participated in the opposition boycott of Parliament and in the renewed campaign for Ershad's resignation. However, it withdrew from the eight-party alliance in protest against what it described as the "atrocities, undemocratic attitude and selfish activities" of the Awami League.

International affiliations. The party's labour organization (*Jatiya Sramik Jote*) is affiliated to the Prague-based World Federation of Trade Unions.

Membership. 5,000.

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Peasants' and Workers' Awami League
Krishak-Sramik Awami League (BKSAL)

Address. 91 Nawabpur Road, Dhaka.

Leadership. Abdur Razzak (gen. sec.); Mohuddin Ahmed (ch.).

Orientation. Claiming descent from the front organization of the same name created by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman shortly before the overthrow of the Awami League government in August 1975, the BKSAL stands for "scientific socialism", Bengali nationalism, secularism and democracy. It advocates nationalization, radical land reform and an "anti-imperialist" foreign policy based on strengthened ties with "progressive and friendly Muslim countries, socialist and democratic countries".

Founded. October 1983.

History. The party effectively came into being with the expulsion from the Awami League (on July 31, 1983) of its left-wing general secretary Abdur Rahman, following a bitter power struggle in which he and his supporters challenged what they regarded as the non-socialist orientation of Sheikh Hasina's leadership. The Razzak faction formally established itself as the BKSAL in October 1983.

The party participated in the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy and was one of the eight parties (headed by the Awami League) which decided, in alliance, to contest the May 1986 parliamentary elections. Although the BKSAL leadership eventually rescinded this decision (in protest against the "arbitrary" manner in which the Awami League had drawn up the joint list of candidates), six BKSAL candidates nevertheless stood, three of them being elected. Thereafter the BKSAL joined the opposition boycott of Parliament and participated in the renewed campaign for the resignation of President Ershad.

International affiliations. The BKSAL's labour organization is affiliated to the Prague-based World Federation of Trade Unions.

Peasants' and Workers' Party (Solaiman)
Krishak Sramik Dal

Address. Sonargaon Bhaban, 99 South Kamalapur, Dhaka 19.

Leadership. A. S. M. Solaiman (pres.)

Orientation. Conservative socialist, eschewing revolutionary approaches to social and economic problems.

Founded. 1914, renamed 1953.

History. The party is descended from the All-Bengal *Praja Samity* founded under British rule by Shere Bangla A. K. Fuzlul Huque as Bengal's first political

party for peasants. It adopted its present name in December 1953 and in 1954-62 participated in coalition governments with the Muslim League and other organizations. In opposition after 1982 to the Ershad regime, in 1984 the party joined the National Unity Front headed by Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed's Democratic League, but withdrew when a majority of the Front decided to boycott the May 1986 parliamentary elections. The party presented 25 candidates in that contest, none of whom were returned. However, the party won four seats in the 1991 elections.

Membership. 125,000.

Workers' Party (Menon)

Address. 31/E-F Topkhana Road, Dhaka.

Leadership. Rashed Khan Menon (gen. sec.); Abul Bashir (pres.).

Orientation. Marxist-Leninist, seeking a "people's democratic revolution to achieve socialism" and unity in the international communist movement. Its immediate objectives include a decentralized administration run by people's representatives, ownership of the land by peasants, a strengthened state-owned industrial sector and an independent and neutral foreign policy based on close relations with the socialist countries.

History. Having contested the February 1979 parliamentary elections (and secured the election of Menon), this group rejected participation in those of May 1986 and accordingly withdrew from the 15-party left-wing opposition alliance headed by the Awami League. This step led to the creation of a breakaway Workers' Party under Nazrul Islam, which favoured participation in the elections. Subsequently, the Menon party joined a five-party alliance of left-wing groups opposed to electoral politics so long as President Ershad remained in power.

Workers' Party (Nazrul)

Leadership. Nazrul Islam (ch.).

Orientation. Marxist-Leninist, seeking the reunification of the international communist movement.

History. This grouping originated as an offshoot of the Workers' Party led by Rashed Khan Menon [see previous entry]. Whereas the Menon party rejected electoral participation under the Ershad regime, the Nazrul faction argued that given the existing disorganization of the people such participation was necessary to mobilize them at grass-roots level. It described the Menon party as "petit-bourgeois revolutionaries" who failed to understand objective conditions.

The Nazrul party participated in the May 1986 par-

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liamentary elections within the eight-party alliance headed by the Awami League, three of its four candidates being elected.

Minor parties

None of the parties described below obtained representation in the 1991 parliamentary elections, although some of them presented candidates. As the listing shows, a feature of the proliferation of parties in Bangladesh is the frequent occurrence of two or more groupings using the same title, as a result of splits, realignments and factional defections leading to the creation of separate groups. Another feature is the complex and continuing alignment and realignment of individual parties within broader alliances and fronts, which means that some of the parties listed below may by now be defunct.

Awami Islami Party (3/5 Chand Khar Pool Lane, Dhaka 1); leadership: Mohammad Shahjahan (founder-convenor). Founded in July 1986. An Islamic fundamentalist party which, while favouring parliamentary democracy, has advocated that Bangladesh should be run by "the pious Muslim intelligentsia" to stem the tide of "moral erosion".

Awami Ulema Party; 27/28 Mohammadpur, Dhaka; leadership: Maulana Khairul Islam Jashori (pres.); founded in 1980. The party, committed to establishing an Islamic social system, was revived in 1980 by Maulana Jashori, who had led it in the 1970s but had joined the National Party (Huda) in 1978. A supporter of President Zia (until his assassination in May 1981), he became president of the Islamic Unity Movement of 16 Islamic parties in 1984 and unsuccessfully contested the October 1986 presidential elections.

Bangla Communist Party; Sheikh Shaheb Bazaar, Lalbagh, Dhaka; leadership: Mannan Sikdar (ch.); founded in 1972. A Marxist-Leninist, Maoist, pro-Albanian party. Descended from the pre-independence pro-Chinese Communist Party of East Pakistan, this party later became critical of the reformist direction of the Chinese party leadership. Part of a six-party Left Front, the party boycotted the May 1986 parliamentary elections.

Bangladesh Janata Dal; 3/5 Asad Avenue, Mohammadpur, Dhaka; leadership: K. M. Obaidur Rahman.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP-Aziz) (*Jatiyatabadi Dal Aziz*); 18 Road No. 18, Gulshan, Dhaka; leadership: Shah Azizur Rahman (ch.); Shamsul Alam (gen. sec.). A centre-right, moderate Islamic party founded in January 1986. Shah Azizur Rahman, who had been Prime Minister under Gen. Zia, was expelled from the main Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) in July 1985 for leading a dissident group which favoured participation in the new National Front inspired by President Ershad. However, when the Front was converted into a unified party in January 1986, Shah Aziz declined to join and maintained his grouping as a distinct party, which subsequently became the main component of a national front.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (Dudu) (BNP-Dudu); 55 Satmasjid Road, Dhaka; leadership: Khalequzzaman Dudu (ch.); Maj. (ret.) Muslim Uddin (gen. sec.). A centre-right, moderate Islamic party founded in 1983. This version of the BNP arose from a split in the party in April 1983, when some elements opposed Begum Khaleda Zia's policy of confrontation with the Ershad regime.

Caliphate Movement (*Jhelafat Andolon*); 314/2 Lalbagh, Fort Bend; leadership: Maulana Mohammed Ullah Hafezji Huzur (founder and Amir); founded in November 1981. An Islamic fundamentalist movement, advocating the rule of God as revealed in the Koran and late Sunni Muslim texts and as practised under the Rashidite Caliphates. Maulana Hafezji Huzur, a noted religious teacher, entered politics in 1952 when he initiated the creation of the *Nezam-e-Islami* Party and thereafter played an influential role in Islamic political circles. He established the Caliphate Movement to support his candidature in the November 1981 presidential elections (in which he came third with some 387,000 votes). He stood again in October 1986 (at the age of 88) and came second, being officially credited with some 1,500,000 votes. Meanwhile, the Movement had fielded 43 candidates in the May 1986 parliamentary elections, none of them being elected.

Prior to the parliamentary elections, divisions in the Caliphate Movement had led to the formation of a breakaway group led by Azizul Huq. The latter continued to recognize Maulana Hafezji Huzur as leader, while claiming that his sons and sons-in-law were isolating him from his disciples. Both factions continued to participate in the broader Joint Caliphate Movement Council, of which Maulana Hafezji Huzur

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was the spiritual head.

Communist Party (*Samyabadi Dal*); there are two factions of this revolutionary Marxist-Leninist grouping, the first led by Nani Dutta was formed by elements dissatisfied with the lack of commitment to Marxist-Leninist unity in other revolutionary Communist parties; the second led by Badruddin Umar has operated in clandestinity, concentrating on organizing peasant resistance to oppression.

Communist Party of Bangladesh, Marxist-Leninist (CPB-ML) (*Bangladesher Samyabadi Dal*); 43/1 Joginagar Lane, Dhaka 3; leadership: Mohammed Toaha (ch.); founded in 1971. Formerly pro-Chinese, the party later inclined to a pro-Soviet stance. The CPB-ML is descended from the Communist Party of East Pakistan, Marxist-Leninist (CPEP-ML), which was formed in 1966 by the pro-Chinese wing of the Communist Party of Pakistan. In compliance with Chinese government policy, the CPEP-ML opposed the secession of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971, whereupon a section of the party led by Toaha formed what became the CPB-ML, which conducted guerrilla operations against Pakistani forces and attempted unsuccessfully to seize the leadership of the liberation movement. It aims at a democratic revolution based on the "marginal peasantry", pending which it is prepared to use "bourgeois instruments" such as parliamentary elections to prepare the ground for revolution.

After independence the party waged a militant campaign against the Awami League government, whose overthrow in August 1975 was followed by the party's legalization. Toaha was a member of Parliament in 1979-82, during which period the party gave support to President Zia's policy of maintaining independence from India and the Soviet Union.

Following the military takeover in March 1982, the party moderated its anti-Indian and anti-Soviet stances and joined the left-wing opposition alliance headed by the Awami League. It participated in the May 1986 parliamentary elections with six candidates (two of them on the joint opposition list), but failed to win representation.

Democracy Implementation Council (*Ganotantra Bastobayon Parishad—GBP*); 53 Road No. 3/A, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka 9; leadership: Maj. (retd.) Mohammed Afsaruddin (pres.); Khondakar Mahtabuddin (gen. sec.); founded in September 1985. A progressive, nationalist and moderate Islamic group,

the GBP advocates democratic government, workers' participation in ownership and management, and peasant co-operatives. It was founded by Afsaruddin to support his candidacy in the October 1986 presidential elections, in which he received a negligible vote. He had previously been vice-chairman of Rahman's Bangladesh Nationalist Party and before that leader of the Justice Party until its dissolution in 1984.

Democratic League; 68 Jigatola Road, Dhaka 9; leadership: Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed (ch.); founded in 1976. Following the overthrow of the Awami League government in August 1975, Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed was briefly President of Bangladesh. He founded the conservative, moderate Islamic Democratic League on the resumption of legal political activity late in 1976, but he was charged with corruption and abuse of power and given a five-year prison sentence in February 1977. The League itself was banned in October 1977 for involvement in "terrorism, foreign infiltration and conspiracy", although the ban was lifted in 1978.

Having initially adopted a co-operative attitude towards the Ershad military regime which took power in March 1982, Ahmed subsequently became leader of a National Unity Front of conservative groups and participated in the campaign for a return to constitutional rule. After some initial uncertainty, the League eventually decided to boycott the May 1986 parliamentary elections, although some other constituents of the front did not follow suit. Two splinter groups broke off from the main (Ahmed) faction of the Democratic League in the mid-1980s. One group, led by Oli Ahad, broke away from the main Democratic League in 1984 in protest against Ahmed's alleged "aversion to movement" and co-operative attitude towards the Ershad military regime. The other, led by Abdur Rouf Chowdhury, joined the seven-party centre-right opposition alliance headed by Begum Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party, within which it called unsuccessfully for full participation in the May 1986 parliamentary elections.

Democratic Party (Islam) *Ganotantrik Dal (Islam)*; 19/A Anwara Bhaban, East Rajabazar, Dhaka; leadership: Tajul Islam (sec.); founded in January 1986. The party seeks "to free the state machinery from the clutches of the comprador-bureaucratic capitalist class and its close ally, the feudal class" and to carry through radical land reforms and the creation of an industrial infrastructure. This faction of the Democratic Party

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(itself founded in 1980) opposed the decision to merge into the new ruling National (*Jatiya*) Party.

Gano Azadi League; 30 Banagram Road, Dhaka; leadership: Alhaj Abdus Samead (gen. sec.); founded in 1976. The League was founded by Maulana Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish (who died in August 1986) as a moderate left-wing party, standing for Bengali nationalism, parliamentary democracy, the rule of law, a welfare-oriented balanced economy and freedom of religion. It participated in the five-party Democratic United Front (headed by the Awami League) which unsuccessfully campaigned for Gen. Mohammed Ataul Ghani Osman in the June 1978 presidential elections won by Gen. Zia. After the Ershad military takeover in March 1982 it joined the 15-party left-wing opposition alliance led by the Awami League and followed the latter in deciding to contest the May 1986 parliamentary elections. Its sole candidate (Alhaj Abdus Samad) was defeated. In 1991, the party joined the Patriotic Democratic League.

Hindu Oikyo Front; 170 Free School Street, Dhaka 5; leadership: Manindra Nath Sarker (ch.). The Front combines its efforts to protect the interests of the minority Hindu community with co-operation with Muslim parties on issues affecting the national interests of Bangladesh. The Front participated in the National United Front led by Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed of the Democratic League but withdrew when the main components of the National Unity Front eventually decided against participation in the May 1986 parliamentary elections. Its four election candidates were all unsuccessful.

Istahul Muslemif; Darbar Sharif, East Nakhapara, Dhaka; leadership: Alhaj Maulana Abul Bashir a *pir* (Muslim saint) who has campaigned for the establishment of Islam in all spheres of life. The party provides financial assistance to the poor.

Islami Oikyo Jote; 44/1 Purana Paltan, Dhaka; leadership: Alhaj Md. Obaidul Haque.

Islamic Party (Hossain); 1st floor, 124/1 New Kakrail Road, Dhaka; leadership: Sheikh Ashraf Hossain (pres.). Islamic fundamentalist party which is an offshoot of the main Islamic Party led by M. A. Malek.

Islamic Party (Malek); 27/4 Aminbagh Road, Dhaka; leadership: M. A. Malek (pres.). An Islamic fun-

damentalist party, but committed to democracy, it was founded in April 1979 by Malek who was formerly a member of the Islamic Democratic Party. A member of the Nationalist Front headed by Shah Azizur Rahman's Bangladesh Nationalist Party, the Islamic Party refused to participate in the May 1986 parliamentary elections.

Islamic Unity Movement (previously Islamic Democratic League) (*Islami Oikyo Andolam*); 84 Prubo Testuri Bazaar, Tejgaon, Dhaka 15; leadership: Maulana Abdur Rahim (ch.); founded in November 1984 as an Islamic fundamentalist party, advocating an "Iranian-style Islamic revolution" in Bangladesh. A veteran Islamic fundamentalist activist, Maulana Rahim was a member of the pre-independence East Pakistan Assembly and was elected to the Bangladesh Parliament in 1979 as a candidate of the Islamic Democratic League, which became the Islamic Unity Movement in November 1984. It is a member of the Joint Caliphate Movement Councils.

Jana Shakti Party; 13/B Road No. 10/11, Mirpur, Dhaka; leadership: Abdullah Al-Naser (pres.); Fatema Khatun (gen. sec.). A moderate Islamic, nationalist party, favouring a free market economy. It was founded in March 1984 and later joined the Nationalist Front headed by Shah Azizur Rahman's Bangladesh Nationalist Party.

Labour Party; 27 Purana Paltan, Dhaka; leadership: Maulana Abdul Matin (pres.); founded in November 1969 as a moderate Islamic and anti-nationalist party which also advocates the emancipation of the poor. A noted author of religious books, Maulana Matin was detained under the 1971-75 Awami League government for protesting against the publication of works which he regarded as derogatory to Islam. Released in late 1975, he became a supporter of President Zia, although he declined to join the latter's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) when it was created in September 1978. The Labour Party subsequently became a member of the Nationalist Front headed by Shah Azizur Rahman's group, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (Aziz) (founded after he was expelled from the original BNP). A dispute between two leadership groups split the party, with the other faction led by Abdul Mutalib Sikdar.

Muslim League Factions. As well as the Muslim League listed under the major parties above, there are

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several factions including those led by Abu Ali Chowdhury; Alhaj Mohammed Shamsul Huda; Kamruzzaman Khan; and Syed Kutub Uddin.

Muslim Nationalist Party (*Muslim Jatiyabadi Dal*); 4th floor, Bikrampur House, 47/3 Toynbe Circular Road, Dhaka 3; leadership: Sirajul Haq Gora (pres.). A Muslim nationalist party, committed to the creation of an Islamic republic. Having earlier been a member of the National Awami Party, Sirajul Haq Gora joined the Progressive Democratic Force in 1981. He subsequently led a breakaway faction called the Progressive Nationalist Party, which was renamed the Muslim Nationalist Party in 1983.

National Awami Party (Bhashani) (NAP-B). Claiming to represent the political principles of the NAP's founder, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, the NAP-B stands for Bengali nationalism, democracy, secularism and socialism. It advocates the emancipation of the working class from domestic and foreign exploitation, an independent national economy, priority for agro-based industrial projects and promotion of a state-owned heavy industrial sector. It was formed as a result of a split in the NAP (Muzaffar) in 1967.

Having not participated actively in the Bangladesh independence struggle, the NAP (Bhashani) had by 1974 fallen under the influence of right-wing Muslim elements and was openly anti-Indian and anti-Hindu as well as in opposition to the Awami League government. Maoist elements deserted or were expelled and Mashiur Rahman, a right-wing leader, became head of the party's organizing committee. After being suppressed under martial law in August 1975, it became legal at the end of 1976 and in June 1978 backed the *Jatiyabadi* Front in its successful campaign for the election of Gen. Zia as President, whereupon Mashiur Rahman was appointed a senior minister in the government.

Meanwhile, the death of Maulana Bhashani in November 1976 had precipitated a series of splits, producing a number of groups calling themselves the NAP (Bhashani) accompanied by a complex series of realignments and mergers involving the various NAP factions as well as other groups. Following the Ershad military takeover in March 1982, some NAP (Bhashani) groups gravitated towards the seven-party alliance headed by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and followed the BNP in boycotting the May 1986 parliamentary elections. Others joined with a

dissident section of the main NAP (led by Muzaffar) and other leftist elements to contest the elections as the NAP (Bhashani/United), presenting 10 candidates and winning five seats. These include factions led by: Abu Nasser Khan Bhashani (the National Awami Party (Bhashani/United) (NAP-BU)); Gazi Shahidullah; M. A. Hannan; A. K. M. Fazlul Haq; Abdul Khaleque; Shakwat Matin; and Mir Abu Zafar.

National Congress; 38 Topkhana Road, Dhaka; leadership: Mohammed Mofizur Rahman Dhali (pres.); S. M. Alam Faridi (gen. sec.). The Congress advocates a free market economy and secularism. Dhali, a former official of the Awami League, was later a member of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party before launching the National Congress.

National Democratic Party (NDP); 3/4 Purana Palatan, Dhaka; leadership: Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury (sec.-gen.).

National Democratic Party (Jagpa) (*Jatiya Ganantrik Party*); 33 Captain Bazaar, Dhaka; leadership: Shafiqul Alam Prodhan; founded in April 1980. Centre-right party, opposed to nationalization. Prodhan was leader of the Awami League's student wing in the early 1970's and was later convicted of involvement in terrorist violence. Freed by President Zia in 1977, he gravitated to the right and founded Jagpa as an anti-socialist party.

National Democratic Peasant Party (*Jatiyabadi Ganantrik Chashi Dal (Jaagchad)*); 20/Gha, Katsur, Master Bari Mohammadpur, Dhaka 7; leadership: Afazuddin Chowdhury (ch.). A moderate Islamic party. A former member of the Democratic Party, Chowdhury contested the February 1979 parliamentary and November 1981 presidential elections, in each case without success. The party initially decided to contest the May 1986 parliamentary elections, but later reversed this decision.

National Hindu Council (*Jatiya Hindu Parishad*); leadership: Prem Ranjan Devwas (pres.). The Council seeks to protect and further the interests of the minority Hindu community. Before independence Devwas was a member of the pro-Chinese Communist Party of East Pakistan, Marxist-Leninist; he was later associated with the National Awami Party (Bhashani) and was also a member of Gen. Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party.

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National (Jatiya) League; 27/1 Elephant Road, Dhaka 5/500A Dhamandi R/A. Road 7, Dhaka; leadership: Giuddin Ahmed Chowdhury (convener). Moderate Islamic party, advocating a free market economy. Founded in 1970 as Pakistan National League, renamed 1972. Dating from the pre-independence period, the League was relaunched in 1976 under the leadership of Ataul Rahman Khan and won two seats in the 1979 parliamentary elections. In 1984-85 Rahman Khan served as Prime Minister under President Ershad and in June 1984 joined the pro-government People's Party (*Jana Dal*), the forerunner of the later ruling National Party. A section of the League led by Chowdhury opposed the merger with the government party and maintained the League as an independent party.

National Party (Begum) (Jatiya Dal (Begum)); 71 Bara Mogh Bazaar, Dhaka; leadership: Amena Begum (pres.). A conservative party founded in November 1976. Having been a senior officer of the pre-independence Awami League, Amena Begum in 1970 transferred her allegiance to the newly formed National League. On the resumption of political activity in November 1976 she led a faction of the League into a merger with a faction of the Democratic Party to create the National Party (her party subsequently remaining distinct from the government party of the same name created in January 1986).

National People's Party (Asad) (Jatiya Janata Dal) (JJD-Asad); 1st floor, 67 Sultangonj Rald, Rayer Bazaar, Dhaka; leadership: Sheikh Mohammed Asad (convener). A centrist progressive grouping which is descended from the party founded in September 1976 by Gen. (retd.) Mohammed Ataul Ghani Osmani, who had commanded Bangladeshi forces during the 1971 War of Independence. Backed by the JJD-instigated Democratic United Front (which also included the Awami League), Gen. Osmani obtained some 4,400,000 votes in the June 1978 presidential elections (won by Gen. Zia), although in the November 1981 presidential elections (won by Abdus Sattar) his support slumped to only 300,000 votes. Following his death in 1985, the JJD split into four factions, each claiming to represent his ideals. The three other factions are led by Suzat Ahmed Chowdhury; Rear Adml. (retd.) H. M. Khan; and Khan Mohammed Anwarul Wadud.

National Socialist Party (Inu) ((Jatiya Samajiantrik

Dal--Inu) (JSD-Inu); Allahwalah Building, 108 Motijheel C/A, Dhaka 2; leadership: Hasanul Huq Inu. Advocating "scientific socialism", this faction of the JSD (originally formed in 1972 by left-wing elements of the Awami League) opposed participation in the May 1986 parliamentary elections, whereas they were contested by the party's two main factions.

National United Front; leadership: Khandaker Mosh-taque Ahmed (chair); founded 1991. An alliance of 23 nationalist and Islamic groups; calls for a representative government and economic emancipation.

Patriotic Democratic Front; founded 1991. An alliance of the following four left-wing political parties: the Bangladesh Communist Party; the Gano Azadi League; the National Awami Party (Muzaffar faction); the Communist Party—Marxist-Leninist.

Nezam-e-Islamic (Ali); 5/6 Shayesthakan Road, Lal-bagh, Dhaka; leadership: Maulana Ashraf Ali (pres.). An Islamic fundamentalist party founded in 1952 at the instigation of Maulana Hafezji Huzur (later leader of the Caliphate Movement), this group opposed Bengali nationalism and the creation of an independent Bangladesh in 1971. It was revived in 1976 under the leadership of Syed Manzoorul Ahsan. His death in 1986 precipitated the division of the party, of which there are three other main factions, led by Maulana Mohammed Abdur Rahman Azad; Maulana Abdul Jabbar Badarpuri; and Khwaja Sayeed Shah.

People's League A centre-left grouping which supports parliamentary democracy. It is split into three factions lead by Syed Mahbub Hossain; Nur Mohammed Kazi; and Garib Newaz.

Peasants' and Workers' Emancipation Movement (Krishak Sramik Mukti Andolan); 41 Greenway, Bara Moghbqazar, Dhaka 17; leadership: Mohammed Sadeq (pres.); Fakhruddin Ahmed (gen. sec.). The party seeks to promote the interests of peasants and workers through a more equitable distribution of wealth.

People's Party (Huq) (Jana Dal (Huq)); 126 Motijheel C/A, Dhaka; leadership: Mohammed Abdul Huq (ch.); founded in January 1986. The conservative People's Party was originally created in 1983 as a pro-government party and was a major component of the new ruling National (Jatiya) Party launched in