BANGLADESH ASSESSMENT

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Country Information and Policy Unit

CONTENTS

I SCOPE OF DOCUMENT	1.1 – 1.5
II GEOGRAPHY	
General	2.1 – 2.3
Languages	2.4
Economy	2.5 – 2.6
III HISTORY	
Pre-independence: 1947 – 1971	3.1 – 3.4
1972-1982	3.5 – 3.8
1983 – 1990	3.9 – 3.15
1991 – 1996	3.16 – 3.21
1997 - 1999	3.22 – 3.32
January 2000 - December 2000	3.33 – 3.35
January 2001 – October 2001	3.36 – 3.39
IV INSTRUMENTS OF THE STATE	
4.1 POLITICAL SYSTEM	
Constitution	4.1.1 – 4.1.3
Government	4.1.4 – 4.1.5
President	4.1.6 – 4.1.7
Parliament	4.1.8 – 4.1.10
4.2 JUDICIAL SYSTEM	4.2.1 – 4.2.4
4.3 SECURITY	
General	4.3.1 – 4.3.4
1974 Special Powers Act	4.3.5 – 4.3.7
Public Safety Act	4.3.8

V HUMAN RIGHTS	
5.1 INTRODUCTION	5.1.1 – 5.1.3
5.2 GENERAL ASSESSMENT	
Torture	5.2.1 – 5.2.3
Police	5.2.4 – 5.2.9
Supervision of Elections	5.2.10 – 5.2.12
Human Rights Groups	5.2.13 – 5.2.14
5.3 SPECIFIC GROUPS	
Religious Minorities	5.3.1 – 5.3.6
Biharis	5.3.7 – 5.3.14
Chakmas	5.3.15 – 5.3.16
Rohingyas	5.3.17 – 5.3.18
Ahmadis	5.3.19 – 5.3.20
Women	5.3.21 – 5.3.32
Children	5.3.33 – 5.3.36
Trafficking in Women and Children	5.3.37 – 5.3.39
5.4 OTHER ISSUES	
Assembly and Association	5.4.1 – 5.4.3
Speech and Press	5.4.4 – 5.4.5
Travel	5.4.6
Chittagong Hill Tracts	5.4.7 – 5.4.10
Student Organizations	5.4.11 – 5.4.12
Prosecution of 1975 Coup Leaders	5.4.13
Domestic Servants	5.4.14 – 5.4.15
Prison Conditions	5.4.16 – 5.4.18
ANNEX A: POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER GROUPS	
ANNEX B: PROMINENT PEOPLE	
ANNEX C: CHRONOLOGY	
ANNEX D: BIBLIOGRAPHY	

III HISTORY

3.2 East Pakistan became dissatisfied with the distant central government in West Pakistan, and the situation was exacerbated in **1952** when Urdu was declared Pakistan's official language. Discontent continued in the eastern wing, mainly due to under representation in the administration and armed forces. The leading political party of East Pakistan, the Awami League (AL), subsequently demanded autonomy from the West. **[1]**

3.3 A general election in December **1970** gave the AL an overwhelming victory in the East and thus a majority in Pakistan's National Assembly. On 26 March **1971** the AL leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, proclaimed the independence of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Civil

war immediately followed and the Pakistan President, General Yahya Khan, outlawed the AL and arrested its leaders. **[1]**

3.4 Resistance continued from the Liberation Army of East Bengal (the Mukhti Bahini), a group of irregular fighters who launched a major offensive in November. As a result, an estimated 9.5 million refugees crossed into India. On 4 December **1971** India declared war on Pakistan, with Indian forces supporting the Mukhti Bahini. Pakistan surrendered on 16 December and Bangladesh achieved its independence, quickly achieving international recognition. **[1]**

1972 - 1982

3.5 Sheikh Mujibur became Bangladesh's first Prime Minister in January **1972**. A general election for the country's first parliament ('Jatiya Sangsad') was held in March **1973**: the AL won 292 of the 300 directly elective seats. Internal stability was however threatened by opposition groups resorting to terrorism. **[1]**

3.6 In January **1975** a presidential government replaced the parliamentary government; Sheikh Mujibur became President, assuming absolute power. However, Mujibur and members of his family were assassinated in a right wing coup (led by army majors) in August. Martial law was then declared and political parties banned. A subsequent counter-coup on 3 November however brought Khalid Musharaf, a pro-Indian commander of the Dhaka garrison, to power. This proved to be extremely short-lived, as a third coup on 7 November overthrew Musharaf and power was assumed under a neutral non-party government, with Major General Ziaur Rahman (General Zia) taking precedence. **[1]**

3.7 Political parties were again legalized in July **1976**. General Zia assumed the presidency in April **1977**. In the parliamentary elections of February **1979**, Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) won 207 of the 300 directly elective seats in the Jatiya Sangsad. A new Prime Minister was appointed in April, and martial law repealed. The state of emergency was revoked in November. **[1]**

3.8 Zia was assassinated on 30 May **1981**, during an attempted military coup. Political instability ensued and Vice President Abdus Sattar was nominated President. Sattar (finding it difficult to retain civilian control) formed a National Security Council in January **1982**, led by Chief of the Army Staff, Lieutenant-General Hossain Mohammad Ershad. On 24 March Ershad seized power in a bloodless coup. Martial law was again declared, with Ershad as Chief Martial Law Administrator (although in October Ershad changed his title to Prime Minister), aided by a military Council of Advisers. **[1]**

1983 - 1990

3.9 Although the government's economic policies achieved some success, increasing demands for a return to democracy ensued throughout **1983**. The two principal opposition groups that emerged were an eight-party alliance, headed by a faction of the AL under Sheikh Hasina (daughter of the late Sheikh Mujibur) and a seven-party group, led by a faction of the BNP under former President Sattar and Begum Khaleda Zia (widow of General Zia). In September the two groups formed an alliance: the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy. In November, permission was given for the resumption of political activity and a new political party, the Jana

Dal (People's Party) was formed to support Ershad as a presidential candidate. Ershad declared himself President on 11 December. **[1]**

3.11 In January **1985** a new Council of Ministers was formed, composed almost entirely of military officers and excluding all members of the Jana Dal (in response to the opposition parties' demands for a neutral government during the pre-election). However, President Ershad refused to relinquish power to an interim government. The National Front (NF), a new five-party political alliance, (comprising the Jana Dal, the United People's Party, the Gonotantrik Party, the Bangladesh Muslim League and a breakaway section of the BNP) was established in September to promote government policies. **[1]**

3.12 The ten-month ban on political activity was lifted in January **1986**, and the NF formally became a single pro-government entity: the Jatiya Party (National Party). Although smaller opposition parties participated in the parliamentary elections on 7 May, the elections were boycotted by the Begum Khaleda Zia-led BNP. The Jatiya Party won 153 of the 300 directly elective seats in the Jatiya Sangsad. Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, the former General-Secretary of the Jatiya Party, was appointed Prime Minister in July. **[1]**

3.13 Ershad joined the Jatiya Party in September, being elected as chairman of the party. In the presidential election of mid-October (which was boycotted by both the BNP and AL) Ershad received 22 million votes. In November, the Jatiya Sangsad approved indemnity legislation (legalizing the military regime's actions since March 1982). Ershad then repealed martial law and formed a new Council of Ministers, including four MPs from the AL. **[1]**

3.14 Dissension from the opposition continued throughout **1987** and President Ershad declared a nation-wide state of emergency on 27 November. On 6 December, after twelve opposition members had resigned and the 73 AL members had agreed to do likewise, Ershad dissolved the Jatiya Sangsad. The Jatiya Party won a large majority of seats in the parliamentary elections of 3 March **1988**. Later that month, Moudud Ahmed, an ally of Ershad, was appointed Prime Minister. Ershad repealed the state of emergency in April. **[1]**

3.15 Violence, anti-government demonstrations and strikes occurred throughout the country in **1990**. Ershad re-proclaimed a state of emergency on 27 November, and later resigned on 4 December, simultaneously revoking the state of emergency (again), and dissolving the Jatiya Sangsad. The newly appointed Vice President, Shahabuddin Ahmed, assumed the responsibilities of acting President, and was placed at the head of a neutral caretaker government. In the week following his resignation, Ershad was placed under house arrest. **[1]**

3.16 On 27 February **1991**, the BNP alliance won an overall majority at the parliamentary elections. Later, following discussion with the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), the BNP ensured a small working majority in the Jatiya Sangsad, and Begum Khaleda Zia assumed office as Prime Minister. Abdur Rahman Biswas was elected as the new President on 8 October. In August **1992**, the government survived an AL-led parliamentary motion of no confidence. **[1]**

3.17 In January **1994**, the AL won the mayoralties of Dhaka and Chittagong. However, a by-election success in March revealed the strength of the BNP elsewhere. All opposition members of the Jatiya Sangsad resigned en masse on 28 December. Nonetheless the Prime Minister, with her party's parliamentary majority, pledged to maintain constitutional government. On 24 November **1995**, the Prime Minister requested that the Jatiya Sangsad be dissolved pending the

outcome of the next general election. Although opposition persisted, Begum Khaleda Zia's administration continued in office in an acting capacity. **[1]**

3.18 The general election, postponed until 15 February **1996**, was boycotted by all of the main opposition parties. Consequently, the BNP won 205 of the 207 legislative seats declared. However, the opposition refused to recognize the legitimacy of the polls and announced the launch of a non co-operation movement against the government. Finally, the Prime Minister agreed to hold fresh elections under neutral auspices. **[1]**

3.19 Begum Khaleda Zia and her government resigned from their posts on 30 March, when the Jatiya Sangsad was dissolved. President Biswas appointed Muhammad Habibur Rahman as acting Prime Minister. Notwithstanding an unsuccessful military coup on 20 May, a further general election was held on 12 June: the AL won 146 of the 300 elective seats in the Jatiya Sangsad. An understanding was rapidly reached between the AL and the Jatiya Party (whose major interest was the release of Ershad). **[1]**

3.20 Sheikh Hasina was sworn in as the new Prime Minister on 23 June. Her Council of Ministers incorporated one member from the Jatiya Party and included a number of retired officials and army officers. On 23 July, Shahabuddin Ahmed was elected as Bangladesh's new Head of State. **[1]**

3.21 Upon assuming power, Sheikh Hasina vowed to bring to justice those responsible for the assassination of her father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. In November, the Jatiya Sangsad voted unanimously to repeal the indemnity law that had been enacted in 1975 to protect the perpetrators of the military coup in that year; the BNP and the JI however boycotted the vote. **[1]**

3.22 Ex-President Ershad was released from prison on bail in January **1997**. Agitational politics continued throughout the year. The trial of twenty people accused of direct involvement in Sheikh Mujibur's assassination began in March 1997. **[1]** The opposition organized further disruptive strikes in July and August 1997 in protest of the government's imposition of higher taxes as part of the annual budget, and also because of increased fuel prices. A series of strikes and demonstrations ensued, organized by the BNP in conjunction with Islamic and right-wing groups. **[1]**

3.23 On 30 August 1997 the BNP, inflamed by a fresh argument over the murder of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, recommenced its boycott of the Jatiya Sangsad. **[4b]** In November 1997 the BNP, backed by its allies including the JI, led general strikes in Dhaka and Chittagong. These resulted in clashes with the AL and subsequent killings and injuries. **[4d]**

3.25 The ruling coalition split on 15 March 1998 when the minority Jatiya Party announced that it was leaving the 'national consensus' government. **[5c] & [11f]** Ershad remained charged with sixteen offences, all of which were filed during the caretaker government (1990-91) and BNP rule (1991-96). These offences mostly concerned the misappropriation of government funds (amongst other corruption charges.) **[11f]**

3.26 The BNP returned to the Jatiya Sangsad on 9 March 1998, following the signing of a memorandum of understanding between it and the ruling AL. **[5c]** However the BNP walked out of the Jatiya Sangsad on 12 April 1998, in protest against four bills concerning the December

1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord. **[5d]** Nonetheless, the Jatiya Sangsad passed the four bills at the beginning of May 1998. **[5e]**

3.27 In August 1998 the BNP vowed to maintain their campaign against the AL in order to force the government from power. **[4m]** In November 1998 fifteen former army officers, including Farook Rahman, a retired colonel, were sentenced to death by firing squad for killing the country's founder, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. **[15]**

3.28 The seven-party opposition alliance led by the BNP renewed its campaign to oust Sheikh Hasina's government during October and November 1998 by holding a series of strikes. **[5h]**

3.29 A new anti-government alliance was formed on 20 December 1998 between Begum Khaleda Zia's BNP and the leaders of the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Jatiya Party (the latter had initially supported the AL government after the June 1996 election). It had been reported earlier on 15 December 1998 that the Jatiya Party had linked up with seven smaller parties to agitate against the government. The opposition claimed that intimidation and vote rigging had marred a recent by-election in Pabna. **[5i]**

3.31 Two bombs exploded at a music and culture festival in the town of Jessore on 6 March **1999**, killing at least eight people and injuring some 150 others. The president of the group organizing the festival (the Udichi Shilpi Gosthi) blamed the bombing on Islamic fundamentalists. The Prime Minister who reportedly implied that the BNP were responsible condemned the attack. **[5j]**

3.32 General Ershad was prevented from leaving the country in November **1999**. This came the day after his Jatiya Party counterpart and former Prime Minister Kazi Zafar Ahmed was sentenced in absentia to fifteen years imprisonment for corruption. Ershad's conviction for corruption was under appeal at the time. **[20a]**

January 2000 - December 2000

3.33 In July 2000 twenty-four people were charged with the March 1999 Jessore bombing, including a former opposition MP. Police suspected a link between the bombing and the murder of prominent investigative journalist Shamsur Rahman the same month. Rahman had exposed the link between organized crime and politics, and police suspected that his murder was a bid to intimidate witnesses in the bombing case. **[20d]**

3.34 The ruling Awami League began a campaign against the Jamaat-e-Islami's student wing - the Islami Chhatra Shibir - following the murder of eight pro-AL students in Chittagong in July 2000. **[22]** The Prime Minister made a statement following this incident which was interpreted as vengeful, and was not well received by the media. Following this there was an attempt on the Prime Minister's life, when a bomb was detected accidentally near Kotalipara a day ahead of her scheduled visit. Ruling party leaders were quick to associate the BNP-led opposition with the incident. **[12j]**

3.35 Political tensions heightened further on 6th August 2000 when police used lathi-charges, teargas and rubber bullets to disperse an opposition alliance rally in front of the BNP central office. **[12j]**

January 2001 - October 2001

3.36 There were violent clashes in February 2001 following the arrest of radical Muslim leader Maulana Azizul Haq of the hard line Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) party, who was charged with the murder of a policeman during a general strike called by the Islamic parties. The violence followed a court ruling banning Islamic edicts (or fatwas). **[20f]** In the same month in Dhaka four people and a policeman were killed and dozens wounded in violence between ruling party and opposition activists during a general strike. **[20h]**

3.37 On 15th July a caretaker government was sworn in to organise new elections, following a violent two-day transition in which twelve people were killed. Former chief justice Latifur Rahman was appointed to head the interim administration, following the first time the country's assembly had served out a full five-year term. Rahman's government was to be responsible to President Ahmed who was to hold supreme powers during the interim period. **[23c]**

3.38 In late September a bomb blast in Dhaka killed at least eight members of the Awami League as the hostile atmosphere in the run up to the general election heightened. In response to the escalating tension the caretaker government deployed more than 50,000 troops to quell the violence. **[20k]**

3.39 The general election took place on 1st October 2001, following the most violent campaign in the country's thirty-year history in which around a hundred and forty people died. In a high turnout of voters Khaleda Zia won an overwhelming victory, ousting Sheikh Hasina's Awami League from power. Polling was reported to have been free, fair and orderly in most of the country. **[20l]**

Government

4.1.4 Bangladesh is a parliamentary democracy, with broad powers exercised by the Prime Minister. There is an active political opposition, although violence is a pervasive feature of politics. **[2]** Bangladeshi politics has tended to revolve around a bitter personal feud between former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her political rival, the new Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. The country is highly polarised between the two main parties, whose ideological differences are slight. The Awami league is viewed as more pro-Indian and left leaning, while the BNP is viewed as more pro Pakistani. **[20l]**

4.3 SECURITY

4.3.2 On 28 June 1997 Sheikh Hasina (when Prime Minister) announced plans to introduce effective laws to stop terrorism. **[12c]** In early 1998 her government announced a number of measures to enable the police to deal better with the deteriorating law and order situation. In April of that year it was also reported that new police officers were recruited. The police were also being equipped with new vehicles and communications equipment, country wide radio network, fax and computer systems. They were also promised improvements to uniforms, rations and weapons. **[3h]**

1974 Special Powers Act

4.3.5 The Special Powers Act (SPA) of 1974 gives the government sweeping powers to detain any person for an initial period of up to 30 days without formal charge or specific complaint, to prevent him or her performing a 'prejudicial act'. **[3h]** Although the SPA provides detainees with limited safeguards against prolonged detention and arbitrary arrest, in practice the grounds for detention are often very vague. **[3h]** The SPA also permits searches without a warrant. **[2]**

4.3.6 SPA cases generally are so weak and vague that courts have had no alternative but to grant bail. The Awami League government cited a significant reduction in the number of persons held under the SPA as evidence that it was minimizing its use of the act. Some observers however assert that use of the Public Safety Act (PSA) explained the reduction of persons held under the SPA. **[2]**

4.3.7 While in the past prominent prisoners were held incommunicado, there were no known cases during 2000. **[2]** It was nonetheless claimed that the former government, instead of using the SPA, filed criminal cases against certain politicians in order to ensure that instead of spending time at party offices, they were spending time in court. **[12k]**

Public Safety Act

4.3.8 In response to a deteriorating law and order situation, Parliament passed the restrictive new Public Safety Act (PSA) in January 2000; the law became effective in February 2000. The PSA established special tribunals to hear cases under the act and made such offences non-bailable. Opposition leaders at the time claimed that the (AL) government had used the PSA to intimidate them. There were credible reports from human rights monitors and political activists that the (AL) government used both the SPA and the PSA as tools to harass and intimidate political opponents and others. **[2]**

V HUMAN RIGHTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

5.1.1 Under the last government of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), increasing efforts were made to protect human rights. **[7a]** The Awami League government was defensive about international criticism regarding human rights issues. They were nonetheless been open to dialog with international organizations and foreign diplomatic missions regarding issues such as trafficking in women and children. In the past the (AL) government had put pressure on individual human rights advocates, including filing charges that were known to be false. Such pressure included long delays in issuing re-entry visas for international human rights activists. Missionaries who advocate human rights have faced similar problems. **[2]**

5.2 GENERAL ASSESSMENT

5.2.8 In March 1999, police officers in Dhaka drowned college student Mujibur Rahman. In July 1999 three policemen in Dhaka allegedly severely beat Mohammed Shahjada Tuku, then threw him into a canal where he drowned; none of the officers involved have been held accountable. According to government figures, 134 persons died in prison and police custody during 2000. Most police abuses go unpunished and the resulting climate of impunity remains a serious obstacle to ending police abuse and extrajudicial killings. However, in some instances the authorities took action. **[2]**

Supervision of Elections

5.2.10 Under a 1996 constitutional amendment, general parliamentary elections are presided over by a caretaker government, led by the most recently retired Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. An Election Commission supervises elections for the presidency and Jatiya Sangsad. The Commission also delimits constituencies and prepares electoral rolls. It consists of a Chief Election Commissioner and other commissioners, as appointed by the President. The Election Commission is independent in the exercise of its functions. **[1]** Elections are held by secret ballot on the basis of universal suffrage. **[2]**

5.2.11 The Bangladesh Election Commission announced in April 1999 that it would issue identity cards to all voters. The secretary of the Commission said that some 60 million eligible voters will be issued with identity cards in the next elections, and that ID cards would also have to be produced to obtain passports, travel documents, driving licences and for buying or selling land. **[4s]**

5.2.12 Following the October 2001 general election the defeated Awami League boycotted parliament amid claims of massive vote rigging. The Chief Election Commissioner dismissed these claims as "baseless", with internal and international monitors also insisting that the polling was free and fair. **[20n]**

- **Human Rights Groups**

[8]

5.3.6 Following the October 2001 election victory of the BNP-led coalition, leaders of the Hindu minority met the president and asked him to ensure the safety of the country's minorities. The minorities are widely considered to be supportive of the defeated Awami League. The meeting followed an increase of reports in the Bangladesh media of attacks on Hindus following the election. The president stated that the government would take necessary steps to ensure the safety of the minorities. **[20o]**

5.4 OTHER ISSUES

Assembly and Association

5.4.1 The Constitution provides for freedom of assembly, subject to restrictions in the interest of public order and public health; however the (AL) government frequently limited this right.

Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure allows the government to ban assemblies of more than four persons. According to one human rights organization, the (AL) government imposed Section 144 bans 33 times during the first 9 months of 2000. The (AL) government sometimes used Section 144 to prohibit rallies for security reasons, and many independent observers believed that such explanations were usually a pretext. **[2]**

5.4.2 Violence is a common feature during rallies, demonstrations, and general strikes (or 'hartals'). In the past some opposition political activities were allegedly staged with the intent of provoking violent clashes in order to embarrass the (AL) government and galvanize public opinion. The overall incidence and severity of hartals however decreased significantly during 2000. **[2]**

5.4.3 In the run up to the October 2001 general election at least 140 people died in the country's most violent election campaign. **[20l]**

Student Organisations

5.4.11 Students have traditionally played a lead in Bangladesh's political life, often being instrumental in bringing about major political change. **[7c]** For example students were reportedly at the forefront of the nation-wide strikes and demonstrations that resulted in the fall of Ershad in December 1990. It is reported that paid party agents pose as students, and that parties seek to control university campuses in the hope of political gain. **[3c]**

5.4.12 The situation on public university campuses remains volatile, seriously inhibiting teaching and the ability of students to receive a university education. Armed clashes between student groups of different parties or of different factions within a particular party have resulted in temporary closures of colleges and universities in Chittagong, Sylhet and other localities. Campus violence has little to do with ideological differences and more to do with extortion rackets run by non-student party activists. Several private universities that were established during the 1990's however are not affected by student political violence. **[2]**

Prosecution of 1975 Coup Leaders

5.4.13 The trial of those accused of involvement in Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's assassination (in August 1975) began in March 1997. **[1]** The High Court confirmed the death sentence against ten former army officers found guilty. Four of the accused are in prison, with eleven believed to have fled abroad. **[20e]**

ANNEX A

POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER GROUPS

Awami League

Founded 1949. Currently headed by former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Advocates socialist economy and secular state; pro-Indian. **[1]**

Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Dal (Bangladesh Nationalist Party)

Founded 1978 (by merger of groups supporting Ziaur Rahman). **[1]** Led by current Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. **[20l]**

Democratic League

Founded 1976. Conservative. **[1]**

Freedom Party

Founded 1987. Islamic. **[1]**

Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ)

Radical Islamic. **[20f]** Small party believing in the strict enforcement of Sharia law and coming under the umbrella of Khaleda Zia's BNP-led coalition. **[20m]**

Jamaat-e-Islami

Founded 1941 (Islamic fundamentalist). **[1]** Opposed to Bangladesh's independence in the 1971 civil war with Pakistan. **[22]** The leader of the party is accused of leading a group called Al Badr that allegedly tortured and executed those fighting against Pakistan in the 1971 war. **[20m]** The party was banned after independence but got its rights back after General Zia (the late husband of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia) allowed them and other fundamentalist parties to enter politics after the first AL led government of Bangladesh had banned them from politics. The party is a strong cadre-based party, yet lacks mass support as electoral results have shown. **[22]** Did nonetheless win an unexpected number of seats in the October 2001 election to form part of the ruling BNP-led coalition. **[20m]**

The party promotes the idea of turning Bangladesh into an Islamic republic. They have gained support due to the fact that much of the electorate was not even alive during the 1971 war, and because their rejection of Western values and tough line on law and order and corruption also appeals to some. **[20m]**

Jatiya Party (National Party)

Founded 1983 as Jana Dal; reorganized 1986, when National Front (founded 1985) formally converted itself into a single pro-Ershad grouping. Advocates nationalism, democracy, Islamic ideals and progress. **[1]** Linked with seven other smaller parties to agitate against the (AL) government on 15 December 1998. Formed new anti-government alliance on 20 December 1998 with leaders of BNP and JI. **[5i]** On 30 December 1998 Anwar Hossain Manju, Communications Minister, was sacked from the Jatiya Party's presidium, from the post of its vice-chairman and the party's membership, for violating party discipline and making outrageous statements. **[4k]** Former Prime Minister Kazi Zafar Ahmed, who was expelled from the party on 5 June 1997 **[11f]** returned to the Jatiya Party. **[6d]** However in November 1999 he was sentenced in absentia to fifteen years imprisonment for embezzlement. **[19a]**

Gained 14 seats in the October 2001 general election although two other factions of the Jatiya Party also contested – the Jatiya Manju faction who gained one seat and the Jatiya Naziur faction who formed part of the BNP-led coalition. **[16]**

STUDENT MOVEMENTS

Bangladesh Chhatra League-BCL (Sha-PA)

Affiliated to Awami League. **[11c]**

Gonotantrik Chhatra League

Affiliated to Democratic League. **[11c]**

Islami Chhatra Shibir

Affiliated to Jamaat-e-Islami (Jamaat). **[11c]**

Jatiya Chhatra Samaj

Affiliated to Jatiya Party. **[11c]**

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD)

Affiliated to Bangladesh Nationalist Party. **[11c]**

ANNEX B

PROMINENT PEOPLE

AHMED Shahabuddin

Current president. **[1]**

Motiur Rahman Nizami

Leader of the Jamaat-e-Islami. **[20m]**

ERSHAD, General Hossain Mohammed

Came to power following coup in March 1982; resigned December 1990. Joined Jatiya Party in 1986. **[1]**

RAHMAN, Sheikh Mujibur (Mujib)

Bangladesh's first Prime Minister; assassinated August 1975. **[1]**

RAHMAN, Ziaur (General Zia)

Assumed presidency April 1977; assassinated May 1981. **[1]**

Sheikh Hasina

Daughter of late Sheikh Mujibur. Former Awami League Prime Minister. **[1]**

ZIA, Begum Khaleda

Current Prime Minister and leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. **[20l]**

ANNEX C

CHRONOLOGY [20i]

1947 - British colonial rule over India ends. A largely Muslim state comprising East and West Pakistan is established, either side of India. The two provinces are separated from each other by more than 1,500 km of Indian territory.

1949 - The Awami League is established to campaign for East Pakistan's autonomy from West Pakistan.

1970 - The Awami League, under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, wins an overwhelming election victory in East Pakistan. The government in West Pakistan refuses to recognise the results, leading to rioting. Cyclone hits East Pakistan - up to 500,000 people are killed.

Independence

1971 - Sheikh Mujib and the Awami League proclaim the independence of the province of East Pakistan on 26th March. The new country is called Bangladesh. Just under 10 million Bangladeshis flee to India as troops from West Pakistan are defeated with Indian assistance.

1972 - Sheikh Mujib becomes Prime Minister. He begins a programme of nationalizing key industries in an attempt to improve living standards, but with little success.

1974 - Severe floods devastate much of the grain crop, leading to an estimated 28,000 deaths. A national state of emergency is declared as political unrest grows.

1975 - Sheikh Mujib becomes president of Bangladesh. The political situation worsens. He is assassinated in a military coup in August. Martial law is imposed.

1976 - The military ban trade unions.

1977 - General Zia Rahman assumes the presidency. Islam is adopted in the constitution.

1979 - Martial law is lifted following elections, which Zia's Bangladesh National Party (BNP) wins.

1981 - Zia is assassinated during abortive military coup. He is succeeded by Abdus Sattar.

The Ershad era

1982 - General Ershad assumes power in army coup. He suspends the constitution and political parties.

1983 - Ershad's proposal that all schools should teach Arabic and the Koran leads to demonstrations. Limited political activity is permitted. Ershad becomes president.

1986 - Parliamentary and presidential elections. Ershad elected to a five-year term. He lifts martial law and reinstates the constitution.

1987 - State of emergency declared after opposition demonstrations and strikes.

1988 - Islam becomes state religion. Floods cover up to three-quarters of the country. Tens of millions are made homeless.

1990 - Ershad steps down following mass protests.

1991 - Ershad convicted and jailed for corruption and illegal possession of weapons. Begum Khaleda Zia, widow of President Zia Rahman, becomes prime minister. Constitution is changed to render the position of president ceremonial. The prime minister now has primary executive power. Cyclonic tidal wave kills up to 138,000.

Awami League returns

1996 - Two sets of elections eventually see the Awami League win power, with Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, becoming prime minister.

1997 - Ershad is released from prison. The opposition BNP begins campaign of strikes against the government.

1998 - Two-thirds of the country devastated by the worst floods ever. Fifteen former army officers sentenced to death for involvement in assassination of President Mujib in 1975.

2000 September - Sheikh Hasina criticizes military regimes in a UN speech, prompting Pakistani leader General Musharraf to cancel talks with her. Relations strained further by row over leaked Pakistani report on 1971 war of independence.

2000 December - Bangladesh expels Pakistani diplomat for comments on the 1971 war. The diplomat had put the number of dead at 26,000, whereas Bangladesh insist nearly three million were killed. Bangladesh wants Pakistan to apologize for alleged genocide that it says Pakistani forces were guilty of during the war.

BNP Back in Power

2001 October – Following the most violent election campaign in the country's 30-year history, a BNP-led coalition won an overwhelming victory in the general election. Khaleda Zia once again became Prime Minister. **[20l]**

ANNEX D

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