

# Huda's 31-party to merge with 14-party: Nasim

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**  
Former BNP leader Nazmul Huda-led Bangladesh National Alliance (BNA), a platform of 31 political parties, would join ruling Awami League-led 14-party grand alliance, said Health Minister Mohammad Nasim.

The senior AL leader said this yesterday at a programme organised on the occasion of the first founding anniversary of the BNA at the Supreme Court Bar Association Auditorium.

During last year's political turmoil, Huda announced the formation of the BNA. None of its 31 members has registration with the Election Commission.

On November 20 last year, Huda, former vice-chairman of BNP, floated "Trinomul BNP". It was the fifth party launched by the former minister since he quit the BNP in June 2012.

He is still the chairman of Bangladesh Manabdhikar Party in addition to being the BNA chief.

Interestingly, none of the organisers including the BNA spokesperson yesterday could mention the names of more than 12 components of the alliance.

Names of the components obtained from them are Trinomul BNP, Aam Admi Party, Aam Janata Party, Baksal, Bangalee Janata Party, Swadheen Party, Desh Premik Party, Gono Andolan Party, Protibadi Janata Party, Jago Bangalee, Jago Dal, and Sachetan Hindu Party.

Huda could not attend the programme due to the death of one of his close relatives.

Nasim in his speech said the BNA

would join the 14-party platform. "You [BNA] are with us and will be with us. I along with the 14-party leaders will sit with you [BNA leaders] soon to this end."

The minister, however, gave three conditions to the BNA leaders saying they would keep the belief that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is the Father of the Nation, would have to work under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and keep no relation with the anti-liberation "war elements", including BNP and Jamaat-e-Islam.

The BNA leaders present at that programme hailed the health minister's announcement.

Nasim also assured the BNA leaders of giving all kinds of assistance so that they can work with the 14-party alliance and the government.

He also advised the BNA leaders to strengthen the alliance.

Nasim claims the government is not trying to split BNP or the BNP-led 20-party alliance as "AL does not believe in splitting any political party or alliance".

In his speech, he, however, said BNP and the opposition alliance would split further in the days to come due to Khaleda Zia's "anti-people" policy.

Nasim told the audience and media that he was giving a guarantee in written that the BNP chief would contest the 2019 general elections under Sheikh Hasina.

The BNA leaders dubbed Nasim as their "guardian" and "apple of our eyes" and sought his assistance so that the platform could be a partner of the government.



Attendants of patients at Dinajpur Medical College Hospital gather around a tube well to collect water and wash clothes as the hospital's water supply remains dysfunctional from last Sunday.

PHOTO: KONGKON KARMAKAR

## Patients face water crisis

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problems are being referred to local clinics and Rangpur Medical College Hospital, they added.

The water supply crisis also badly affects cleanliness and hygiene of the hospital, said patients and staff at the hospital.

The washrooms and the floors of different wards were awfully dirty.

"I feel like throwing up whenever I pass the toilet on the fourth floor," said Lota, a patient.

During a visit there yesterday, this correspondent saw a number of people, including children and women, collecting waters in bottles from the tube well.

Many take bath and wash their clothes there as well, said sources.

"It's a 500-bed medical college hospital but it has just one water pump whereas the nearby 250-bed Dinajpur General Hospital has two," a staff, who was collecting water there, said.

Many others at the hospital echoed him and demanded that new water pumps be set up immediately.

Hospital Director Tarun Kanti Haldar said they were taking steps to

ensure temporary supply of water to the hospital.

He said water from the hospital's reservoir will be pumped to the hospital building to meet the demands.

However, sources said the water in the reservoir was too dirty to be used and it could pose a threat to the health of patients and their attendants.

## Cancer treatment facilities

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got 50 beds for indoor patients. Later in 2009, 100 more beds were added. With the addition of another 150 beds in 2014, it is now a 300-bed hospital.

But it is nowhere near enough because the number of patients seeking treatment there are on the rise.

So even if the hospital is expanded to a 2,000-bed one, the pressure will not ease unless cancer treatment is made available across the country, the director said.

Latest data is difficult to get, but according to a 2012 report of GLOBOCAN, a project of the World Health Organisation, some 1.22 lakh new cancer cases are reported in Bangladesh every year. Of them, around 91,000 die, most of them from breast and lung cancer.

Tobacco, alcohol, obesity, food contamination, unhealthy diet with low fruit and vegetable intake, lack of physical activity, infection, radiation and air pollution are among the main causes for cancer.

However, if detected early, cancer can be cured and that too at a minimum cost.

In Bangladesh, cancer casualty is very high as up to 90 percent patients report it at the last stage. Another problem is the lack of treatment facilities.

Besides the NICRH, 15 government and private hospitals across the country have logistics for cancer treatment. Of them, Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) has only two radiotherapy machines, one of them inoperative.

Outside the capital, government hospitals in Rajshahi, Bogra, Barisal, Mymensingh, Rangpur, Sylhet and Chittagong have radiotherapy machines. Many of them were bought at least 20 years ago and do not function properly, sources said.

This is one of the reasons why so

many patients flock to the capital, particularly the NICRH and the DMCH.

In 2014, the NICRH treated 11,108 cancer patients.

At the DMCH, some 200 cancer patients come for radiotherapy every day. The hospital can treat about 80 with the single machine functioning, said Swapan Bandyopadhyay, associate professor at the radiotherapy department.

The government has recently purchased three radiotherapy machines to be installed at Chittagong, Khulna and Barisal medical college hospitals, said AKM Saiedur Rahman, deputy director (hospital-1) of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

A process is on to buy nine more by June, he added.

According to the WHO, Bangladesh should have at least 160 radiotherapy centres considering its population, said Mofizur Rahman, associate professor of radiation oncology at the National Institute of ENT (Ear Nose Throat). But the country has only 16 -- nine government hospitals, six private hospitals and one Combined Military Hospital.

To better cancer treatment, the government must have sufficient data regarding cancer patients across the country, said Swapan of DMCH.

Habibullah Talukdar Raskin, associate professor and head of the cancer epidemiology department at NICRH, suggested that the government set up cancer treatment facilities at division, district and upazila levels where people can go for early detection and regular screening.

Talking about the problems they face, he said they now had adequate manpower and expertise, but needed six more therapy machines.

Majority of the patients in the country seek treatment when their

cancer is at the advanced stage when they need radiotherapy.

At government hospitals, a full course of radiotherapy costs between Tk 15,000 to Tk 30,000. Most of those who go to public hospitals belong to lower and lower-middle income groups. Many of them cannot afford the cost and give up halfway through the treatment.

At private hospitals, the cost is between Tk 1 lakh and 2.5 lakh.

Swapan of DMCH radiotherapy department said the government should have funds to provide free chemotherapy and radiotherapy to the poor.

The NICRH gives free radiotherapy to four to five patients a day considering their financial status.

Halima, who used to work at a garment factory before her cancer was detected, had a free operation for her breast cancer at the NICRH. But for medicines and other post-operative cares, she had to spend more than Tk 20,000, which is way beyond her means.

Now she is trying to get her radiotherapy for free, for which she got an appointment on Monday.

"I'm not feeling well," she told this correspondent by phone last night.

## China PM to visit Saudi, Egypt, Iran

AFP, Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping will visit Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Iran next week, Beijing's foreign ministry said yesterday, as the world's second-largest economy seeks greater diplomatic heft in a crucial and tense region.

Spokesman Lu Kang said in a statement that Xi would visit the three Middle Eastern countries over five days from Tuesday.

## DSCC staff tortured

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Once Bikash fell off the motorcycle, Akash and the other policemen with him started kicking and hitting the DSCC officer with their rifles, she said.

"At one stage, Akash hit Bikash on the nose with the butt of his gun. My husband started bleeding from the nose," Saraswati added.

A female cleaner, who witnessed the incident, said: "The SI at one stage strangled Bikash Sir and said, 'Machher raja lish r desher raja police [Hilsa is the king of all fishes and police is the king of the whole country]. Who would dare do anything against us?'"

The officer also threatened to shoot Bikash, said another DSCC staff.

One of the cleaners then informed Bikash's family about the incident over the phone.

When Saraswati and other family members reached the spot around 5:00am, they found Bikash lying on a rickshaw-van "like a dead man".

"Even though my husband was bleeding profusely, the policemen did not send him to a hospital. Rather, they were trying to hide the truth," Saraswati alleged.

The family then took Bikash "in an almost unconscious state" to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Police officer Akash could not be reached on his phone.

His boss Abani Shankar Kar, officer-in-charge of Jatrabari Police Station, however claimed that the incident was "a case of misunderstanding".

"As it is a mugging-prone area, three police teams including a plainclothes one led by Akash were on patrol," he told The Daily Star.

"When Akash's team signaled him, the victim could have mistaken them for muggers and tried to speed away. The policemen also suspected him to be a criminal and hit him once from the back to capture him."

However, those responsible for the incident would be punished, the OC said.

Saraswati, quoting witnesses, contradicted the OC's version of the incident, and said there could be no scope for misunderstanding as Bikash's motorcycle had DSCC stickers both in the front and the rear end of it.

"The Policemen did not stop beating him even after seeing his professional identity card and knowing about him from the city corporation cleaners working at the scene," she added.

Later in the evening, Bikash was shifted to the intensive care unit of Labaid Hospital in Dhanmondi.

Meanwhile, a two-member committee, led by Additional Deputy Commissioner (Crimes and Ops) Mainul Hoque, has been formed to investigate the incident, said Syed Nurul Islam, deputy commissioner (Wari Division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

The committee has been asked to submit a report within three working days and actions would be taken on the basis of the report, the DMP official added.

## French drug

**FROM PAGE 16**  
trial at a licensed private European laboratory that specialises in clinical trials, the French health ministry said.

The trial aimed to evaluate the "safety, tolerance and pharmaceutical properties of the molecule" in healthy volunteers.

Marisol Touraine, the French health minister, said she was travelling to Rennes, where the group are being treated, yesterday.

"Marisol Touraine wants to express her solidarity and deep determination to get to the bottom of what happened and establish responsibility for this tragic accident," a statement added.

One of the six volunteers is currently in intensive care at Rennes University Hospital, where the other five are also being treated.

France's medicines agency (ANSM) has launched an investigation into the laboratory.

## Rabbi

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Rabbi that the country's existing law and order situation was such that even incidents of murders and forced disappearances were commonplace and people responsible for those incidents are rarely brought to justice."

"They then inquired about the status of security for Rabbi at the hospital.

"I think what they said and did contain elements of a potential threat," Rashed told The Daily Star yesterday evening.

On the night of January 9, Sub-Inspector Masud Shikder of Mohammadpur Police Station and his men beat up Rabbi and demanded Tk 5 lakh from him. The officer also threatened to kill him in "a shootout" and frame him in narcotics cases if he didn't pay them the money.

Rabbi was planning to sue the policemen once he recovered and that is why the "concealed threat" was issued to him, Rashed believes.

Identities of the two men could not be confirmed.

Assistant Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Hafiz Al Faruque, who is probing the alleged assault following a written complaint by the victim on Sunday, said he was unaware of the threats.

The incident of police brutality caused a massive outrage among the people. Many have taken to the social media to protest the incident and have demanded that the law enforcers involved in the incident be sacked from their jobs and made to stand trial for abusing power.

Yesterday, a group of different professionals and students formed a human chain at the capital's Shahbagh, demanding justice for Rabbi.

Nur Khan, director of rights body Ain o Salish Kendra, visited Rabbi at the hospital yesterday morning and offered him legal assistance to bring the culprits to book.

"The government must take into consideration the deviating ideology and values of the police force and punish the guilty policemen for the greater interest of the nation," Nur Khan told journalists at the DMCH.

**PROBE BODY FORMED**  
The police headquarters yesterday formed a three-member committee to investigate the alleged police assault on Rabbi and a Dhaka South City Corporation official by police, reports UNB.

Bikash Chandra Das, a cleaning inspector of DSCC, was beaten by policemen in Jatrabari area early yesterday.

The probe panel, led by Additional DIG (ICT) Harun-ur-Rashid, has been asked to submit its report as early as possible.

Legal actions would be taken as per the inquiry report, Assistant Inspector General (Media) Nazrul Islam told The Daily Star.

On Wednesday, Bangladesh Bank Governor Atiur Rahman wrote to the police chief demanding trial of the those involved in the torture of the central bank official.

## Life at death yard

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Enterprise Shipbreaking Yard which left four workers killed and as many injured, she said it reportedly occurred due to a cylinder blast in the changing room when some workers went there with burning cigarettes.

"Why the yard authorities kept gas cylinders in the changing room? It indicates sheer negligence of the owners towards workers' safety," she added.

According to a High Court verdict, nobody can enter a shipbreaking yard with a burning cigarette, but the authorities of Shital Enterprise didn't comply with the order, said Rizwana.

The HC also said the accidents in shipbreaking yards must be probed by independent inquiry committees, but the "directive has never been followed", lamented the rights activist.

She accused the owners of not allowing workers to exercise their rights.

Talking to this correspondent at the CMCH, some workers said they were not wearing safety gears when accidents struck.

On January 19, 2014, Mokhes had brought his coworkers Tapan Jaladas and Md Lalu from Kabir Steel Shipbreaking Yard to the CMCH after an explosion there. He said the two were not in proper safety gears at their workplace.

Tapan Dutt, convener of Shipbreaking Workers' Trade Union Forum, said as per international rules, ships must be cleaned of toxic materials before they are brought to shipbreaking yards for dismantling. But most of the owners don't follow the directive.

The rules also stipulate that owners must train the workers in shipbreaking before employing them, but the majority of the owners hire unskilled workers, he claimed.

Bangladesh Ship Breakers Association (BSBA) had opened a training centre for workers at

### CASUALTY OF WORKERS

YEAR	KILLED	INJURED
2015	13	7
2014	10	28
2013	4	15
2012	13	18
2011	13	10
2010 (July-December)	7	47

SOURCE: SHIP BREAKING WORKERS TRADE UNION FORUM

Halishahar of Chittagong city a few years ago, but it is not operating now, said Tapan.

He complained the workers were not provided with adequate safety gears, resulting in high casualty numbers.

As per international rules, workers must use personal protective equipment (PPE) at work. The equipment include gears for protection of head,

eye, face, foot, hearing, respiratory, hand and body. The workers must use helmet, safety glasses, gloves, full sleeved shirt, long pants and flashlight.

BSBA President Abu Taher claimed the owners were now more careful about workers' safety than anytime before. "We've strictly instructed the owners to provide the workers with safety gears and make sure that all the workers wear them."

The number of accidents has come down significantly in recent years due to owners' awareness, he said. "There was a time when around 50 to 60 workers were killed every year. But the situation has changed due to the measures taken by our association."

Taher said around 45 yards have been in operation now and most of them provide safety equipment to workers.

Abdur Rahim Master, general secretary of Bangladesh Ship Breakers Workers' Federation, said workers in around 60 percent of the firms use PPE.

Abdul Hai Khan, deputy inspector general of Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishment (DIFE) in Chittagong, admitted that some owners didn't provide their workers with PPE.

"But many workers don't want to wear safety gears for feeling uncomfortable. Although it is mandatory for the owners to compel each worker to be in safety gears, many don't do so," he added.

The DIFE official said they cannot monitor all the shipbreaking yards regularly due to shortage of inspectors. "We have only two inspectors in Sitakunda for around 100 shipbreaking yards and hundreds of shops and factories in the upazila."

During their visits to shipbreaking yards, the inspectors assess safety and rights issues of workers. If a firm is found lacking in any of the issues, a notice is served on it to make those up. Legal action is taken against the firm only if the owner doesn't take corrective measures.