

Declaration Nationalist Democratic Movement (NDM)



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We need a new Revolution

Every epoch makes new demands of the people, and in turn the people seek new solutions from their government and the political system. The Nationalist Democratic Movement (NDM) has come into life to fulfill those demands of the people of Bangladesh. Demands that have arisen not just due to continued misrule and the mismanagement of government over decades, but also due to the needs of a new millennium.

The spirit of youth reigns supreme in our youthful nation. It is this bold and undaunted youthful, entrepreneurial, and tireless spirit that shall lead us to an exemplary global status. But we need urgent reforms in our political structures to harness this spirit.

Our nation has been riddled with political strife that has been the legacy of our difficult history. It is time that we cast its dark shadows aside. We must learn from our mistakes over the last four and half decades and start paving a path to democracy and progress.

A new Bangladesh is on the rise and to serve it in earnest we need to see power devolved to the grassroots. We need to deliver power to the doorsteps of each citizen, and especially to the marginalized. Our past shows clearly how our achievements today redound almost absolutely to the toil, innovativeness, and entrepreneurship of our citizens. If we are to continue on that path of progress then we must empower our citizens to effectively shape their own destiny.

We envision a nation that celebrates diversity, and strengthens our national bonds of unity through inclusion, respect, democratic values, and social justice.

Democracy and equality of opportunity were the dreams of our freedom fighters. They still remain the dreams of every living Bangladeshi citizen. What we have received from our politicians so far has only been lip service to these high ideals.

Our nation is in a political crisis

Our nation is built on the shoulders of our farmers, our agriculture workers, our brothers and sisters in innumerable fields, streets, and factories, supported by millions of mothers who stand as the foundation of all that we are and that we shall ever be.

It is their dreams and aspirations on which was constructed the Preamble of our noble Constitution:

We, the people of Bangladesh, having proclaimed our Independence on the 26th day of March, 1971 and through a historic war for national independence, established the independent, sovereign People's Republic of Bangladesh;

Pledging that the high ideals of absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah, nationalism, democracy and socialism meaning economic and social justice, which inspired our heroic people to dedicate themselves to, and our brave martyrs to sacrifice their lives in the war for national independence, shall be fundamental principles of the Constitution;

Further pledging that it shall be a fundamental aim of the State to realize through the democratic process to socialist society, free from exploitation—a society in which the rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedom, equality and justice, political, economic and social, will be secured for all citizens;

Affirming that it is our sacred duty to safeguard, protect and defend this Constitution and to maintain its supremacy as the embodiment of the will of the people of Bangladesh so that we may prosper in freedom and may make our full contribution towards international peace and co-operation in keeping with the progressive aspirations of mankind;

In our Constituent Assembly, this eighteenth day of Kartick, 1379 B.S corresponding to the fourth day of November, 1972 A.D., do hereby adopt, enact and give to ourselves this Constitution.

But a continuation of political strife with regular interruptions to our democratic ideals has kept us from achieving these lofty goals. Our current political crisis is a manifestation of the social and historical contradictions manufactured by our current political parties.

Absence of democracy

A crisis of democracy has befallen our nation.

We have fought multiple independence struggles, first from the British Raj and then from the Pakistani military junta to achieve this democracy. Barring temporary interruptions of unrest we have enjoyed some form or another of

representative democracy through ten separate national elections. However, questions have incessantly been raised on the sanctity of the process during many of these, but, more importantly, the governments resulting from these elections have failed to live up to true democratic ideals of accountability.

Our nation now faces a crisis not just in lack of accountability, which has always persisted, but even in the facile nature of representation due to a polarization of political opinion and a strong bent among existing political parties of an autocratic abuse of power within the party establishment.

The people of this nation have been denied the true fruits of a democracy due to a shameful lack of accountability.

Looting and corruption

Political strife is largely responsible for the creation of a new cadre of elites whose establishment has been based on looting of state resources and victimization of the masses. True leadership that practices self sacrifice and is devoted to a vision of progress has eluded us. A concentration of power in political centers has ensured a vacuum of merit in responsible positions. High offices in most political parties have been filled with people competing to serve their own selfish purposes. Many government offices have also been politicized and the civil cadres have been filled with men who are bound less to their offices and more to their patron political parties.

Political violence

That very same political strife has also led to a degradation of our youth politics. The vanguard of the nation's future, our youth, have been introduced to political practices that are akin to street warfare. Student and youth cadres of most parties are known more for their ability to harness violence than for practicing public service. Leadership with a purpose is rarely to be found in the youth that have been engaged in politics by many of these political parties.

Lawlessness

Resulting directly from the lack of accountability, from corruption, and political violence has been the steady and nefarious erosion of rule of law. Every conceivable crime has been propagated with a strength that no functioning democracy need brook. This has created a culture of impunity.

Some of the most violent criminals, including murderers, rapists, and robbers are getting protection from vested quarters. Law enforcement agencies are failing to achieve the seemingly achievable due to the political structures under which they serve as well as from lack of training or expertise in many sensitive cases. Law enforcement agencies are being used by political parties in power to pursue their own political ends.

Absence of freedom of expression

Contrary to the very spirit of our noble Constitution, the people's and as the peoples voice the media's, expression has been gagged. This has been achieved by various means including distribution of media licenses as prizes to political loyalists who have then gone on to self-impose gags, and also through a string of regulations that directly or indirectly inhibit both personal and media expression.

Lack of economic opportunity

Endless economic opportunity lies before our nation. Yet we are failing to achieve significant milestones in distribution of income. The rural poor are not benefiting from our urban development. The contrasts between the regions are huge as well and mostly related to poverty and entrepreneurial opportunity. By recent numbers on regions Barisal division was by far the most poverty stricken, with 35.6% of the population suffering from high levels of poverty, and following it was Dhaka, with 19.9%.

Our rural farmers and their families are being left in the cold from industrial development. There is no trickle down opportunity created for them. Neither is our industries being helped to prepare for the future. In the industrial sector our economy has been based on low and semi skilled labor over the last few decades. We need to make the jump to high skilled labor and to service sectors to ensure the pace of our economic expansion. Governments have failed time and again to create the structural conditions necessary for such jump.

We need to ensure creation of structural conditions for our next big economic leap both in agriculture and in industry. We need to ensure equitable distribution of economic opportunity both by population segment and by region.

Helplessness of youth

Close to forty percent of our population fall under the ages between fifteen and thirty five and it is these youths who are being deprived of a future due to broken promises and pandering. Both the availability and the quality of their education are compromised as is their possibility of gainful employment. Even when there are global opportunities due to rising labor costs elsewhere in Asia.

Even after obtaining a degree from a college or a university, after spending money that the family did not even have, the youth of today find it well nigh impossible to find a job. This has multiple reasons; the grade inflation that we have seen in the past decade has led to a drop in the value of grades as well as of degrees. The number of jobs created is not in line with the number of degrees being given out annually nor with the types of degrees being given out.

There was a time when a government job came with high prestige, but such a job cannot even be had without paying a substantial bribe anymore.

Rural youth are not receiving training in better methods of farming or getting any education related to their own livelihoods. The subsidized education they do receive has nothing to do with their livelihood. Thus ensuring little additional value in their lives and giving them training for the types of jobs that are very short in supply.

Nationalist Democratic Movement is the people's party

NDM has come into being with the explicit belief that it is the voice of every common Bangladeshi. Long have the political and economic elite turned the very name of 'politics' into something to be derided among the common people. The high ideals of democracy and self-sacrifice that were practiced by the political leaders, to whom we owe two great phases of liberation, have been jettisoned by a new guard of elites who have made it a practice to come to government through force or pandering, but never by working for and with the common people.

It is time that the word 'politics' starts representing those high ideals one more time. It is time we hand power back to the common people of this nation.

Nationalist Democratic Movement's core principles

NDM stands on the four unshakable pillars of Bangladeshi Nationalism, Religious Values, Spirit of Independence, and Accountable Democracy, to build the nation of our dreams and to fulfill the dreams of our valiant freedom fighters.

We will establish 'accountable' and 'consensus' democracy. We will protect national sovereignty at all costs. We will work to reduce the size and increase the effectiveness of government. We will create mandatory social safety net. We will ensure alleviation of rural poverty by ensuring access to crop research and small loans to farmers and farming families. We will ensure economic development by ensuring ease of access to funds, permits, and energy to small and medium entrepreneurs and to industries in innovation and technology, and equitable taxation.

1. Bangladeshi Nationalism

The previous lack of definition and one party's confused rhetoric of people's democracy as Bangladeshi Nationalism has marred this term in many people's eyes. With extreme apathy and the lack of appreciation for the sensibility or intellect of the people of this country a defunct, if ever applicable, definition of "Bangladeshi Nationalism" was pandered by them.

In addition, under the guise of all-enveloping terms, they tried to create strife among the people of this nation by posturing Bangladeshi Nationalism against Bengali Nationalism. While in actual reality the former is an icon of our beloved past, but has no relevance in the present, and the latter was a ploy to fool the people.

For far too long has the nation suffered from this manufactured strife. We deplore the artificial divisions created among the masses by pandering defunct notions of national identity, divisive iconography that still rends this nation in many faux ideological parts, all to achieve some form or another of quick political benefit at the expense of the nation whose name it purports to serve.

NDM does not believe in nationalism as a militaristic convergence on a set of stolid ideals that divide the nation, but rather a set of ideologies of national unity and a vision of progress.

Bangladeshi Nationalism cannot and must not ever be confused with jingoism or a philosophy of exclusion. It is an overarching philosophy of belonging, an establishment of faith in the bonds of citizenship, in the fraternity and love of each other and of nation that transcends all other constructs. Bangladeshi Nationalism is the inherent faith we have in our identity and is the bedrock of NDM.

Territorial Sovereignty

We believe in the sanctity of our land. Nothing can compromise our territorial sovereignty. Also, nothing that lies within these territories can be alien to our nation. Our basic rights and our identification as citizens to enjoy those basic rights are based on this territory. We shall never tolerate any threat or harm to our territorial sovereignty.

Thriving in Diversity

We pride ourselves over the diversity that our nation preserves. We seek unity in diversity. We as a nation seek fraternity. Our diversity is one of our great strengths. This nation is not to be a melting pot of a single identity. We must revel in our diversity and not try to shun it.

History and Culture of Bangladesh

No nation can have a national identity without paying proper respect to its history. Our history is rich. We need to pay homage to all our national heroes and icons. Our forefathers who fought for freedom against European colonizers, our fathers and brothers, who fought against the Pakistani military junta to create an independent Bangladesh, and those who led us over such struggles, are our greatest heroes.

Along stand the heroes of our culture, whose work and ideas are what we have built our culture on.

Bengali – our language, our culture

The basis of our cultural identity is on the language of our majority, Bengali, on the religion of our majority, Islam, and our geographical state. On this is added the variety of other mixes that is given unto us by the many multitudes of other cultural iconography from all over the nation. We hold all of that high.

As our majority-language, Bengali, is an integral part of our culture and we believe in the need to represent and uphold Bengali literature and culture worldwide.

Culture of Innovation

Ours is a new age in technology and innovation. Even rural communities today have access to global information networks. Farmers can check through their mobile phones the prices of commodities in distant markets. Rural youth have access to online social networks. Yet we are still using ancient methods in our governance. We need to embrace technology in the political arena. We need to embrace innovative methods to ensure that the people always have a voice in their governance.

2. Religious Values

Our nation has a rich history of communal bonds and religious tolerance. Any interruption to such have been brief and caused by machinations of nefarious political forces. A political existence based on any kind of strict communal identity is contrary to the spirit of our noble Constitution.

Some leaders have tried to divide our society on the basis of religion to play on vote-bank politics. Some parties have tried to create a divisive political bloc by trying to manipulate the emotions of the Muslim majority of our nation. Nothing could be more contrary to the spirit of Islam, the religion of our national majority, than that of communal separation. Islam is, and has always been, a religion of peace and tolerance, and Bangladesh as a Muslim-majority nation embodies that very same spirit.

Social and Family values based on respect

Our moral values are derived from our religion. The high ideal of Islam is submission to our Creator. Our social ills, from crime infestation to moral decay are all connected to the gradual disconnect with our original cultural and moral values that were imbued in our society by our religion. It is those values that we strive to instill in all our social and political practices.

Democratic Ideals

While the Western world preaches democracy as a purely Western philosophy it is forgotten that democracy was absent from their midst for over two millennia, while the religion of Islam and Muslim communities were building democratic institutions the world over.

The Westerner's view of Islam is also a significant factor in the narrative of Islam itself, albeit at the chagrin of more puritanical thinkers, because the narratives woven by the dominant culture, which at this juncture happens to be the global culture sprung out of Western European origins and dogma. As a Muslim-majority nation we believe the onus falls on us as well to show the world what 'Muslim community' means and that Islam is a religion of peace and cultural prosperity.

Women's Safety and Respect

As a progressive democracy we believe in participation of our women in every aspect of practical and political life. In conjunction, it is our religious values that also instill special protection and respect of our women. We believe the respect and safety due our women is our nation's imminent responsibility and we shall work indefatigably to ensure that such is achieved.

3. Spirit of Liberation

We believe that in 1971 the whole population of seventy million of this proud nation worked, suffered, and dreamt of the creation of our independent nation. The spirit of liberation is not contained in one set of dogma, neither is it represented by any one group or clique. We believe that our valiant nation fought for independence to achieve an accountable democracy, equitable rights, and eschew all forms of communalism.

Against communalism

It was communalism and the attempt at subjugation of the Bangladeshi population that our nation fought against in 1971. Our war of independence was to ensure that never again shall one group or community rule over our land and never again shall one group subjugate others to their will. In that spirit, giving any communal identity power over another is contrary to the spirit of our great liberation. We shall not brook any form of communalism in our nation any longer.

Ensuring delivery of all basic rights

It was the Pakistani junta's disregard for our rights and our freedom against which our brave brothers and sisters fought. It is in the spirit of liberation that our government ensures the delivery of every basic right of every Bangladeshi citizen. Our basic rights do not only include the right against crime or abuse, but also the right to food, education, and opportunity.

Honor of all freedom fighters

Ensuring respect and honor of our noble freedom fighters is paramount among our national duties. We believe that political interests between some large political parties have caused us to deviate from a proper learning and appreciation of the rich history of our liberation war and we urgently need to correct that by ensuring a proper analysis of our history for the sanctity of our freedom fighters and of all the seventy million Bangladeshis who suffered to grant us our liberation.

4. Accountable Democracy

In one guise or another we as a nation have enjoyed some form representative democracy since our inception. However, those elected governments have failed to meet the people's expectations or needs. The primary reason for such has always been that our political system is a democracy in name only. There is a clear lack of accountability post-election.

Only an accountable democracy can ensure that the political system and the government work for the people and not the other way around.

We believe that we need to establish accountability in our political process and in government. In addition we believe that the nation needs consensus democracy, to ensure that it does not suffer from the tyranny of the majority.

Institutional accountability

To ensure institutional accountability we believe we need to focus on creating accountability in both governmental institutions and political parties. We need to ensure that the three branches of government are actually separate and are systematically held accountable to the public. We also need to ensure that political parties, who are the basis of political governments, are also governed by democratic means and are held accountable to the people.

Decentralization of power

Power cannot be relegated to the people unless power is decentralized. It is only when local government has the power to act for local communities that we will see the state of the people improve. Right now all political and governmental power in the nation is centralized in Dhaka, and as long as that remains the case the general masses of this nation will remain underserved, if served at all.

Bicameral parliament

In our current unicameral parliament the Members of Parliament are chosen by a first-past-the-post system. The candidate getting the most votes wins. In such cases if a party candidate wins 51% of the vote and another party candidate wins 49% of the vote the former goes to parliament. The latter 49% of the population remain unrepresented.

To remedy this inequity we will create a bicameral parliament with an upper house where the Members of Parliament will be chosen according to the percentage of the votes their party received in the election. So if a party receives 10% of the votes in a General Election then that party will get 10% of the seats in the Upper House, notwithstanding how many individual seats they might have won in the traditional Lower House.

Social safety net

A democracy, even an accountable democracy, means nothing to the people if their basic needs go unmet. We believe that the government's responsibility does not lie only in ensuring negative rights, as in rights that protect from: such as protection against crimes or malfeasance. For a democracy to function properly in a poorer nation such as ours the government must also ensure positive rights, as in right to receive: such as food, education, pension, and healthcare. We believe that our national government needs to ensure a broad social safety net to meet the basic needs of all its citizens.

Nationalist Democratic Movement's Commitments

NDM is committed to creating an accountable democracy and the structural soundness that shall harness the full potential of our nation's youth. For that we need to upturn the system. Accountability of government does not mean only a changing of guard once in five years through elections. We aim to give the people a voice in every action of the government and ensure that the people and not the elites are best served.

We are committed to be the new guard in this nation's politics. We will bring back the ideals of self-sacrifice. No longer will politics be held synonymous with corruption and barbarity.

Bangladesh before all else

Sovereignty and Prestige

There shall never be any compromise on the question of our national sovereignty or the prestige of our nation or our people.

The 'Citizen'

We shall ensure that no citizen is ever insecure in attaining his/her rights as a citizen. Citizenship of our nation is sacrosanct and cannot and shall not be called into question on any other charge but that of direct and personal perpetration of acts of treason as defined by our Constitution and human reason, specifically by the person in question, and proven in a competent court of law.

Democracy & Rights of every citizen

Executive - decentralization

Too much power is concentrated today in the hands of the Executive. Seated in an ivory tower the Executive today is too far removed from the masses. The people at large can be served best by the leaders that are close to them. We will ensure that decisions related to villages, municipalities, and districts will be taken by local governments. Only matters related to national policies such as economic policy, and national security will be the jurisdiction of the central government.

Legislature

Members of parliament, notwithstanding their party affiliation, have to work to represent the people. No law shall restrain the lawmaker from voting in parliament, or conduct any official business that he/she believes is contrary to the best interests of the people he/she represents. The people and not a political party shall take precedence in any parliamentarian's decision making. In that spirit and the true spirit of democracy we will rescind Article 70 of the Constitution.

Referendum

Referendums are the only direct way to get the consent of the people. For matters of grave national import, including amendments to our Constitution, we will go straight to every citizen of the nation. This is the only way every citizen can partake in the legislative process. On things that warrant the people's explicit consent we cannot use any other method.

Our governments today revile referendums. The excuse they proffer is that non-democratic governments have abused referendums before. But they also rightfully claim that non-democratic governments have abused general elections before, so why do they not shun elections? They revile referendums because they fear that the people will shun their dictates.

Judiciary

The Judiciary is our third branch of government and the one recourse of our people on a day-to-day basis. Yet millions of cases are pending in our courts and by most estimates it will take over a century to just dispose of pending cases. On top of this most of the people pursuing cases are forced to go through numerous other hardships. This is not the nation of our dreams.

Justice is a fundamental right and we will ensure more fast track courts to dispense justice in criminal cases. Justice should also be dispensed locally.

We will ensure that the Judiciary is separated from the Executive and the Legislative branches of Government. The Judiciary is a check to the power of the Executive. This check is rendered useless if the Executive has power to appoint, and the legislature the power to impeach members of the Judiciary.

Election Commission

In a representative democracy like ours it is elections that decide the fate of the nation. The Election Commission is the body given the responsibility to ensure a free and fair election. It is their solemn duty to ensure that the people's voice is heard. This sacrosanct body always has to remain above suspicion of any politicization or complicity with any political party.

We will ensure that appointments in the Election Commission are not politicized. We will also ensure that the culture within the commission is not mired by partisan inclinations. As a bastion of democracy the Election Commission will also be given full control of its finances and not be made dependent on the Executive or the Legislature.

Public participation at the local level

Democracy truly happens at the local levels. We will ensure that all local government offices are empowered. We will ensure all local government offices hold monthly town hall meetings with local residents at the Ward levels. We

will establish scorecards for local elected officials. Local residents will post anonymous scores to the scorecards through text messages or online voting. These scorecards will be available for the nation to view online. The government has to remain ‘of the people’, ‘for the people’, and ‘by the people’.

Rural Poverty Alleviation

While it has been abused by some political parties as just rhetoric, Bangladesh resides in its villages. Almost half of our population is engaged in farming activities. There can be no prosperous future nation without prosperity in our villages and without progress of our farmers.

We will ensure that resources are equitably transferred between cities and villages. While cities are congregations of the future our villages are our present. We will focus on building rural infrastructures to ensure easy access to markets and other resources. We will also ensure that rural development plans are made in conjunction with rural communities not disregarding them.

We will ensure access to information on rights and markets, and also ensure fair and equitable valuation of their produce with effective Price Commissions. We will enact pension schemes for our farmers.

Education and healthcare will be ensured for all rural communities under a broad national social safety net. No longer can we afford to allow dishonest profiteers to take advantage of our farmers.

Our industrial workers and the urban poor

For our nation to make the leap from ‘developing’ to ‘developed’ status we need to empower our industrial workers. We will ensure that factory workers and urban laborers are not denied their rights. We will ensure that they are not denied their proper wages.

Our labor laws will be made more worker-friendly and will be strictly enacted.

No city can survive without the efforts of its lowest paid labor force. We will ensure that they receive equitable compensation for their labor. We will also enact pension schemes, and ensure healthcare and education under a broad national social safety net.

Our youth

The youth is not only our future, but they also make up the largest chunk of our present population. Yet our government is not youth friendly. We need to focus on equality of opportunity for them. We need to be able to give them the tools that will help them fulfill their potential and in turn build a better nation.

We will ensure education as skill development so that our youth are prepared for the job market. A youth who wants to work on farming will be taught the most effective farming techniques, among others. We will ensure that the youth are empowered to choose their own vocation.

We will channel resources to ensure that enterprising youth can take more responsibility. Our industrial policy and commercial policies will also be focused on ensuring that the entrepreneurial spirit of our youth is harnessed, not diminished.

Political participation of our youth today means little more than abusing them as street weapons for large political parties. We will create space for our youth to start making policy decisions. Our youth cannot and shall be used as vile weapons by nefarious political forces any more.

The people shall be the rulers

We believe that small governments are the best governments. The duty of the government is to ensure that the people receive equality of opportunity. The government should not indulge in commercial enterprise. It is the government’s duty to regulate all enterprises to ensure the best interests of the people; such a government cannot be a market competitor.

In order to establish the most effective government, however, we need to establish an effective bureaucracy and also ensure that the failures of the government can be openly pointed out. Only then will we be able to keep our government improving and keep serving the people better.

Bureaucracy

Our civil bureaucracy has always been the backbone of our government. Unfortunately a large portion of this backbone has been politicized. They tend to serve a political party more than the people. We will work to ensure nonpartisanship within our bureaucracy.

We will ensure recruitment to the bureaucracy strictly on merit. We will not remove affirmative action quotas, but they will only remain for Freedom Fighters, and for members of sections of society who have been marginalized. Promotions within the bureaucracy will be based strictly and only on merit, which too shall go through a 360 degree review process. Reward systems will be put in place for innovation and punishments for delinquencies.

All process of recruitment and promotions will be depoliticized.

Freedom of media

A free and fair media is every government's friend. The media will be given complete freedom. We need the media to point out the errors of those who have authority, without it authority goes unchallenged, and unchallenged authority leads to autocratic governments. This has been the cyclic history of our nation. No more.

Freedom of expression

In the age of digital media and online social networks the voice of the youth and the people are more easily heard. Just like the media the people too have to be respected for their opinions. Freedom of expression, be that in speech or in social media, is the most basic right ensured by our Constitution, and by human reason. This cannot ever be challenged. Any challenge to this is a challenge not only to our Constitution but to our very way of being.

Social Safety net

Healthcare

While we do have free healthcare available to our people, in most cases they are available in name only. In many cases the healthcare available is shoddy at best.

We want to ensure the basic right of healthcare to the people by focusing on improving healthcare delivery and also by enactive measures for preventative care.

Preventative care work will be intensified under current government programs and with the help of NGOs as well. These will be coordinated both nationally and locally. Local governments will be given a substantial portion of the responsibility to modulate care by local needs. Most of the sicknesses among both our rural and urban population are due to a lack of knowledge or due to poor lifestyles and practices.

Healthcare in our nation comprises both of healthcare training facilities, as in medical colleges, and clinics and hospitals. We will ensure that the quality of healthcare training meets global standards and for that we will ensure copying of best practices from around the world. We will acquire experts from the world over and they in conjunction with local communities and officials will create the basis of a healthcare system that serves our nation's specific needs.

Finances of local medical facilities will come from local governments thus making the medical staff accountable to the locality and not the central government. In many local medical facilities the medical staff is absent because they are only accountable to a central national office. No longer will medical staff be unavailable in villages where medical staff has been appointed. They will be directly answerable to the local people they are meant to serve.

Education

We shall enact an education policy that is more in keeping with our times. We will improve the state of our schools and stop this trend of grade inflation that is now plaguing our system. Astonishingly high grades are being awarded to students while the quality of education keeps dropping.

Public schools will have to reach similar standards as good private schools, and private schools too shall be given minimum criteria of performance that they will have to meet. The performance measurement will not be based on any one criterion like an exam, but a more wholesome set of criteria as suggested by leading experts in education.

Education policy will be integrated into every aspect of policy. We will focus on two primary aspects in our education policy:

1. Skill development
2. Knowledge creation

In skill development we will focus on ensuring that our next generations are prepared for a more fulfilling life as productive members of society and have jobs available to them not only upon ending their education, but also during if they so choose. Education programs will be modulated by local requirements and will be integrated with knowledge of vocations. Rural families will not have to fear losing their progeny to the cities and to a future of joblessness.

A focus on knowledge creation will ensure that our nation makes that next big lead to becoming a ‘developed’ nation. All our college and university policies and subsidies will be focused on advancing research and creating a nation that competes with the best.

Pension

Under a broad social safety network we will introduce pension policies to all working members of society. Our pension policy will focus on the rural populace and the urban poor.

Economic and infrastructural development

Economic policy

Our economic policy has to be integrated with our education and social policies. It has to encourage innovation and honest toil. It has to encourage our people’s entrepreneurial spirit. It has to be equitable by region and by sector.

Monopolies and cartels shall not be tolerated at any cost. The price paid for such elite consolidation of power is suboptimal economic premiums for the whole nation. It is not only that such practices create inequitable distributions of income, but also that it wastes national resources.

We have to focus on optimal efficiency in our use of national resources. We have to access global markets through local innovations. We need to focus on improved production both in agriculture and in industry.

Pricing of commodities have to be brought within the reach of the general population. Energy has to be treated as a basic good, and people’s need for energy met equitably. Pricing of such basic commodities will be determined with broader public knowledge and consent.

The struggle for young and new entrepreneurs to start new ventures has to be streamlined. Both costs and difficulty of process has to be reduced. Innovation in farming practices has to be encouraged with access to latest technology and through making small loans available to farmers.

Banking regulations have to take into account incentives for making loans available to farmers and small businesses. We have to ensure equal participation of men and women in our economic development.

Taxation brackets need to be enlarged with more equitable and accountable local taxation for individuals and local businesses and broader more comprehensive taxation policies for corporations and big businesses. Depending on corporate charity is tantamount to taxing the well intentioned.

Rich nations do as they please, but poor nations do as they must. We have to do all that is necessary to ensure that our brave nation does not brook under the strains of poverty any longer.

Energy policy

Our energy policy has to be in tune with the needs of our local populace. In the last two decades our energy needs have more than doubled, and with the rate of development we envisage this need will only keep climbing. Not all of it can be met with coal power plants.

Residential power needs need to be treated as a basic good. At the same time we need to create the basis of our future needs in industry, commerce, and transport sectors.

Nuclear energy could be a midterm solution for our nation but the complexity of the technology necessitates more thorough analysis, as does energy sharing treaties with our neighboring nations.

Road network and road safety

Development cannot come without more improved communication. Currently there are less than a hundred thousand kilometers of paved local roads in rural communities across the nation. This has to change.

The onus of local development has to go to local governments, with equitable support from the central government. Our investment in transportation network has to increase, but more importantly it has to become more efficient.

Costs per kilometer of paved highway are in many cases more than five times higher in our nation than in similarly developed nations around the world. This has to change.

Our water transport networks and increasing our rail networks also need due attention.

Corruption must stop

Corruption shall not be tolerated. Enforcement of current regulation and enactment of new effective regulations will be our focus.

In many cases corruption in our nation is created by a mix of complex regulatory and socio-cultural issues that are difficult to unwind in one go. The most effective policies will be enacted with due reverence to local needs.

We do not believe that distributive justice will hurt additional economic surplus in the long run. However, in the short term anti-corruption drives can hurt economic prospects and hence the redresses to those will also be addressed by local governments.

Corruption among elected officials will not be tolerated in the least. In a country where civil servants become ineligible for service if they or their spouse are citizens of another country, there seems to be no specific law as such for the spouses of lawmakers, nor is there a responsible body to investigate and implement such law. There shall be no opportunity for elected officials to siphon the nation's wealth overseas.

Corruption among large corporations will be punished through limited access to contracts and licenses and also through higher rates of taxation. Corporations obey the rules of money and if corruption is made more expensive than otherwise then it will inevitably stop.

Cases of corruption will be judged by speedy trial tribunals. As part of the Judiciary they shall be exempt from interference from the Executive or the Legislature.

The Ant-Corruption Commission will also be made independent of the Executive and the Legislature and given powers such as the Election Commission, to ensure that the corrupt shall have no safe avenues left.

Social Justice

Equality of opportunity

The one right that a democracy must provide its people is equality of opportunity. Every citizen of the nation should be equal under law. They also need to have equal access to a good life. It is only by providing all the basic goods and empowering positive rights that we can truly provide equal opportunity to our people. Our nation is full of potential. There are future leaders and luminaries being born in our villages and our cities but we cannot harness what they could give the nation if we cannot empower them.

It is through broad enactment of the social safety net that we shall ensure that every individual citizen of this nation gets that equality of opportunity.

Women's empowerment

By any statistic more than four fifth of our women are victimized by some form of domestic violence. Countless suffer even worse fates, including kidnapping, rape, and murder. How are we to become a truly democratic nation if over a half of our population has to live in fear because of their very gender?

Economic development of our nation is not possible without empowering this half of our population. But much more importantly, it is not acceptable by our Constitution, religion, or human reason to allow the unabated repression of our women to continue in any form.

While we have very strict regulations against violence against women and against things like dowry, the enactment of those laws are often lax. Cases remain pending for years with justice rarely meted out to the victims. We will enact strict guidelines to rule on cases of domestic and sexual violence within six months. We will ensure adequate enforcement by appropriate recruitment policies for women both in Judiciary and in Law Enforcement.

Under affirmative action we will enact policies to recruit and appoint women in every government department and office. We will encourage the hiring of women in private enterprises through tax incentives and incentivize women entrepreneurs with access to loans.

Rule of Law

Law Enforcement, like every other part of government, belongs to the people. The politicization of law enforcement agencies or attempts thereof has eroded the people's trust in them. The people today are afraid of law enforcement just as they were during the British Raj, when police forces were employed to rule over the people.

Recruitment and appointment of law enforcement officials will be depoliticized. Local police officials will be accountable to local governments. In order to serve the people they have to be close to the people. They will be made to engage with local communities.

Female police officials will be put in charge of all cases of gendered violence or oppression of women.

Other matters

Sunset clause

Many Black Laws and dubious laws are created in parliament by pressing some sudden emergency. We will ensure that no law that might in any way conflict with the spirit of the Constitution is created. But any law created for a national emergency will have a sunset clause placed within it so that it will automatically expire after a certain period unless renewed by parliament. Many laws have been created that give undue power to vested groups and these laws persist because no one introduces a new law to annul them. We will retroactively insert sunset clauses in all such legislation. So that these laws automatically expire after a certain time. We believe that it will be easier to renew laws that have the people's support.

Measuring progress

NDM, while in government or otherwise, will maintain a scorecard of the national executive, including the whole cabinet. We will regularly update the scorecards and publish them at least once annually. It is not only GDP measure that shows the progress of a nation and with that in mind we will employ multiple measures to check for progress including Human Development Index (HDI), and Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI).

Nationalist Democratic Movement shall always practice party democracy

NDM is and shall always be the people's party. NDM shall always be guided by the votes of all of its workers, and to achieve that purpose we are developing an app through which a large majority of party members can vote regularly on party decisions.

NDM is and shall always be different from all the current political parties in Bangladesh. First and foremost it shall always practice democracy within the party ranks.

1. All electoral candidates will be chosen by party Primaries in which ordinary member of the party shall vote, so all party electoral candidates will be chosen democratically
2. Every electoral candidate will have to release his/her complete financial information for screening to the party and this information shall be available to voters in said primary
3. All party positions, both local and national, shall be filled by councils with party members voting as councilors
4. All office holding members of the party and all party leaders will be held to a strict code of conduct
5. Any legitimate complaint of moral turpitude against any party leader will result in investigation by the vested party committee and, if proven guilty, shall result in fitting punishment and all related information shall be made available to party members
6. All donations to the party will be available for all party members to view
7. All party members shall be able to vote on issues deemed important to the party and the nation through mobile phone apps and party web portal, the results of such vote being viewable to all party members
8. The party shall never attempt to divide the nation in the name of religion, language, communal ties, or any other sectarian criterion
9. Youth are the future of our nation and with that in mind the party shall reserve a portion of positions in every committee for the youth

10. To ensure political empowerment of women the party shall fill one third of all committee positions with women
11. Every position in the party's Central Committee shall have specific purpose and shall be accountable to all ordinary members of the party
12. Every Vice Chairman in the party's Superior Council shall have specific purpose and shall be responsible to update the nation on every relevant National policy issue
13. Before every National Council the party shall publish a detailed policy statement on which party members shall vote in the council, and post-council they will be published for the public's perusal
14. The party will establish open assessment of its work and actions by creating public scorecards at every local level

Our nation, our future

This is our moment in history. Now is the time to claim the nation back for its people. Now is the time to fight the good fight. We stand at the gates today and what we do now shall define the nation as it is and the nation as it shall be. Too many of our nation and our kin have made too many sacrifices for us to stand aloof today. This is our nation and we must claim it back for the people.

No more shall we quiver in the face of political opposition. No longer shall we stand satiated at the sight of an election only to be followed with five years of unaccountability. No longer shall we allow the sacrifices of seventy million Bangladeshis who faced down the barrels of guns and tanks to create this nation go unfulfilled.

We, the people of this nation, have suffered enough. We have suffered from poverty, from exclusion, from alien conquest, and from rapine and pillage by those who have been our own. Nationalist Democratic Movement is the people of this nation. We are every citizen of this great nation given unto us by Allah Almighty; we are the masses; we are the young and the old, and we are heart and conscience; we stand for our rights and our future, and we shall not be deterred.

Nationalist Democratic Movement is and shall forever be a party of the people, for the people, and a party that shall never shirk the responsibility of delivering the voice of the people.

Joi Bangladesh!