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Nat'l Democratic Front launched with 18 parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party factions led by Anisul Islam Mahmud and Anwar Hossain Manju, and 16 other parties yesterday launched a new alliance called National Democratic Front (NDF).

Announcing the launch at a convention centre in the capital, Anisul, who has been made NDF president, said six registered and 12 unregistered parties are in the alliance.

He added that this alliance would advance Bangladesh's genuine democratic transformation, build a national consensus to overcome the prevailing political crisis, uphold the spirit of the Liberation War, and carry forward the aspirations of the July uprising.

The alliance aims to push for necessary state reforms, end fascism, and amplify the weak voices of people yearning for good governance.

JP faction led by Manju, Bangladesh Jatiya Party, Bangladesh Sanskratic Muktijot, Bangladesh Nationalist Movement, and Bangladesh Muslim League were among the registered parties.

Golam Sarwar Milon, acting chairman of Janata Party Bangladesh, has been given the charge of combine's chief coordinator while Ruhul Amin Howlader will serve as its chief spokesperson.

In a statement at the press conference, Anisul placed a seven-point demand on behalf of the alliance.

The demands include the interim government be transformed into a neutral election-time administration in the next two months; harassment cases be withdrawn to ensure equal opportunity for all to participate in the election; national aspirations for reform initiatives be implemented based on national consensus; legal action be taken against criminals, armed groups, extortions, and land grabbers, regardless of their political affiliation; and prices of essential commodities be reduced.

At the briefing, Manju, who was made

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16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

The pen that pierced the purdah

Rereading Begum Rokeya's 'Oborodh Bashini'

NAZMUN AFRAD SHEETOL

On Begum Rokeya Day, we do more than remember a historical figure; we associate with the spirit of a revolutionary writer. We celebrate a woman who, more than a century ago, stared down the twin fortresses of religious dogma and social norms, armed not with a sword but with a pen.

Her seminal work, "Oborodh Bashini", published in 1931, is often read as a critique of the oppressive purdah system. Yet, to confine it to that alone would miss its literary depth and strategic genius.

Oborodh Bashini is a monumental work in which the act of writing itself becomes an act of liberation.

Begum Rokeya Sakhataw Hossain weaponised language, using testimony, satire and logic not just to critique confinement but to shatter its foundation by celebrating the voices it sought to silence, turning writing into a masterful act of defiance.

Begum Rokeya's primary weapon for this book was testimony. Oborodh Bashini is a chorus of voices, a collection of stories that bring the private sufferings of the "zenana" into the public sphere, making readers feel compassion for these women's silent pain. She fills her pages with accounts of women wasting away in airless rooms, denied sunlight, education, sometimes food and dignity. This radical choice aimed to stir empathy and show the human cost of social injustice.



One story recounts a woman so intellectually starved that she secretly read scraps of paper used to wrap groceries. This image is not just a personal tragedy; it is a devastating indictment of a culture that snatched away women's freedom of intellect. In another powerful testimony, Rokeya writes of a young girl confined within her home whose only wish was to see a circus outside her window, only to be punished and have the window sealed with bamboo blinds. The story captures the absurd cruelty of the system: a child's innocent curiosity becomes a punishable crime, and her world grows physically darker as a consequence.

By documenting such claustrophobia, intellectual deprivation and casual cruelty,

Begum Rokeya forces the reader to see and feel and recognise their own complicity. She was not merely describing a prison; she was [handing] its inmates a megaphone. Each story, each testimony, removed a brick from the wall of silence that upheld the complexity of purdah.

On this day, we celebrate Rokeya not just as a writer but as a pioneer who taught us that the personal is political and that lived experience is a powerful tool for social critique.

But how does one ensure these heartfelt testimonies are not dismissed as sentimental complaints? Begum Rokeya's satirical layout of stories appeals so sharply that it cuts through the veneer of social order. Her satire dissects patriarchal absurdities with

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Without any safety harness, two workers are painting a 17-storey building, hanging precariously from a makeshift ladder, in Barishal city. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

DNA study reveals when first house cats reached China



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The earliest domestic cat arrived in China during the Tang dynasty's rule between 618AD and 907AD, likely through the Eurasian trade routes connected to the Silk Road, according to a new DNA study.

Feline bones found at archaeological sites were long believed to show that cats lived alongside Chinese farming communities in the Stone Age. But a new DNA analysis of remains spanning over 5,000 years reveals that the early felines were native leopard cats rather than house cats.

The analysis showed that house cats, descended from the Near Eastern African Wildcat, arrived in China much later.

Power sector officials resistant to renewable expansion
Says Adviser Fouzul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The major barrier to renewable energy expansion is the people in the power and energy sector themselves, said Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan, power, energy and mineral resources adviser.

Many government officials in the sector have engaged with businesses and would lose their transactional benefits if a transparent and competitive system is introduced, he said.

"We are trying to transition from such a system and it is not being liked by most of them. They want to continue the previous system of dealings, negotiations and under-the-table transactions," he said at the closing ceremony of Bangladesh Energy Conference 2025 yesterday.

The adviser said they also want to get rid of fossil fuel usage but their dependence is by compulsion and not by choice.

"If we had the opportunity, we would stop purchasing LNG (liquefied natural gas) and would shut down the coal-based power plants," he added.

The conference has announced a 22-point Dhaka Declaration towards Net Zero carbon emission and a 13-point Citizen Manifesto.



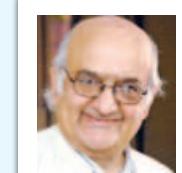
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Elite-dominated parliament source of many ills
Says Rehman Sobhan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Without representatives from varied backgrounds in parliament, the democratic system risks remaining elite-dominated, which is a key source of many longstanding problems, said eminent economist Rehman Sobhan yesterday.

"At the end of the day, unless you change the equality of the parliamentarians, unless you ensure people from all backgrounds, you are going to get an elite-dominated democratic system -- that has been the source of many of our problems."



"Unless we can democratise the nature of electoral contestation in which people from all social backgrounds and with limited resources can actually contest and hope to win elections, you are going to get a particular class of people occupying the legislatures."

CPD Chairman Rehman Sobhan

His comments came at a session titled "Democracy and Development" at the Annual BIDS Conference on Development 2025.

In the election in 1970, most candidates commuted in buses and rickshaws for their campaigning, according to Sobhan, also a former director general of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

"That was the level of income and resources at their disposal back then. Today, no one can imagine contesting an election unless they actually own a Pajero. This essentially means you have got a parliament of the elite by the elite for the elite."

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