



সেন্টার ফর পলিসি ডায়ালগ (সিপিডি)
Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)

CPD study

Presentation on

Ensuring Accountability of the Majority Party in the Parliamentary System of Bangladesh

Presentation by

Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem

Research Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)

9 October 2025

Study Team

Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem

Research Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)

Professor Nizam Ahmed

Department of Public Administration, Chittagong University

Rukaiya Islam

Program Associate (Research), Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)

Sami Mohammad

Program Associate (Research), Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Analytical Framework
3. Methodology
4. State of Accountability of National Legislature in Bangladesh
5. Proposals for Constitutional and Parliamentary Reform: An Overview
6. Critical Analysis of Reform Proposals for Ensuring Accountability in the Parliamentary System
7. The Case for Bicameralism in Bangladesh
8. Analysis of Accountability in Different Parliamentary Systems: Lessons for Bangladesh
9. Recommendations for Strengthening the Accountability of the Majority Party in the Parliament

1. Introduction

1. Introduction

- Bangladesh's **political transition in 2024** is marked with **people's demand for accountability** of the majority party in the parliament
 - Will work for **ensuring good governance**, human rights, and **inclusivity** for all sections of the people
 - A major demand is to **ensure 'checks and balance' of the power** of the majority party, particularly its prime minister both as legislative and executive agencies
- **Reform commissions** established by the interim government proposed setting up an upper house (bicameralism) as a **potential tool for checks & balances** stressing on reducing concentration of power, improving oversight of executive and ruling party
 - The six reform commissions also provided **alternatives to bicameralism**, emphasizing strengthening existing parliamentary mechanisms
- Bangladesh's **current practices** under the unicameral parliamentary system following the **Westminster majoritarian model**, allows concentration of power in the majority party, particularly the Prime Minister
 - **Past reforms and mechanisms** (committee systems, caretaker government) have **partially** addressed electoral fairness and parliamentary accountability
 - But **political dynamics** in recent years highlight **domination of the ruling party**, weakening opposition and checks & balances

1. Introduction

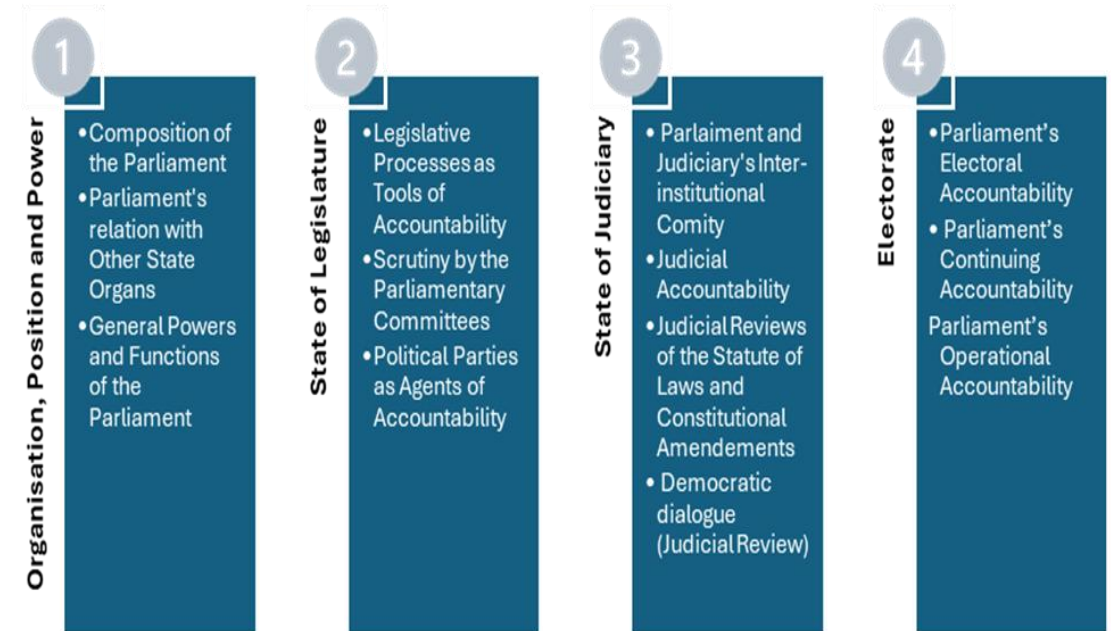
- The **debates** over introducing upper house generated questions **whether it could improve accountability** of the majority party and its leader?
 - In extreme sense, whether it could strengthen or **weaken the lower house**?
 - Finally, are there alternative mechanisms to ensure accountability **without creating an upper house**?
- The objective of the study is **whether** the existing unicameral system would be **unable to ensure** accountability of the majority party at the parliament in the law-making process as well as in the government and **whether** it is inevitable to create an upper house to address the issue
- The specific study objectives are-
 - To **examine the weaknesses** of the existing parliamentary system in ensuring the accountability of the majority party and its leader in the parliament as well as in their executive role
 - To review and analyse the **advantages & disadvantages of different proposals** related to parliamentary reform under the given political system in Bangladesh
 - To **review the cross-country** experiences on accountability related issues in the parliamentary systems of South Asia & other regions
 - To put forward a **set of alternative proposals** for ensuring accountability of the majority party putting emphasis on a better functional parliamentary system

2. Analytical Framework

2. Analytical Framework

- **Four core instruments** shape accountability, transparency, and efficiency in parliamentary system - Jashim (2025), Nizam (2020), and Rounaq Jahan (2014)
 - **Organization, Position & Power:** The structure and authority of Parliament define its ability to legislate, oversee the executive, and engage with other state organs
 - **State of Legislature:** Legislative processes and parliamentary committees function as key mechanisms for scrutiny and holding the government accountable
 - **State of Judiciary:** An independent judiciary enables legal oversight by reviewing laws and maintaining institutional balance with Parliament
 - **Electorate:** Free and fair elections, along with citizen participation, ensure that Parliament remains answerable to the public

Figure 1: Instruments for ensuring accountability, transparency and efficiency of Unicameral Parliament

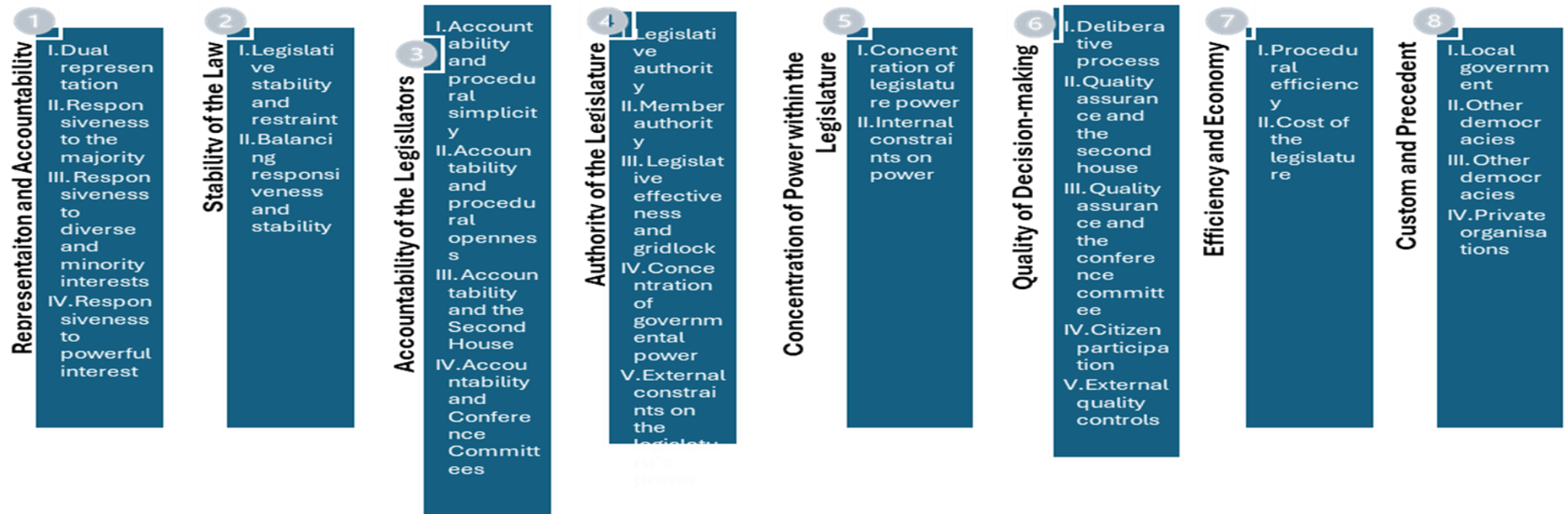


Source: Jashim, 2025

2. Analytical Framework

- After the assessment of the existing unicameral system, it is **important to review whether new system** could add value towards ensuring the transparency and accountability of the majority party
- Todd (1999) identifies **eight critical factors** to assess both systems **before transition**
 - **(a)** Representation & Accountability; **(b)** Stability of the Law; **(c)** Accountability of Legislators; **(d)** Authority of the Legislature; **(e)** Concentration of Power within the Legislature; **(f)** Quality of Decision-Making; **(g)** Efficiency and Economy; and **(h)** Custom and Precedent

Figure 2: Transiting factors to be analyzed before the shift



Source: Todd (1999)

3. Methodology

3. Methodology

- The study is based on both **primary and secondary data** related to parliamentary systems and factors guiding the comparison between two systems
- The study analyzes the **recommendations and proposals** of political parties
 - To assess how these reforms may affect the accountability of the majority party.
- A detailed **literature review** was carried out
 - With regard to countries' experiences with parliamentary systems and the reasons behind transitions
 - Challenges facing the current parliament in Bangladesh are reviewed in detail
- Several **key informant interviews** were conducted with political scientists, academics, and political party leaders
- **A focus group discussion session was organized** with the participation of political leaders, academia, CSO representatives
- **Cross-country experiences** of parliamentary systems in South Asia are analyzed
 - To evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in terms of accountability, transparency, and checks and balances
- The study evaluates whether Bangladesh should strengthen its current parliamentary system or transition to **an alternative system**
 - Alternative reforms to improve checks and balances without changing the current parliamentary structure are also explored

4. State of Accountability of National Legislature in Bangladesh

4. State of Accountability of National Legislature in Bangladesh

Legislative initiation and government dominance

- In terms of initiation of legislation, the **Constitution** endows JS with **supreme** legislative authority
 - **In practice**, the exercise of this power is **mediated by structural, political**, and institutional constraints beyond parliament's control (Jahan, 2012)
- There is a **near-total dominance** of government-initiated bills, which reveals a **systemic imbalance** where the legislature functions more as a **ratifying body** than as an autonomous **lawmaking forum**
- Between 1973 and 2013, **only nine** private members' bills became law, demonstrating parliament's **limited space** for independent initiative and the overwhelming **centralization of agenda-setting power** in the executive
- While executive dominance is a feature of most Westminster-style systems, Bangladesh's case is more pronounced, as the **legislature shows less initiative and produces fewer outputs** compared to peer parliaments.

Table 1: Comparative account of laws enacted by different parliaments (1973-2013)

Parliament	Total Bills Passed	Out of which-	
		Government bills	Private members' bills
First	154	154	-
Second	65	63	2
Third	39	38	1
Fourth	142	142	-
Fifth	173	172	1
Sixth	1	1	-
Seventh	191	190	1
Eighth	185	184	1
Ninth	271	268	3
Total	1221	1212 (99.3%)	9 (0.7%)

Source-(Ahmed, 2020)

4. State of Accountability of National Legislature in Bangladesh

Scope for private bill initiation

- Private members often introduce legislative measures, but very few become law. In Bangladesh, **private members initiate an exceptionally low number of bills compared to some smaller democracies**
- Two main factors limit MP activism are - **party political restrictions and procedural constraints**. Governing parties often prevent their members from moving bills independently
- Private members face **more procedural hurdles than ministers when introducing legislation**. Governments sometimes **introduce 'parallel' bills to delay private members' bills**
- Recent parliaments show more backbencher activity in moving private members' bills than earlier ones. The fifth Parliament (1991-1995) had higher MP activism due to more political diversity and opposition representation
- Despite increased activity, **majoritarian democracies generally limit the legislative role of private members**
- In India, **only 14 private members' bills have become law**, with the last one passed in 1970
- Australia has **passed only 30 private members' bills since 1901**
- New Zealand has passed **only two private members' bills in the last 40 years**. Private members' bills are important for sparking discussion and motivating policy development.
 - These bills serve citizens' interests even when they do not become law

4. State of Accountability of National Legislature in Bangladesh

Nature of Committee Scrutiny of Legislation

- Article 77 of the **Rules of Procedure (ROP)** allows bills to be referred to committees or circulated for public opinion, but this was rarely utilized before 1996
- Since 1996, there has been a clear trend toward increased parliamentary scrutiny through committees, a practice first established by the government of Sheikh Hasina and maintained
- Bangladesh's parliamentary committees have greater scope for legislative scrutiny than many other Westminster-style parliaments and can amend bills extensively, although radical changes are rare
- The eighth Parliament saw fewer bills scrutinized due to delays in forming standing committees
- A special committee was created in the seventh Parliament to review bills until standing committees were established, but no similar initiative occurred in the eighth Parliament despite the ruling party's majority

Table 3: Parliamentary scrutiny of government bills

Parliament	Government Bills Passed (% of total)	Bills referred to Committees (% of total)	Amendments Moved (Per bill)	Amendments passed (Per bill)
First	100.0	2.0	0.7	0.5
Fifth	99.4	4.0	4.0	1.1
Seventh	99.5	100.0	2.2	2.2
Eighth	99.5	62.7	5.9	5.9
Ninth	100.0	87.6	5.6	5.6

Source- (Ahmed,2020)

4. State of Accountability of National Legislature in Bangladesh

Nature of Committee Scrutiny of Legislation

- A major drawback of legislative scrutiny is that committees tend to **hurriedly scrutinize bills, limiting the scope for thorough deliberation**
- In the eighth Parliament, **about 63% of committee reports on bills were prepared after just one meeting**, with some meetings deciding on **three to four bills at once**
- Many **reports are produced in a casual manner**, and there is **no provision for public participation** in the legislative process
- The opposition **rarely legitimizes laws passed by the government under the majoritarian principle**, and bills are seldom passed by consensus
- Parliamentary members **mostly vote along party lines**, reflecting **divisions that extend beyond legislation to other parliamentary activities**
- A key reason for this **division is the limited scope for opposition proactivity**, as almost all **committee chairs came from the ruling party**

Table 4: Committee Scrutiny of Government Bills

Variables	Committee Recommendations	Parliaments		
		Seventh N=190	Eighth N=184	Ninth N=201
Bills scrutinised by committees (%)	-	65.8	60.8	79.6
Bills be passed as introduced in the House	-	32.0	21.6	32.4
Bills be amended and passed	-	68.0	78.4	67.6
Committees' reports prepared unanimously (%)	-	99.0	96.8	99.3
Amendments proposed (per bill)	-	5.6	6.2	13.7
Total amendments proposed	-	709	668	1983
Nature of amendments proposed (%)	Insertion	17.6	13.6	15.6
	Deletion	10.5	13.6	6.6
	Replacement	59.2	64.4	59.3
	Addition	4.8	2.9	2.6
	Renumbering	7.8	5.5	15.9
	Date Change	-	-	-
	Others	0.1	-	-
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source- Ahmed, 2020

*Until December 2012

**Excludes (23.7%) bills scrutinized by a special committee

4.State of Accountability of National Legislature in Bangladesh

Parliamentary Oversight of Government

- The Parliament of Bangladesh exercises **three main forms of oversight**
 - Legislative, budgetary, and general oversight of government activities
- General oversight within the chamber **primarily relies on parliamentary questions, which are central to accountability in Westminster-style systems**
- Questions are more likely to be **accepted and answered in Bangladesh compared to other mechanisms, making them an effective oversight tool**. The **first hour of each sitting (excluding budget day) is reserved for questions**, reinforcing their institutional importance
- A **Prime Minister's Question Time (PMQT), modeled after the UK system**, has recently been introduced to enhance executive accountability. Additional oversight tools include **call-attention motions, adjournment motions, and motions for half-hour discussions**, though these are used less frequently

4. State of Accountability of National Legislature in Bangladesh

Nature of Use of Oversight Techniques

- Recent parliaments have shown similar levels of activity in using **oversight tools such as call attention motions, adjournment motions, and half-hour discussions**
- However, **the ninth Parliament outperformed others in terms of raising questions**, although only **9% of oral questions were answered in person by ministers**
- Most **responses in the ninth Parliament were written**, which contributed to the higher volume of questions recorded
- In contrast, the first Parliament showed **significantly lower oversight activity due to its one-party dominance**, with **97.8% of MPs belonging to the ruling Awami League**
- Since the early 1990s, **greater partisan balance and inter-party competition have contributed to increased MP activism and more dynamic parliamentary oversight as showed in the table**

Table-5: Comparative performance of Parliament (1991-2006)

Parliament Held	Average (per sitting day)				
	Question Answered	CAM (oral)	SD moved	AM held	HHD moved
First	44.8	0.2	0.03	-	-
Fifth	22.0	0.8	0.1	0.01	0.004
Seventh	21.5	1.1	0.02	0.0	0.0
Eighth	30.1	1.1	0.01	0.0	0.0
Ninth	56.8	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAM: Call -Attention Motions; SD: Discussion for Short Duration; AM: Adjournment Motions; and HHD: Half-an-Hour Discussion.

Source: Ahmed (2002); Bangladesh Parliament (2001-2006; 2009-2011)

4. State of Accountability of National Legislature in Bangladesh

Limits of Oversight Techniques

- Despite being constitutionally empowered, oversight techniques such as questions and call attention motions often fail to compel administrative compliance, reflecting a **disconnect between parliamentary intent and executive accountability**
- Both ministers and MPs have contributed to the ineffectiveness of question time. **Ministers often deliver lengthy, evasive responses**, while MPs misuse time by crafting unnecessarily elaborate questions to limit others' participation
- This procedural inefficiency led MPs during a **2009 UNDP orientation to call for stricter enforcement of the Rules of Procedure by the Speaker to prevent abuse of question time and improve oversight effectiveness**
- A major **limitation of Prime Minister's Question Time (PMQT) is its overt partisanship**, where ruling party MPs often use the platform to attack the opposition rather than question executive actions
- The effectiveness of **PMQT is further undermined by the opposition's frequent boycotts**, enabling government MPs to dominate the session and avoid meaningful scrutiny
- Unlike **ministerial questions selected by ballot**, **PMQT questions are formally selected by the Speaker but are often controlled in practice by the Prime Minister**, compromising neutrality and transparency
- This **self-selection allows the Prime Minister to avoid difficult or critical questions, turning PMQT into a tool for political messaging rather than accountability**
- Additionally, **MPs frequently ask vague or open-ended questions during PMQT**, despite rules requiring focus on substantive policy issues, further diluting its oversight value
- Many questions directed at the **Prime Minister could more appropriately be addressed to relevant departmental ministers, indicating a misuse of parliamentary mechanisms**

4. State of Accountability of National Legislature in Bangladesh

Committee Oversight of Government

- In Bangladesh, parliamentary committees have evolved into critical structures for institutional resilience and accountability
- The Parliament of Bangladesh, following Westminster traditions, **operates through three types of committees: standing committees (permanent), select committees, and special committees (both ad hoc)**. Standing committees are further classified into four categories: committees on ministries (SCMs), financial committees, scrutinizing committees, and house committees
- Among these, SCMs and financial committees, particularly the **Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and the Public Undertakings Committee (PUC)**—are the main instruments of oversight, empowered to **investigate government irregularities and recommend corrective measures**
- Since the 1990s, institutional reforms have significantly enhanced the role of committees. For instance, **Rule 248 of the Rules of Procedure mandates that each SCM must meet at least once a month, with the Speaker authorized to intervene if meetings are not held**
- Previously, **ministers chaired SCMs, undermining independent scrutiny**. Now, **most SCMs are led by backbench MPs**, with even opposition members appointed as chairs in some cases indicating a modest shift toward bipartisan committee leadership
- Committees **can regulate their own proceedings, summon individuals, request documents, and conduct inquiries on their own initiative**. Furthermore, the Constitution empowers Parliament to **delegate legal authority to committees, allowing them to enforce witness attendance, administer oaths, and compel the production of records**

4. State of Accountability of National Legislature in Bangladesh

Nature of Committee Oversight

- With the expansion of ministries, the number of **Standing Committees on Ministries (SCMs)** has also increased, enabling more targeted oversight across government sectors
- Each SCM is tasked with **scrutinizing the administration, policy, legislation, and expenditure** of its corresponding ministry, making them central to sectoral accountability.
- Recent evidence suggests that SCMs have **increasingly exercised their powers in a balanced and active manner**, showing a notable improvement in their functional engagement.
- SCMs are now **more involved in the legislative process** than in previous parliamentary terms, reflecting their growing role in shaping policy
- Many SCMs have frequently used their **deterrent powers** to investigate **corruption and mismanagement** within the departments they oversee
- There is a visible improvement in **committee performance**, as SCMs now **meet more regularly and report to Parliament** with greater consistency than in the past

Table : Activities of Standing Committees on Ministries

Nature of Activism	Parliament			
	Fifth N=37	Seventh N=35	Eighth N=37	Ninth N=37
Average number of meetings held (per year)	7.8	8.6	8.2	12
Average number of bills scrutinised (per committee)	-	3.3	2.7	2.5
Average number of inquiries made/underway	1.1	3.0	2.7	0.5
Total number of reports submitted*	13	11	33	27

Source: Hasanuzzaman (2007); Bangladesh Parliament (2009-2011)

* Excludes reports on bills

N= Number of SCMs

4. State of Accountability of National Legislature in Bangladesh

Limits of committee scrutiny of government activities

- A significant gap exists between the **Rules of Procedure (ROP)** and actual committee practices
- **Committee activism remains low**—most committees meet infrequently and for short durations
- While committees regularly report on bills, they are **irregular in reporting other oversight activities** to Parliament
- **SCM members often prioritize breadth over depth**, limiting the effectiveness of scrutiny.
- Many issues are delegated to subcommittees, **half of which failed to report back** during the eighth Parliament undermining the committee's core function of completing assigned tasks and reporting outcomes
- **Partisan behavior**, once avoided in committees, is now increasingly evident, affecting impartial scrutiny

4. State of Accountability of National Legislature in Bangladesh

Parliamentary boycott and walkouts

- Parliaments elected in **2014, 2018, and 2024** lacked **opposition representation** and faced **legitimacy crises** due to **alleged rigged elections**
- Unlike a **functioning Westminster system**, **Bangladesh's rigid party control** and **distorted elections** **marginalize opposition voices**
- Opposition **parties resort to boycotts**, further **eroding Parliament's role** as a **forum for accountability**

Table 7: Parliament Walkouts and boycotts in Bangladesh

	Parliament/Walkout and boycotts			
Total sitting days	Fifth	Seventh	Eighth	Ninth
Total sitting days	400	382	373	370
Opposition's walkouts	76	61	N/A	N/A
Opposition boycotts of sittings	135 (34%)	163 (43%)	223 (60%)	316 (84.5%)
Boycott by leader of the opposition	265 (66%)	345 (93%)	328 (88%)	362 (98%)

Source- (Ahmed, 2020)

4. State of Accountability of National Legislature in Bangladesh

Budgetary oversight on the floor

- The Constitution vests full **authority over taxation and expenditure in Parliament, yet the executive dominates budget formulation**
- Money bills **enjoy immunity from judicial review and presidential veto, reinforcing parliamentary sovereignty in theory but not in practice**
- Parliamentary **involvement begins only after presentation of the budget, limited to discussion, voting on demands and appropriations, and passage of finance and appropriation bills**

Structural constraints persist

- Budgets **cannot be referred to committees, technical support for MPs remains inadequate despite the establishment of BAMU, and quarterly implementation reports are rarely utilized**
- The time allocated for **scrutiny is about three weeks, contrasting with years of executive preparation, while strict party discipline curtails independent engagement by MPs**
- Despite these constraints, budget debates continue to surface critical economic, political, and social concerns, disclose otherwise **inaccessible information, shape public opinion, and create political pressure on unresponsive governments**

4. State of Accountability of National Legislature in Bangladesh

Budgetary oversight of financial committees

- The Parliament relies on three committees for financial oversight: **the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), the Estimates Committee (EC), and the Public Undertakings Committee (PUC)**
- The **PAC remains confined to post-expenditure review, while the EC has authority to examine estimates throughout the year**

Committee on Public Undertakings (PUC)

- The PUC is **tasked with reviewing reports of public undertakings and C&AG findings, yet its activities often extend beyond this mandate**
- During the **11th Parliament, the PUC held 21 meetings but produced only one report containing 81 recommendations, covering institutions such as Bangladesh Bank, Dhaka WASA, RAJUK, BIWTC, and others.** The Secretariat faces a shortage of skilled manpower, limiting its effectiveness
- Compared with **India's Lok Sabha, which meets thrice monthly, Bangladesh's PUC demonstrates a far weaker record of output and oversight** (Moazzem, 2024)

4.State of Accountability of National Legislature in Bangladesh

Committee on Estimates (EC)

- The Committee on Estimates (EC) in the 11th Parliament has produced two reports summarizing its deliberations and decisions
 - Its discussions have examined the activities of several public institutions, including the Health Services Division, the Ministry of Health, LGED, WASA, and Dhaka City Corporation, with attention to management and operational issues
- Many of the committee's decisions have extended beyond the jurisdiction defined by the rules of procedure
 - However, the EC has not addressed administrative reforms within these institutions, nor has it considered whether its recommendations align with government policy or explore alternative policy options (Moazzem, 2024)

4. State of Accountability of National Legislature in Bangladesh

Post-Expenditure Review: Role of Committee on Public Accounts (PAC)

- The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) is formally assigned five functions, yet its current activities are **largely confined to examining Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) audit reports**, conducting hearings, and issuing recommendations
- **Other mandated duties**, including reviewing financial irregularities of autonomous bodies, examining **annual financial and appropriation accounts, assessing excess grants**, and scrutinizing other parliamentary accounts, remain largely unfulfilled
- A **significant backlog exists**, with audit reports from 2015 through 2021 still pending review, and only one meeting held on the 2015–16 Appropriation Accounts during the 11th Parliament
- Meetings reveal **uneven member participation**, with some **contributing off-topic**, which, combined with time constraints, leads to hurried consideration of agenda items and limits substantive scrutiny (Moazzem, 2024)

5. Proposals for Constitutional and Parliamentary Reform: An Overview

5. Proposals for Constitutional and Parliamentary Reform: An Overview

Selected Proposals from Different Reform Commissions

Commission	Selected Proposals from Different Reform Commissions
Constitution Reform Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of institutional balance of power • Reduction of the absolute power of the office of the prime minister • Clear proposals for the structure of the Interim Government • Decentralization of the judiciary • Ensuring a robust local government system
Election Reform Commissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disqualifying candidacy for fugitives, severe violators, enforcers of disappearance and human rights violators and those submitting false affidavit information • Enhancing Election Commission's autonomy • Election of the President via elected representatives • Revising Prime Ministerial tenure • Increasing the number of seats to 400 • Authority of EC in suspending elections in case of malpractice • Publication of the party members online • Banning political parties maintaining foreign branches • Parliament candidates must have at least 3 years of party membership • 'No-vote' option for voters to reject all candidates in a constituency
Public Administration Reform Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creation of four provinces as part of decentralization ▪ Abolition of the unified cadre system and creation of 13 services based on the nature of their work and specialization ▪ Merit-based recruitment in public service, reorganization of PSC and change in the syllabus of BCS written examinations ▪ Creation of a Superior Executive Service ▪ Line promotion for each service ▪ Cabinet Committee to recommend promotions of additional secretaries to secretaries and secretary to principal secretary ▪ Renaming DCs and UNOs ▪ Reducing the number of ministries and grouping them into five clusters ▪ Abolition of Zila Parishad ▪ Strengthening the office of C&AG ▪ Creation of the office of Ombudsman ▪ Introduction of new performance management system in government offices

5. Proposals for Constitutional and Parliamentary Reform: An Overview

Proposals of Selected Reform Commissions

Commissions	Proposals
Judicial Reform Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Setting up a separate SC Secretariat• Form commission with majority senior judges for appointing judges based on merit• Appointment of Chief Justice• Amendment to Article 49 to restrict the president's power to grant pardons, reprieves, and commutations of sentences• Set standards for discipline & post-retirement restrictions (no political or profit roles)• Strengthening the judiciary's insulation from executive pressure
Local Government Reform Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allocate one-third of national VAT directly to local government bodies• Bring all district-level public offices under elected district councils• Establishing local courts• Establishing city governmental model• LG government commission• Enable LG bodies to collect taxes and fees independently• Non-party LG polls• Simultaneous LG elections

5. Proposals for Constitutional and Parliamentary Reform: An Overview

Proposals of Political Parties for Parliamentary Reform

Issues	BNP	BJI	NCP	IA	ABP	CPB
Limiting PM's term to 10 years	Supports	Supports	Supports	-	Supports	Supports
No prohibition of Floor Crossing (exception to no-confidence motion and financial bill)	Supports	Supports	Supports	Supports	Supports	Supports
Chairperson of 4 standing committees will opposition MPs	Supports it	Support it	Supports	Supports	Supports	Supports
Presidential clemency power regulated through law	Supports	Supports	Supports	Supports	Supports	Supports
Permanent HC benches in every division	Supports	Supports	Supports	Supports	Supports	Supports
President election through secret voting by both houses	Supports	Supports	Supports	Supports	Supports	Supports
Equity, human dignity, social justice, democracy and religious freedom- to be added as basic principles	-	Support for rights framed in religious-moral terms but pressed for implementation assurances	-	-	-	Opposed changes that they saw as diluting or reordering the fundamental principles
Selection of CA of CG	Objects to the Commission's proposed selection panel composition and expansion, support selection by wider party consensus	-	Proposes alternative implementation routes (a constituent assembly)	-	-	-
PR system for a 100-member upper house	Opposes	Supports	Supports	-	-	Opposes
Most senior judge of SC to be Chief justice	Objects to retain flexibility	-	-	-	-	Supports merit-based appointment
Ban on Party Chief as PM	Opposes	Opposes	-	-	-	-
Women representation in Parliament	Opposes	-	-	-	-	-

6. Critical Analysis of Reform Proposals for Ensuring Accountability in the Parliamentary System

Factors	Issues Covered
Organizational Structure and Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of institutional balance of power • Reduction of PM's term • Caretaker Government structure • Bicameral legislature (Upper House/Senate with PR & reserved seats) • Dual deputy speakers • Separation of roles in two houses • Creation of four provinces as part of decentralization
State of Legislature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ban on foreign branches • PR membership requirements • President elected via MPs • 400-member Lower House (300 direct + 100 women by direct vote)
State of Judiciary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decentralization of judiciary • Separate Supreme Court Secretariat • Commission of senior judges for merit-based appointments • Appointment of Chief Justice • Standards for post-retirement restrictions • Stronger insulation from executive pressure • Disciplinary mechanism for judges
Electorate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disqualification of fugitives, Human Rights violators, false affidavit submitters ▪ EC's authority to suspend elections ▪ PR-based election of Senate members ▪ 30% women representation ▪ Publication of party members online ▪ Non-party LG polls ▪ Simultaneous LG elections ▪ Membership requirements (3 years)

6. Critical Analysis of Reform Proposals for Ensuring Accountability in the Parliamentary System

Table: Recommendations/Party Proposals from Accountability Perspective

Factors	Issues Covered
Representation and Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Women in LG bodies• 30% women seats• 5 disadvantaged community seats in Senate• Floor crossing by MPs
Stability of the Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Stronger insulation from executive pressure▪ Expansion of fundamental rights▪ EC's power to suspend elections▪ Upper House can only delay bills for 2 months, not block permanently▪ Emergency powers and the retention of fundamental rights
Accountability of Legislators	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Ban on foreign party branches▪ Requirement for PR/non-partisan Senate representation▪ Selection of chairpersons for parliamentary standing committees

6. Critical Analysis of Reform Proposals for Ensuring Accountability in the Parliamentary System

Table: Recommendations/Party Proposals from Accountability Perspective

Factors	Issues Covered
Authority of the Legislature	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Balance of institutional powers▪ Interim Government framework▪ Senate reviews bills, except money bill▪ Bicameral oversight
Concentration of Power within the Legislature	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Reduction of PM's absolute power▪ Reduction of PM's term▪ Bicameral legislature with PR-based Senate oversight
Custom and Precedent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ VAT allocation directly to LG▪ District councils' control over offices▪ Independent tax collection by LG▪ Amendment to Article 49 to restrict presidential pardons

Source: (Choudhury,2025), (Todd,1999), Author's Compilation

7. The Case for Bicameralism

7. The Case for Bicameralism

- The idea of a bicameral parliament in Bangladesh was first **raised by left-oriented parties, particularly ISD, in 1972**, but no sustained campaign or mainstream political demand has emerged since
- The lack of debate is partly explained by the country's social and cultural homogeneity, with few ethnic or communal divisions, and limited academic interest in bicameralism
- **None of the researchers** recommended bi-cameral parliamentary system as a mean of addressing the problems in the parliamentary system except Islam (2024)
 - **Islam (2024) argues that bicameralism could enhance representation for ethnic and minority communities, mitigating the risk of majority dominance, while also improving legislative quality**
 - He further suggests that distinct **physiographic regions could be represented through an upper house without the need to adopt a federal system**, ensuring territorial inclusivity within the national legislature

7. The Case for Bicameralism

Path Dependence

- The Constitution Reform Commission recommended a bicameral parliament, which political parties also endorsed
 - However, **historical and structural realities suggest Bangladesh is not ready for a second chamber**
- Bangladesh's **unitary structure and cultural-linguistic homogeneity reduce** the natural need for a second chamber
- From the **1773 Government of India Act** to later reforms, Bengal witnessed the gradual creation of **Bengal Legislative Council in 1862**
 - Culminating in the **1935 Government of India Act**, which granted **provincial autonomy** and introduced a federal system with a bicameral central parliament
 - Despite these reforms, both **British colonial and later Pakistani rule imposed centralized** and discriminatory governance over East Bengal, intensifying the demand for genuine self-rule and equal participation
- Following the Liberation War, Bangladesh **adopted a unicameral parliamentary system**
 - It symbolized **ethnic homogeneity, national identity**, and long struggles against external domination

7. The Case for Bicameralism

Structure and Composition Issues

- The Commission proposed a **105-member upper house: 100 elected proportionally by parties in the lower house and 5 nominated by the President to represent disadvantaged communities**
- Eligibility **requires parties to secure at least 1%** of votes in the lower house, aiming to improve representation of smaller parties under the FPTP system
- Proposals are influenced by countries with long-standing bicameral traditions, such as the UK and USA
 - The UK benefits from **conventions and limited upper-house powers**, while the US Senate suffers from overrepresentation and inefficiencies
- Reform **agendas in Bangladesh often follow a “Wishlist” approach** rather than long-term structural planning

7. The Case for Bicameralism

Representation Issues

- In practice, upper house's **aim is to primarily represent political parties** rather than marginalized groups
- Dominance of **white-collar elites within parties makes voluntary inclusion of marginalized communities unlikely without specific rules**
- The **1% vote threshold** for representation poses challenges for fringe parties
 - Historical elections show dominance by a few parties: **AL, BNP, JP, and JIB**
 - Other parties rarely crossed the 1% threshold, limiting their ability to gain upper-house representation
- This pattern highlights potential **underrepresentation of smaller or marginalized political actors** in a proportional upper house (Ahmed, 2013)

7. The Case for Bicameralism

Pervasive Dominance of Responsiveness to Power Interests

- Political contests in Bangladesh are unlikely to change, reflecting the enduring dominance of responsiveness to power interests
- **New parties**, except those patronized by the state, **struggle to establish secure electoral support**
- Established **parties are likely to retain dominance, although the form of control may evolve**
- Left-oriented parties rarely gain significant representation without alliances and use of a major partner's election symbol
- Regional **representation remains limited, as no party maintains equal support across all areas**
- The BNP's **31-point program proposes upper house members from diverse backgrounds, including educationists, professionals, scientists, journalists, and socialists**
- Without **constituency-based accountability, upper house members are likely to serve party interests or act on behalf of domestic or international agencies**
- Thus, efforts to create an 'independent' voice **may instead reflect the priorities of specific interest groups** rather than the electorate

7. The Case for Bicameralism

Selecting Non-Partisans for the Upper House

- The Election Reform Commission recommended that **half of a party's upper house seats be filled by non-partisan representatives from civil society, academia, science, humanitarian work, labor, women's rights, culture, and marginalized communities**
- It also proposed that **30% of upper house members be women, aiming to enhance responsiveness to diverse and majority interests**
 - The Constitutional Reform Commission did **not suggest any reservation for women**
- If implemented, **non-partisan seats could depoliticize the upper house but may make politicians vulnerable to influence from so-called non-partisans**
- In established democracies, **non-partisans rarely occupy upper house seats directly; they usually participate informally through memoranda, expert testimony, or public hearings**

7. The Case for Bicameralism

Authority of Legislature for Checks & Balances/ Imbalance in Inter-House Relations

- The Constitution Commission did **not grant the upper house any power to initiate legislation**
 - Its role is **limited to reviewing and analyzing bills** referred by the lower house
 - All bills, except money bills, must be submitted by the lower house to the upper house
- While the upper house **can amend, reject, or review bills, failure to act within two months** results in automatic approval, highlighting legislative restraint.
- The Commission suggested **returning bills with amendment proposals could promote inter-house cooperation**
 - But **no formal mechanisms** are proposed to ensure dialogue, resolve deadlocks, or encourage proactive engagement
- Upper house shares with the **lower house the power to pass constitutional amendment bills by a two-thirds majority**
 - **Consistent with most bicameral systems, though variations exist internationally**

7. The Case for Bicameralism

Financial Implication of Bicameralism

- **Bicameral systems generally incur higher costs** due to salaries, staff, infrastructure, and operations for two legislative bodies
- **Countries like India, Nepal, and Pakistan face significant financial commitments**; India's Parliament costs over \$537 million PPP for both chambers
 - **Ratio of budget for both chambers: 65:35**
- Smaller bicameral systems, like Bhutan, cost around \$9.5 million PPP
 - **Ratio of budget for both chambers: 58:42**
- Bicameralism **also increases administrative overhead**
 - But provides a review mechanism to enhance law-making quality
- Unicameral systems, such as Bangladesh and Iran, **operate with lower budgets and simpler administrative structures**

Table: Budgetary allocation for chambers in South Asian Countries

Countries	Chamber	Budget per year in PPP	Ratio of budget in two chambers
Bangladesh	Parliament	N/A	
India	House of the people	349,192,492	65:35
	Council of States	188,109,996	
Nepal	National Assembly	N/A	
	House Of representatives	N/A	
Bhutan	National Assembly	5,557,276	58:42
	National Council	4,024,768	
Sri Lanka	Parliament	N/A	
Maldives	People's Majlis	N/A	
Pakistan	Seante	N/A	
	National Assembly	N/A	
Iran	Islamic Parliament of Iran	N/A	

Source: IPU Database, 2025

7. The Case for Bicameralism

Balancing the power of state organs

Restraints on the Power of Prime Minister

- **Excessive concentration of power** in the Prime Minister and centralization in Dhaka **undermines governance** and encourages tyranny
- Unlike in other regional states, heads of government in Bangladesh historically appoint leaders of constitutional agencies alone, **reducing checks and balances**
- Initial proposals to grant opposition majority in appointments risked government instability
- The Commission now recommends a **Constitutional and Statutory Appointments Committee** of seven members, including the PM, leaders of both houses, a fringe party nominee, and nominees of the President and Chief Justice
- Experts argue opposition may still dominate, potentially affecting executive functioning

Limiting Terms of PM

- The Commission **proposes a 10-year maximum term** for the PM. In practice, these measures are unlikely to prevent executive overreach.
- **Power sharing between PM and President** could produce divided government and governance uncertainty.
- **True accountability** requires balancing power between the executive and parliament, government and opposition, front-benchers and backbenchers, and PM and ministers.
- **Greater inter-organ limits** strengthen institutionalized democracy, whereas **executive empowerment of the President risks destabilizing governance**

7. The Case for Bicameralism

Balancing the power of state organs

Operational Reform of Three State Organs

- The Commission recommends **decentralizing the judiciary, strengthening local government**, and constitutionally protecting fundamental rights (food, education, internet, voting)
- Judicial reforms include a **separate Supreme Court Secretariat**, merit-based appointments, restrictions on pardons, disciplinary mechanisms, and post-retirement limitations to reduce executive influence

Electoral Reform

- Reforms include **mandatory ID for fugitives and violators**, strengthening Election Commission authority, revising PM tenure, increasing women's parliamentary representation, **prohibiting election-disrupting parties**, ensuring free voting rights, and curbing party domination over branches aiming at enhancing representative accountability and **reduce party-centric control of parliamentarians**

7. The Case for Bicameralism

Balancing the power of state organs

Autonomy of Local Government and Decentralization

- Proposals include **allocating one-third of national VAT to local governments**, bringing district offices under elected councils, establishing local courts, city government models, and independent tax collection.
- **Non-party local elections**, simultaneous polls, and women's representation in executive bodies are recommended.
- **Functional local government** would gradually balance power between local and parliamentary representatives.

Reforming the Public Administration System

- The **bureaucracy remains unreformed**; successive governments have failed to improve efficiency or accountability.
 - Under past regimes, bureaucracy was politicized and used to suppress opponents.
- The Public Administration Reform Commission proposed abolition of Zila Parishad, **creation of office of ombudsman**, creation of superior executive service, **merit-based recruitment**

7. The Case for Bicameralism

Balancing the power of state organs

Making the Parliamentary Standing Committees Functional

- Proposals emphasize **functional and effective standing committees**, improved public access to debates, and media engagement for transparency
- Recommendations include **operationalizing the Parliament Media Centre**, holding the executive accountable, limiting committee certification powers, **maintaining Parliament-judiciary balance**, and **promoting citizen participation in agenda-setting**

8. Analysis of Accountability in Different Parliamentary Systems: Lessons for Bangladesh

8. Analysis of Accountability in Different Parliamentary Systems: Lessons for Bangladesh

- Based on the **Inter- Parliamentary Union (IPU) data**, a cross-sectional analysis has been carried out on different aspects of unicameralism & bicameralism regarding its structure, formulation and different issues of the parliament members
- **South Asian countries** have been considered as the evidence for detailed analysis where Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives practise unicameral parliamentary system; on the other hand, Afghanistan, Bhutan, India and Pakistan practise the bicameral Parliamentary system

8. Analysis of Accountability in Different Parliamentary Systems: Lessons for Bangladesh

Practices of Accountability in Unicameral Parliamentary Systems in South Asian Countries

Factors	Issues	Bangladesh	Maldives	Sri Lanka
Representation and accountability- dual representation & responsiveness to the majority	Principal mode of designation of members	Directly Elected	Directly Elected	Directly Elected
	Compulsory voting	No	No	No
Stability of the law- legislative stability & restraint	Parliamentary Terms	5	5	5
Accountability of the legislators- Accountability & procedural openness	Committee meetings are open to public	No	No	No
	Members are required to declare income	No	Yes	No
	The agendas of plenary meetings are published online in advance	All	All	All
	The agendas of committee meetings are published online in advance	Some	All	All
Authority of legislature – legislative authority	Parliament has a specialised unit to conduct budgetary analysis	Yes	No	No
	Parliament has the power to carry out inquiries	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Parliament has the power to summon members of the govt	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Parliament has the power to approve key govt appointments	No	Yes	Yes
	Parliament's power to amend the budget	Parliament may only decrease existing expenditures/revenues (i.e. Parliament cannot increase existing items or create new ones)	Parliament has unrestricted powers	Parliament may modify the total deficit/surplus proposed by the Executive
	Responsibility for preparing the proposal for the parliamentary agenda	Parliament & The executive together	The Executive	Parliament
	The parliamentary administration is independent from the govt	Yes	Yes	Yes
Quality of decision making- Citizen's participation	Citizens can submit comments on draft legislation on the parliamentary website	No	Yes	No
Concentration of Power within the Legislature- Internal constraints on power	Members of the govt must also be members	Can be a MP	Cannot be a MP	Cannot be a MP

8. Analysis of Accountability in Different Parliamentary Systems: Lessons for Bangladesh

Practices of Accountability in Bicameral Parliamentary Systems in South Asian & Other Countries

Issues	Bhutan		India		Pakistan		Nepal		United Kingdom	
	Assembly	Council	CoS	HoP	Assembly	Senate	Assembly	HoR	HoC	HoL
Principal mode of designation of members	Plurality/majority (FPTP)	Plurality/majority (FPTP) (non-partisan)	Indirectly elected	Directly elected	Directly elected	Indirectly elected	Indirectly elected	mixed	Directly elected	Indirectly elected
Parliament/chamber has the power to summon senior government officials	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	No
Committee meetings are open to public	No	N/A	No	No	No	Yes	N/A	No	Yes	Yes
The agendas of plenary meetings are published online in advance	No	Some	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Some	Yes	Yes
Parliamentary powers to amend the budget	N/A	N/A	May only decrease existing expenditures/revenues	may only decrease existing expenditures/revenues	unrestricted powers to amend the budget	unrestricted powers to amend the budget	may not make any changes	may not make any changes	May only decrease existing expenditures/revenues	May only decrease existing expenditures/revenues
The agendas of committee meetings are published online	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	N/A	Some	Some	Some
Parliament has a specialised unit to conduct budgetary analysis	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Parliament has the power to carry out inquiries	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bill initiation	May initiate any bill	May initiate any bill except money bill	May initiate any bill except money bill	May initiate any bill	May introduce any bill	Cannot introduce bill	May initiate any bill except money bill and security bill	May introduce any bill	May initiate any bill	May initiate any bill except money bill

8. Analysis of Accountability in Different Parliamentary Systems: Lessons for Bangladesh

Practices of Accountability in Bicameral Parliamentary Systems in South Asian & Other Countries

Issues	Bhutan		India		Pakistan		Nepal		United Kingdom	
	Assembly	Council	CoS	HoP	Assembly	Senate	Assembly	HoR	HoC	HoL
Responsibility to prepare proposal for parliamentary agenda	The executive	The executive	Other	Other	The executive & parliament together	The executive & parliament together	The executive	The executive	Parliament	Parliament
Parliamentary Administration is independent from govt	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Citizens can submit comment on the draft legislation on the parliamentary website	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	N/A	No	No	No
Members of the govt must also be members of parliament	Can be an MP	Cannot be an MP	Must be an MP	Must be an MP	Must be an MP	Must be an MP	Must be an MP	Must be an MP	Must be an MP	Must be an MP
Outcome when the two chambers cannot agree on a piece of draft legislation	A Joint Sitting of the Parliament is conducted	A Joint Sitting of the Parliament is conducted	Joint sitting for any bill except money bill	Joint sitting for Any bill	A Joint Session of both Houses and the decision of the majority prevail.	A Joint Session of both Houses and the decision of the majority prevail.	A joint sitting of both houses	a joint sitting of both houses	If the two Houses do not agree on the text of the legislation the House of Commons can decide to apply the Parliament Acts under which the House of Commons can apply for Royal Assent for its text of the legislation without the agreement of the House of Lords.	If the two Houses do not agree on the text of the legislation the House of Commons can decide to apply the Parliament Acts under which the House of Commons can apply for Royal Assent for its text of the legislation without the agreement of the House of Lords.

8. Analysis of Accountability in Different Parliamentary Systems: Lessons for Bangladesh

- This study places Bangladesh within a comparative institutional framework to investigate **how institutional characteristics influence governance performance**
 - It draws on **cross-country panel data from 1996 to 2020**
 - The dataset **captures political system type, the presence of bicameralism, electoral design**, party alignment between legislative chambers, political polarization, and the presence of military executives
- **Governance outcomes** are measured through indicators such as **control of corruption**, government effectiveness, voice and accountability, and judicial independence
 - while government social expenditure is included as a measure of public service provision. Institutional and electoral characteristics are obtained from the Database of Political Institutions, while political constraints are drawn from the Political Constraint Index
- **Governance quality** is measured using the **Worldwide Governance Indicators**
 - Macroeconomic performance is proxied by GDP per capita from the World Development Indicators.
 - This empirical analysis employs a panel data framework across five models
- Models one to three **use control of corruption, government effectiveness, and voice and accountability** as dependent variables
 - Model **four evaluates government social expenditure**, while model five examines judicial independence.
 - Explanatory variables include bicameralism, system type, electoral design, party alignment, polarization, and GDP per capita, with a time trend to account for systematic changes over time

8. Analysis of Accountability in Different Parliamentary Systems: Lessons for Bangladesh

- **Bicameralism** and proportional representation systems are **generally associated with weaker governance outcomes**, although bicameralism is positively related to government social expenditure
 - Parliamentary and assembly-based systems are **linked to improvements in the control of corruption** and voice and accountability
 - Alignment between houses and higher levels of political polarization are **both negatively related to governance indicators**
 - The method of upper house selection by plurality shows **mixed results**, with positive associations for corruption control and accountability but **negative associations** for social expenditure and the judiciary

Table 1: Results of the Cross-Country Quantitative Investigation

Variable	Control of Corruption	Government Effectiveness	Voice & Accountability	Gov. Social Expenditure	Independent Judiciary
Bicameralism	Negative (-)	Negative (-)	Negative (-)	Positive (+)	
Assembly-elected president	Positive (+)	Negative (-)	Positive (+)		
Parliamentary	Positive (+)		Positive (+)		Positive (+)
Alignment between houses	Negative (-)				
Political polarization (high)	Negative (-)	Negative (-)			
Upper house selection: plurality	Positive (+)		Positive (+)	Negative (-)	Negative (-)
Proportional representation system	Negative (-)	Negative (-)			Negative (-)
GDP per capita (PPP)		Negative (-)		Negative (-)	

Source: Author's Analysis, 2025

8. Analysis of Accountability in Different Parliamentary Systems: Lessons for Bangladesh

- The findings indicate that **unicameral systems are positively associated** with control of corruption, government effectiveness, and voice and accountability, with the strongest effect observed for citizen participation and inclusiveness
 - Bicameral legislatures, in contrast, **are negatively associated with corruption control**, effectiveness, and accountability, although they correlate positively with social expenditure
 - Party alignment across legislative chambers **reduces oversight and weakens** control of corruption
 - The electoral design of upper houses also matters. **Plurality-based systems are linked to weaker judicial independence**, although they sometimes show positive associations with accountability
 - Importantly, parliamentary systems are more likely to sustain **judicial independence** compared to presidential or hybrid regimes

8. Analysis of Accountability in Different Parliamentary Systems: Lessons for Bangladesh

- Policy implications emerge directly from these results
 - First, **bicameralism should not be considered a straightforward solution**, as its contribution to accountability depends on its design and independence. Any introduction of an upper chamber must be carefully structured, possibly through proportional representation, to function as an effective oversight body
 - Second, **parliamentary systems demonstrate clear advantages** in governance quality, suggesting that strengthening legislative committees, inter-party deliberation, and oversight mechanisms offers a more reliable path to reform than structural innovation alone
 - Third, reducing full political alignment between executive and legislative powers is essential to maintaining accountability. **Competitive dynamics, meaningful opposition participation, and transparent legislative processes** are necessary to prevent the concentration of power
 - Finally, **sustaining judicial independence remains critical** for the rule of law and effective governance, which requires safeguarding appointments from partisan influence and ensuring institutional protection for the judiciary
- In summary, the study finds that the **quality of governance depends less on the existence of new structural features and more on institutional design** that ensures inclusiveness, independence, and accountability
 - For Bangladesh, this implies prioritizing reforms that strengthen parliamentary oversight and judicial autonomy while preventing excessive executive concentration, rather than focusing narrowly on creating a bicameral legislature

9. Recommendations

9. Recommendations

- Based on the detailed review, analysis and cross-country exercise on accountability issues related to different forms of parliamentary practices, CPD would like to put forward following suggestions.
- Interim government, especially the Consensus Commission should **drop the proposal of forming an upper house** from the final consensus list
- The Consensus Commission **should put focus on different reform proposals** targeted to the judiciary, local government, electoral system and political parties in the final consensus list
- The 13th New Parliament should put focus on **strengthening the existing parliamentary system** by necessary legal, institutional and operational measures as suggested below
- The 13th New Parliament may consider setting up a **‘Parliamentary Commission for Democracy, Legislative, Executive and Legal Affairs’**

9. Recommendations

9.1 Strengthening institutional reform through Reform Proposals

- CPD found that the reform mechanisms suggested by the Constitution and Election Reform Commissions carry **normative appeal** but fall short of **practical applicability** in Bangladesh's political culture
- Proposals such as bicameralism, proportional representation, inclusion of non-partisan figures, and committees for appointments are designed to strengthen accountability, transparency, and checks on majority dominance
 - Yet in a system historically shaped by **entrenched partisanship, patronage**, and a winner-takes-all political ethos, these measures risk becoming ornamental rather than functional
 - While their democratic potential cannot be entirely dismissed, in practice they are likely to produce **unintended consequences such as deadlock, manipulation**, or further concentration of power under dominant parties
 - Thus, instead of ensuring accountability and balance, these mechanisms **may replicate existing weaknesses**, showing that **without deeper structural and cultural transformation**, institutional reforms alone cannot guarantee meaningful checks and balances in Bangladesh
- The study **appreciates different recommendations** made for strengthening the existing parliamentary system
 - These include **floor crossing** of parliament members, making **standing committees functional** by appointing members from the opposition parties, **transparency of political parties' fund** raising and fund utilisation mechanism, **strengthening local government** system, extending more authority to the local government with more fiscal authority, higher female representation in local and national elections
 - However, the majority party should have the **authority to function the executive responsibilities** properly-hence all important and constitutional positions to be appointed by the government but those could be reviewed by the national parliament through a review committee

9. Recommendations

9.2 Strengthening the Existing Parliament – Jatiya Sangsad

9.2.1 Expanding Private Members' Participation and Legislative Balance

- To make the system more accountable, reforms must **reduce procedural barriers** and widen the scope for private members' participation.
 - Relaxing the **rigid referral of private members' bills** to committees and **enabling MPs to play a more active** legislative role, as in other Westminster parliaments, could diffuse concentrated power and ensure broader representation
- Equally, **empowering parliamentary committees** with stronger scrutiny functions would raise the quality of oversight and allow opposition MPs to meaningfully challenge government proposals

9.2.2 Overcoming weaknesses in scrutiny of legislation

- Although recent improvements, such as the practice of referring bills to committees after the first reading, have enhanced the legislative process, committee scrutiny remains rushed and superficial.
 - Despite provisions for public participation in the legislative process, these opportunities are rarely utilized, leaving significant gaps in democratic engagement
- Reforms should focus on **improving the quality of committee deliberations** by allowing for more time, enhancing public participation in the process, and ensuring **greater independence of committee leadership**

9. Recommendations

9.2.3 Restructuring Prime Minister's Question Time (PMQT)

- Reforms should focus on **restructuring PMQT to ensure questions are selected by ballot**, not the Prime Minister, to prevent partisan bias
 - The **Speaker's authority should be strengthened** to enforce rules against long-winded replies and partisan tactics
- Opposition engagement **must be guaranteed**, with the Leader of the Opposition present and allotted fixed questions
 - Question rules should ensure PMQT focuses on high policy, while departmental issues are redirected to relevant ministries
- **Oversight motions should be streamlined**, reducing delays and ensuring timely government responses

9.2.4 Strengthening Committee Oversight of the Executive

- Committee meetings must be held **regularly and with sufficient duration** to ensure thorough scrutiny of government activities
- Enforcing a **strict reporting schedule** for committees, similar to the process for bill scrutiny, would ensure that their findings are consistently presented to the House, allowing for timely deliberation
- Additionally, committees should **avoid focusing too heavily on partisan** or past government issues, as seen in the current practice where committees emphasize the activities of previous administrations rather than holding the current government accountable
 - To address this, **clear guidelines** should be established to ensure that committees maintain a balanced approach, focusing on the present government's actions while still addressing historical concerns where relevant
 - Strengthening the power to **enforce attendance and compelling the production** of documents is critical to overcoming challenges in holding witnesses accountable

9. Recommendations

9.2.5 Ensuring Opposition Participation and Ending Parliamentary Boycotts

- To end the cycle of boycotts and restore accountability, Bangladesh must **first address rigged elections**, which erode legitimacy and push the opposition out of Parliament
 - **Ensuring free, fair, and transparent polls** through an empowered Election Commission is the starting point
 - Inside Parliament, **meaningful opposition participation** should be guaranteed by limiting excessive party control over MPs and encouraging greater independence in representing constituencies
 - Mechanisms such as **cross-party committees and stricter oversight requirements** would create constructive avenues for opposition engagement
 - Finally, curbing the practice of **partisan domination of proceedings and institutionalizing stronger checks** and balances would reduce incentives for walkouts

9.2.6 Enhancing Budgetary Oversight and Financial Accountability

- **Budgetary oversight** by the financial committees in Bangladesh must be effective
 - First, the Committee on Public Accounts (PAC) **should expand its scope beyond merely reviewing audit reports** and actively engage in addressing financial irregularities and reviewing annual financial accounts as stipulated by its mandate
 - The committee **must also work towards reducing the audit report backlog** by setting clear timelines for processing older reports, as delays hinder effective oversight
 - Committee on Public Undertakings (PUC) and the Committee on Estimates (EC) should **enhance their engagement with public institutions**, ensuring their recommendations align with government policies and consider administrative reforms

9. Recommendations

9.3 Establishing an Independent Commission for Accountability

- This study explores an **alternate institution** which could play an oversight role in order to support the parliamentary affairs properly
 - A cross-country data analysis reveals that Kenya and the UK practice Commissions for parliamentary oversight and support. Kenya's Parliamentary Service Commission and the UK's House of Commons Commission (Jogerst, 1993) are tasked with managing staffing, budgeting, and internal governance to ensure the effective functioning of their parliaments
 - While they play a significant role in strengthening parliamentary activities, their location within the parliamentary structure means they are not fully independent and remain subject to political influence
- CPD's research study argues for the establishment of an independent commission in Bangladesh that can provide both pre-legislative and post-legislative support to ensure the desirable state of impartial scrutiny, stronger accountability, and more democratic practices
 - In this connection, this study recommends setting up a Commission currently in operation in the European Commission titled "European Commission for Democracy through Law". The name of the proposed commission could be – **'Parliamentary Commission for Democracy, Legislative, Executive and Legal Affairs'**

9. Recommendations

9.3 Establishing an Independent Commission for Accountability

- The main purposes of the Commission **are constitutional, legislative and administrative** principles and techniques that serve the efficiency of democratic institutions and their strengthening
 - It also aims to protect **fundamental rights and freedoms** that involve the participation of the citizens
 - Furthermore, it contributes to local and regional self-government for the enhancement of democracy
- The Commission also encourages setting up similar bodies in other regions of the world and links them to run joint programmes within its field of activity
 - Furthermore, it carries out **research, prepares studies** and drafts guidelines
 - It is funded by member states of the **Enlarged Agreement**
 - Although it is assisted by the Secretariat General of the Council, it may take the **assistance of consultants**. It may also accept voluntary contributions

9. Recommendations

9.3 Establishing an Independent Commission for Accountability

- On appointment and term, **independent experts having eminent experience** in democratic institutions and excellent contribution to the enhancement of law and political science shall compose the Commission
- On operational independence and interaction with stakeholders, the **Commission members are independent** and shall not receive any instruction from outside
 - The Commission members and experts receive guidance and support in exercising their duties throughout their mandate by the Secretary
 - The Commission engages in confidential discussion with governmental or public bodies, representatives of the private sector or from civil society during plenary sessions
- **On report, session and confidential protocol**, although draft opinions and reports are restricted for the public, they shall be public once adopted by the Commission
 - The sessions that the **Commission holds are private**, and the President can invite guest representatives of interested institutions to participate in plenary sessions

Thank you.