

Revision of Rules of Procedure in the Parliamentary System

Perspective From the Post-Election Development

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Executive Summary

This report examines the amendments required to the Rules of Procedure (RoP) of the Bangladesh National Parliament in light of the parliamentary reform agenda emerging from the 2026 Referendum, the July National Charter, and subsequent post-election developments. It argues that the existing RoP, designed for an earlier institutional context, is no longer adequate to support evolving constitutional and governance arrangements. Drawing on comparative parliamentary practices, expert consultations, and CPD's previous research (Moazzem et al., 2026), the study identifies procedural and institutional gaps that limit transparency, accountability, legislative effectiveness, and the capacity of Parliament to exercise meaningful oversight over the executive. The report therefore proposes a comprehensive framework for revising the RoP to accommodate both constitutionally mandated reforms and broader improvements in parliamentary governance.

The study identifies two categories of reform. The first concerns amendments required to operationalise reforms emerging from the Referendum Ordinance and the July National Charter, including procedures relating to Prime Ministerial term limits, expanded women's representation, the appointment of Deputy Speakers and Standing Committee Chairs from the opposition, parliamentary privileges, restrictions on dual office holding, and floor crossing. Since many of these reforms introduce institutional arrangements not currently recognised within the existing RoP, the report recommends both the revision of existing rules and the incorporation of new procedural provisions. Comparative analysis of parliamentary practices in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the United Kingdom, and Italy demonstrates that while several proposals are institutionally novel, carefully designed procedural rules can strengthen the balance between executive authority and parliamentary accountability.

Beyond referendum-related reforms, the report identifies persistent weaknesses in the practical functioning of Parliament that require procedural reform irrespective of constitutional change. These include the marginalisation of private members' bills, inadequate legislative scrutiny, ineffective Prime Minister's Question Time, weak committee oversight, low parliamentary participation, and limited financial oversight during the budget process. Although many of these mechanisms already exist within the current RoP, they have remained largely ineffective because of procedural ambiguities, weak enforcement, and executive dominance. The report, therefore, recommends strengthening implementation through clearer procedural rules, enhanced committee jurisdictions, improved parliamentary practices, and the establishment of an independent Parliamentary Commission to monitor compliance with the Rules of Procedure and support evidence-based legislative oversight.

The report also assesses recent post-election developments and their implications for parliamentary reform. While the referendum has provided a public mandate for constitutional reform, significant legal and procedural questions remain regarding the implementation of the Constitution Reform Council, the relationship between the Implementation Order and constitutional amendment procedures, and the sequencing of parliamentary approval. The study concludes that successful parliamentary reform will depend not only on constitutional amendments but also on modernising the Rules of Procedure to ensure that new institutional arrangements operate effectively in practice. A coherent and enforceable RoP will be essential for strengthening parliamentary democracy by promoting transparency, accountability, inclusive participation, and more effective legislative governance in Bangladesh.



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The authors are highly grateful to the distinguished parliamentary experts, constitutional scholars, legal practitioners, former parliamentary officials, and academics who generously shared their time and expertise through the Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). Their valuable insights on parliamentary procedure, constitutional reform, legislative oversight, and comparative parliamentary practices greatly enriched the analytical foundation of this report.

The research team also gratefully acknowledges the valuable support received from *Mr Avra Bhattacharjee*, Additional Director, Dialogue and Outreach, CPD, and *Mr H M Al Imran Khan*, Publication Associate, CPD.



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Acronyms

BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
EC	Estimamte Committee
EC	Election Commission
JS	Jatiya Sangsad
NCP	National Citizen Party
PM	Prime Minister
PR	Proportional Represesntaion
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
PMQT	Prime Minister's Question time
PUC	Public Undertakings Committee
RoP	Rules of Procedure



Introduction and Objectives of the Study

1

Following prolonged discussions among political parties, several institutional and parliamentary reform issues were identified as requiring structural change. These included the introduction of a bicameral legislature with a 100-member upper house, with seats distributed in proportion to the votes received by political parties in parliamentary elections; amendment of Article 70 to allow MPs to vote independently on all matters except budgetary and confidence votes; the election of the Deputy Speaker and parliamentary committee chairs from the opposition; and term limits for the Prime Minister. These issues later became central to the national political debate and were subsequently reflected in the reform agenda discussed prior to the 13th National Parliament election. With the completion of the 13th National Election and the formation of a new Parliament, these reform proposals are now expected to enter the formal legislative arena. Consequently, the newly constituted Parliament will serve as the principal forum where these issues will be deliberated, debated, and ultimately determine whether and how they will be implemented through constitutional amendments or procedural reforms.

Although political parties reached consensus on several reform issues during earlier discussions, the July National Charter also acknowledged that many parties intended to implement a number of these reforms according to their own political mandates once elected to power. Following the election, an elected government is now in place; however, the legal validity and future implementation of the Referendum Ordinance remain subject to ongoing scrutiny. In this context, greater attention must be directed towards the parliamentary issues that are expected to be discussed within the legislature itself. Many of these issues introduce institutional arrangements that are not currently addressed within the existing Rules of Procedure (RoP). Given their novelty and their potential implications for improving transparency, strengthening majority accountability, and enhancing the efficiency of parliamentary functioning, revising and amending the existing RoP has emerged as a necessary step to accommodate these reforms within the parliamentary governance framework.

The 2026 referendum, which gained significant public mandate, has highlighted multiple governance and parliamentary issues that are entirely new to the existing unicameral legislature. These include introducing term limits for the Prime Minister, determining the chairmanship of parliamentary standing committees from opposition, nominating speakers and deputy speakers, and clarifying the inter-house relationship, along with the legal limitations of authority and power for each chamber. These proposed reforms directly call for comprehensive and integrated RoP that address all the new structural and procedural demands. This debate has underscored the necessity to amend the existing RoP.

Against this backdrop, the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), in partnership with the European Union (EU), undertakes this study to identify and revise specific areas of the Rules of Procedure that have been explicitly implicated in the ongoing reform proposals. The study focuses on how targeted and systemic amendments to the Rules of Procedure can respond to emerging procedural requirements while remaining grounded in Bangladesh's parliamentary practice. Beyond textual revision, the study proposes revision for the RoP to clarify inter-

institutional relations, regulate parliamentary authority, and ensure efficiency, transparency, and accountability in legislative functioning.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- a) To analyse the existing RoP of the National Parliament and identify the procedural and institutional gaps that hinder accountability, transparency, and efficiency in parliamentary operations.
- b) To critically examine the extent to which the RoP enables or constrains the transparency, accountability and operational dominance of the majority party in the parliamentary system.
- c) To analyse cross-country practices of parliamentary RoP and drawing lessons that are relevant and adaptable to the context of Bangladesh.
- d) To develop and propose necessary amendments revisions, and extensions to the existing RoP in order to incorporate the parliamentary reform issues identified in the 2026 referendum, ensuring that the RoP remains adaptable and responsive to the evolving legislative and governance needs of Bangladesh's National Parliament.



Overview of the Referendum Ordinance and Required Amendments to the Rules of Procedure

2

2.1. Background of The Referendum Ordinance

The Interim government has issued the Referendum Ordinance with the objective of providing legal ground to the July Charter in response to the demands of political parties. Articles 3, 4, 5, and 6 of the Implementation Order¹ provide the legal framework for holding a referendum. Article 5 specifies the question to be placed on the referendum ballot. Considering the July Charter, a detailed description has been provided regarding the aspirations of 33 political parties and alliances concerning the future roles of the legislature, executive, judiciary and other independent state institutions, as well as the government's policy and procedural decisions taken in response to those aspirations.

Out of the 33 political parties/alliances that participated in the discussions of the Consensus Commission, 24 parties/alliances have signed the Charter which is considered as a political document. However, the Communist Party of Bangladesh and four left-leaning parties have not yet signed the Charter. In addition to the Order, the July Charter² and the Referendum Ordinance³ will require approval in the next National Parliament which means they must be placed before the Parliament for approval in the first session after the formation of the Thirteenth National Parliament for implementing the Reform Proposals articulated in the Ordinance.

Through the four questions of the Referendum Ordinance, public consent is being sought on three broad and distinct issues:

- (a) consent to the July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Ordinance, 2025;
- (b) consent regarding specific constitutional reform proposals recorded in the July Charter; and
- (c) consent regarding the implementation of other reforms outlined in the July National Charter in line with the commitments of political parties.

Within these three components, the July Charter itself contains 84 separate items. When these are combined with the 23 articles of the Referendum Ordinance and the 15 articles of the July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Ordinance, a total of 122 issues or articles are effectively placed before the public. This means that, instead of deciding on four issues, voters are being asked to decide on 122 distinct matters through a single response (Moazzem, 2025).

¹July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Order, November 13, 2025.

²The July National Charter, 2025.

³The Ordinance promulgated for the purpose of framing provisions for holding a referendum to verify whether public consent exists regarding certain proposals related to constitutional reform, in accordance with the July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Order, 2025.

2.2. Issues on Which Revision is Required to the Rules of Procedure as per Referendum Ordinance

Revision of the existing RoP of the Parliament can only take place after necessary constitutional reforms are formally established. The Referendum Ordinance has enlisted 30 reform issues in its third question, of which four are directly related to parliamentary matters. These four issues have been derived from the broader set of 84 reform proposals contained in the July Charter and have been prioritised for immediate consideration. Once these issues are constitutionally endorsed through the referendum and implementation process, they will create the primary legal and procedural basis for initiating amendments to the current RoP. Therefore, these seven parliamentary reform issues together constitute a major cluster of areas where revision of the RoP will become both necessary and applicable.

The third referendum question of article 4 refers to the 30 issues of the July National Charter that achieved consensus among 33 parties. There is a cluster consists of six parliamentary issues (Table 1) among those 30 issues that have successfully reached a consensus among the political parties.⁴ These points are formally articulated in the Referendum Ordinance and include matters such as – a) PM term limits, c) increasing women's representation in the parliament, d) nominating Deputy speaker from the opposition, g) selecting chairman of parliamentary standing committees from opposition. Since the referendum held on 12th February received public mandate, the seven agreed-upon points will be discussed in the parliament and implemented by the 13th Parliament and the Constitution Reform Council, in line with the method committed to in the winning party's electoral manifesto, as outlined in the July National Charter.

Table 1 Issues of RoP Amendment as per Referendum Ordinance and July Charter

Ordinance issues	Charter issues	Issues on which parties have note of dissent
• PM term limits	• Dual office holding	• The PM can simultaneously remain the head of the party. • If any political party or alliance mentions this in their electoral manifesto & receives a public mandate, they may take arrangements accordingly.
• Increasing women representation in the parliament	• Bar on Floor Crossing	• If any political party or alliance mentions this in their electoral manifesto and receives a public mandate, they may take arrangements accordingly.
• Deputy speaker from the opposition		• If any political party or alliance mentions this in their electoral manifesto and receives a public mandate, they may take arrangements accordingly.
• Chairman of committees from opposition		• If any political party or alliance mentions this in their electoral manifesto and receives a public mandate, they may take arrangements accordingly.

Source: Authors' compilation.

2.3. Amendment of Existing Rules of Procedure as Per Referendum Ordinance

The necessity to revisit the Rules of Procedure (RoP) reflects a critical institutional shortfall exposed by three converging factors: a) CPD's findings from previous study (Moazzem et al., 2026), b) persistent concerns in the Referendum Ordinance and c) the structural proposals outlined in the July Charter. Together, these developments expose the structural inadequacy of the current RoP, many of whose provisions are outdated, incomplete, and ill-suited to the expanded institutional demands now placed on Parliament. Existing rules remain weak in enforcing executive accountability, as several provisions lack clear triggers, binding consequences, and robust oversight mechanisms, resulting in fragmented scrutiny and limited legislative control. These deficiencies are compounded by unresolved questions around bicameral design, legislative competencies, committee architecture, quorum

⁴There is huge debate whether a referendum could take place on such many issues (122) with only one binary response (yes/no). It is to be noted that most of the issues endorsed by all participated parties/alliances- the highest 32 parties have agreed in one issue only.

and voting rules, and executive–legislative interface, all of which remain outside the effective reach of the current RoP. As these gaps prevent the RoP from sustaining a balanced and functional relationship between the executive and the legislature, a whole-of-system, comprehensive amendment becomes essential to modernise parliamentary practice and align it with contemporary governance requirements. Two types of adjustments will be necessary- 1) Revision to the RoP and 2) Addition to the RoP.

2.3.1. Revision to the RoP

Although the RoP formally provides for Prime Minister’s Question Time (PMQT), private members’ bills, and committee oversight, their implications in practice have remained largely hollow and, in several instances, procedurally distorted. During the previous regime in Bangladesh, the PMQT was widely criticised by observers and media commentators for being dominated by interventions rather than scrutiny, with questions appearing selectively admitted and structured in ways that shielded the executive from substantive accountability. Similarly, while the RoP allow private members’ bills, these provisions offer no realistic competitive space vis-à-vis government bills, as private initiatives are routinely crowded out, delayed or rendered redundant when identical or overlapping government bills are prioritised. Committee oversight mechanisms suffer from comparable procedural weaknesses; meetings are irregular, often convened in haste, follow-up is weak, and committees have at times undertaken activities that appear to fall outside their mandated jurisdiction, diluting their core oversight function. These outcomes are not incidental but reflect the limited enforceability, vague design, and executive-centric bias of existing RoP provisions, underscoring the need for targeted and substantive revisions if the proposed reforms are to have any practical effect.

2.3.2. Addition to the RoP

The July Charter and the Referendum Ordinance introduce a range of institutional and procedural issues that are entirely absent from the existing RoP, making the addition of new provisions indispensable to operationalise the reform agenda. On the issue of Standing Committee chairmanship, the RoP provide no guidance on selection, rotation, or insulation from executive influence, nor do they require that chairs be drawn from the opposition, leaving committees susceptible to continued executive domination. Parliamentary privileges and liabilities are addressed only in general terms, with no mechanism to clarify MPs’ rights, adjudicate disputes, regulate misuse, or enforce disciplinary action, perpetuating accountability gaps that the reforms seek to close. The President’s engagement with Parliament, particularly regarding powers and emergency declarations is largely ungoverned beyond the obligation to transmit messages before sessions, necessitating stepwise procedural rules to ensure oversight and constitutional compliance.

Newly introduced measures, including Prime Ministerial term limits and prohibitions on dual office-holding, require explicit procedural articulation to translate these constraints into enforceable parliamentary practices and prevent executive overreach. Expanded women’s representation similarly demands enforceable criteria, nomination protocols, and compliance mechanisms to render the commitment operational rather than symbolic. Finally, matters such as floor-crossing regulation and treaty ratification are unaddressed in the current RoP; without structured instructions, party democracy and legislative scrutiny of international agreements will remain inconsistent and ineffective. Collectively, these reform proposals cannot be implemented within the existing procedural framework, making the addition of explicit, enforceable rules to the RoP imperative.



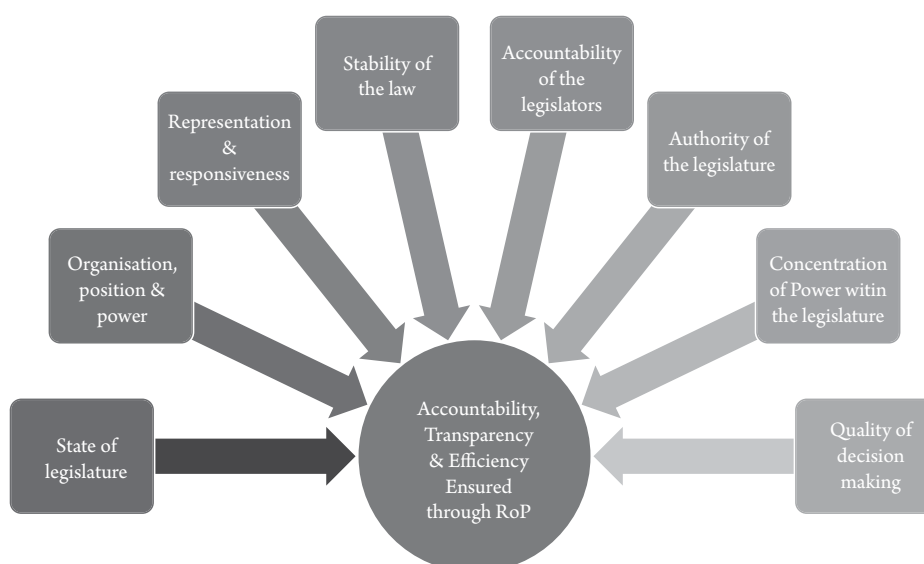
Analytical Framework for the Revision of Rules of Procedure Considering Referendum Ordinance

3

Parliamentary accountability in Bangladesh has historically rested on a limited set of institutional instruments. Chowdhury (2025) points to four core pillars that shape transparency and efficiency in a parliamentary setting: the organisation and distribution of power within Parliament, the operational state of the legislature and its committees, an independent judiciary, and electorate in enforcing political accountability. These elements have jointly determined how Parliament legislates, oversees the executive, and remains answerable to citizens.

Tom Todd's (1999) framework identifies eight critical factors for assessing parliamentary systems prior to structural transition: representation and accountability, stability of the law, accountability of legislators, legislative authority, concentration of power, quality of decision-making, efficiency and economy, and the role of custom and precedent. Taken together, these factors provide a comprehensive lens to evaluate institutional resilience and reform readiness.

Figure 1 Determining Factors of Parliamentary Accountability, Transparency and Efficiency



Source: (Chowdhury, 2025 and Todd, 1999).

The July National Charter proposals, however, do not seek a comprehensive overhaul of the parliamentary system. Rather, they focus on a limited but high-impact set of reforms associated with the recalibration of parliamentary authority. Given this focus, the study selectively draws on those analytical dimensions most relevant to the RoP reform and institutional rebalancing. This selectivity is not a limitation; rather, it reflects the novelty of many Charter proposals within Bangladesh's parliamentary context and the need for targeted, practicable amendments.

Following the framework of the study on the majority party's accountability, national parliament's transparency and efficiency, this study incorporates the conceptual framework for revising the RoP. The revision of the RoP will follow eight principles- 1) State of legislature, 2) Organisation, position and power, 3) Representation and responsiveness, 4) Stability of law, 5) Authority of the legislature, 6) Concentration of power within the legislature, 7) Accountability of the legislators, 8) Quality of decision making (Figure 1). Focusing on these areas enables a grounded assessment of where existing RoP are insufficient where new provisions are required and how institutional design choices may either strengthen or undermine accountability in a transitioning parliamentary system.



This study employs a layered methodological approach combining primary expert consultations and structured comparative analysis. The primary source of data consists of interviews with RoP scholars, parliamentary practitioners, and subject-matter experts. These consultations provide first-hand insights into parliamentary practice, executive-legislative dynamics, and the operational implications of procedural reform within the existing unicameral system. Expert input is used to assess the feasibility, contextual relevance, and operational challenges of revising the RoP for the national parliament, focusing on revision of the existing chamber's RoP and addressing emerging procedural challenges and reform debates in Bangladesh's unicameral system.

Secondary data is drawn from a systematic review of the RoP of selected parliamentary systems, including those of India's Lok Sabha, Pakistan's National Assembly, and the Parliament of Sri Lanka, to identify areas requiring addition, modification, or extension. This comparative review provides insights into how procedural rules can effectively address legislative needs while reinforcing institutional strengths. In the context of this study, these comparative lessons serve to guide amendments to the existing Rules of Procedure of Bangladesh's National Parliament.

Once a future upper house be established, a separate study will be required to design a tailored institutional framework for its operations. Drawing from the methodology outlined above, this future study will similarly incorporate expert consultations and comparative reviews of bicameral parliamentary systems. However, the focus will shift to designing a procedural framework for the upper house, drawing on lessons from the RoP of other bicameral parliaments, such as the United Kingdom's House of Lords, India's Rajya Sabha, and Pakistan's Senate. The new study will assess the roles, functions, and inter-house coordination necessary for a well-defined and effective upper chamber, ensuring that it complements the existing unicameral system while promoting efficient governance.



Framework for the Revision of the Rules of Procedure for the Lower House of the Parliament

5

From the discussion in the overview section, particularly on the Referendum Ordinance question, it is evident that several institutional and procedural issues have been proposed for reform in the National Parliament. These issues reflect long-standing concerns about balance of power, inclusiveness and accountability within the parliamentary system.

One major set of proposed reforms relates to executive power and representation. These include introducing a term limit for the Prime Minister, increasing women's representation in Parliament, and gradually expanding the number of reserved seats for women to 100. Proposals also emphasise strengthening the role of the opposition by appointing a Deputy Speaker from the opposition and ensuring that the chairs of Parliamentary Standing Committees are drawn from opposition members.

In addition, there are further reform proposals that address structural weaknesses in parliamentary governance. These include limiting the Prime Minister's dual office holding, enforcing stricter bar on floor crossing, and establishing clearer procedures for the ratification of international treaties by the Parliament. Together, these measures aim to reduce executive dominance and reinforce parliamentary authority.

5.1. Areas of Amendment in the RoP of National Parliament as per Referendum Ordinance

5.1.1. Issue of limiting Prime Minister's Term

Table 2 presents the areas identified for amendment in the RoP of the lower house of Bangladesh Parliament, as outlined in the Referendum Ordinance. Although several institutional issues were listed, political parties demonstrated no major disagreement over most of them, as the July Charter allowed future governments to implement these reforms according to their respective manifestos (July National Charter, 2025). However, the issue of limiting the Prime Minister's term generated unanimous agreement among political parties, distinguishing it from other proposed reforms.

A comparative review of the Rules of Procedure of selected countries, namely India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, and Italy - reveals that none of these parliamentary systems contain explicit procedural rules limiting the term of a Prime Minister. (Standing orders of the Parliament of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, 2022) Similarly, the existing RoP of the Bangladesh Parliament do not include any provision restricting the number of terms a Prime Minister may serve. This absence indicates that executive leadership tenure has traditionally been regulated through constitutional practice rather than parliamentary procedure. Nevertheless, the contemporary political context of Bangladesh, characterised by prolonged concentration of executive power, has raised growing concern regarding the dominance of the executive branch over the legislature. Therefore, introducing a procedural rule on Prime Ministerial term limits within the RoP is justified by the novelty of the reform initiative and by the broader objective of strengthening parliamentary accountability.

Table 2 Areas of Amendment in the RoP of Lower House

Issue	Bangladesh	India	Sri Lanka	Pakistan	UK	Italy
PM's term limit	×	×	×	×	×	×
Increasing women representation in the parliament	×	×	×	×	×	×
Deputy speaker from the opposition	✓	×	×	✓	✓	×
Chairman of committees from opposition	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	✓
Legislation on the Rights, Limitations, and Liabilities of the Parliament, its Committees and Members	✓	✓	×	✓	×	×

Source: Authors' compilation.

To operationalise this reform, an amendment may be introduced within the framework of Rule 159 of the RoP, which governs motions expressing want of confidence in the Cabinet. Since Rule 159 provides the procedural mechanism through which parliamentary confidence in the executive leadership is formally tested, it offers a relevant procedural point for incorporating limitations related to executive tenure. Accordingly, an additional clause may be inserted to specify that a Prime Minister who has already served two terms shall not be eligible to continue as Leader of the House beyond that tenure.

In presidential systems such as those in France and the USA, the term limits for the president are constitutionally mandated. However, in parliamentary systems of government, such as in Bangladesh, the UK, and India, no such term limit reform has been implemented. Experts show concerns over introducing a term limit for the Prime Minister in a parliamentary system is an unprecedented move and while it may serve to curb executive dominance, it deviates from established norms. The risks associated with this deviation are significant, as altering an established system in this way may create instability within the political structure.⁵

5.1.2. Women's Representation and Increased Women Seats

The 17th Constitutional Amendment of Bangladesh provides 50 reserved seats for women in the Jatiya Sangsad (JS). The July National Charter and Referendum Ordinance propose increasing this number to 100 seats, a change largely accepted by political parties, who are permitted to implement it based on their manifestos once in power. However, the allocation method for these additional seats remains a matter of debate. This distribution is a critical issue that must be carefully considered, and the RoP will need to address this once the constitutional amendments are finalised.

As per experts⁶, women's representation could be expanded to 33 per cent of the total membership to align with broader gender parity standards. A proportional allocation formula based on total parliamentary seats, rather than vote share, may offer greater clarity and stability in representation. However, these structural choices will require careful constitutional articulation, and the RoP must subsequently define the allocation mechanism and implementation process once the constitutional amendments are enacted.

5.1.3. Nominating Deputy Speaker From the Opposition

The issue of nominating the Deputy Speaker from the opposition has been outlined in the Ordinance as a reform to enhance parliamentary balance and fairness. Currently, Rule 9 of the Bangladesh Parliament's RoP outlines the process for the election of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker. However, it does not specify that one of the

⁵Please watch- <https://youtu.be/b4qcVKf4Qjo?si=Wla03wDM8EbZcwBM>

⁶Based on Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) with constitutional experts, former parliamentarians, and legal scholars in January 2026.

Deputy Speakers must come from the opposition. Similarly, both Pakistan and the UK have clear rules regarding the nomination of Deputy Speakers in their RoP. Specifically, UK provided for election of Deputy Speaker from both sides of the house.

In Pakistan, Rule 10 of the National Assembly's RoP mandates the election of a Deputy Speaker immediately after the Speaker's election, using the same procedure as that of the Speaker, with no explicit mention of party affiliation (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2007).). Similarly, The UK's House of Commons has a more explicit rule for the election of Deputy Speakers, outlined under Rule 2A, where Deputy Speakers are elected through a secret ballot. The election process requires that two candidates come from the opposite side of the House to that from which the Speaker was drawn: the first candidate will be elected as Chairman of Ways and Means and the second as the Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means. Additionally, one candidate must come from the same side of the House as the Speaker and will be appointed as the First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means. The election process also includes a gender balance requirement, ensuring that at least one man and one woman are elected across the four posts of Speaker and Deputy Speakers (House of Commons, 2024).).

To incorporate the reform of ensuring representation of the opposition in the parliamentary leadership, Rule 8 of the existing RoP of the Bangladesh Parliament should be amended. The revised provision may specify that at the first sitting after a general election, Parliament shall proceed to elect a Speaker and two Deputy Speakers - one from the treasury bench and one from the opposition bench. The current rule outlines the procedure for the election of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker but does not specify the requirement for a Deputy Speaker from the opposition. Therefore, it is essential to extend the rule to explicitly state that one Deputy Speaker must be nominated from the opposition in the national parliament. Additionally, the election process for the Deputy Speaker should be amended to include a gender-inclusive approach, ensuring that at least one man and one woman are elected across both the Speaker and Deputy Speaker posts in each House. This extension will ensure proper distribution of the Deputy Speaker role, promoting bipartisan representation and gender balance in parliamentary functions, while ensuring the opposition's role in this key position.

5.1.4. Selecting Chairmen of Parliamentary Standing Committees from Opposition

In Italy, rule 20.2 of the RoP of the house of deputies, provides guidelines for the selection of the Chairman of parliamentary committees, but it does not require the Chairman to come from the opposition (Rules of Procedure of the Italian Chamber of Deputies). In the UK, Rule 85 outlines the appointment of committee chairs from the Panel of Chairs by the Speaker, but there is no specification regarding the selection of the Chairman from the opposition (Standing orders , House of Commons, 2024). In India, Rule 331(D) specifies the constitution of Standing Committees, but does not address the issue of selecting the Chairman from the opposition. (Rules of procedure, Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2019).

In Bangladesh, Rule 191 currently states that the Chairman of a Committee shall be elected from among its members, but it does not mention the requirement for the Chairman to come from the opposition. Similarly, Rules 219, 222, 225, 231, 234, 236, 239, 240, 245, 247, 249, 257, 264, and 266 specify the composition of 14 other parliamentary committees, but none mention the selection of a Chairman from the opposition. To address this gap, the RoP of Bangladesh should be amended by extending Rule 191 and the relevant rules (219, 222, 225, 231, 234, 236, 239, 240, 245, 247, 249, 257, 264, and 266) for each parliamentary committee to include a clause that explicitly requires the Chairman of each committee to be nominated from the opposition. This extension will ensure fair opposition representation in parliamentary leadership roles.. (Rules of procedure of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2007).

Experts opined that the current practice in Bangladesh, where the Leader of the House plays a decisive role in committee formation⁷, may limit structured opposition influence unless clearer procedural safeguards are embedded in the RoP. It has been proposed that certain core oversight committees-particularly the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and the Estimates Committee-should be expressly identified in the RoP as requiring opposition chairmanship. In this model, the First Opposition Party would hold the Chair of the PAC, while the

⁷Based on Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) with constitutional experts, former

Second Opposition Party would chair the Estimates Committee, thereby distributing oversight authority across opposition blocs rather than concentrating it in a single group.

Further recommendations suggest that opposition parties should formally nominate eligible members for committee chairmanships, with such nominations reviewed by a Business Advisory Committee composed of members from both Houses. At the same time, concerns have been raised regarding the potential risk of loyalty shifts if a smaller opposition party chairs a powerful oversight committee such as the PAC, particularly where political alignment with the executive may weaken scrutiny. To mitigate this risk, the selection process should be deliberated transparently within parliamentary forums. Accordingly, amending Rule 191 and the related committee rules to explicitly require opposition chairmanship-alongside structured nomination and review mechanisms-would strengthen accountability and institutional balance within Bangladesh's parliamentary framework.

5.1.5. Enactment of Legislation on the Rights, Limitations and Liabilities of the Parliament, Its Committees and Members

The demand to amend Article 78(5) will be implemented following a successful referendum, and the constitutional reform process will, for the first time, clearly determine the specific privileges and immunities of Parliament, its members, and its committees. Article 78(5) of the Bangladesh Constitution grants Parliament the authority to determine the privileges of its members and committees through an Act of Parliament. However, at present, neither the Constitution nor the RoP explicitly defines the exact content and scope of these privileges; the RoP only provides mechanisms for raising questions of privilege and procedural protections in cases of alleged violations. Therefore, the reform will generate a concrete and authoritative understanding of what parliamentary privileges entail and how they operate in practice.

Once these privileges and their areas of application are clearly established through the constitutional reform, the existing Rules of Procedure particularly Rules 163 to 176 - can be revised accordingly (Rules of Procedure, Bangladesh Parliament, 2007). The revised RoP will then incorporate the newly defined privileges, specify their legal implications, and adjust the procedures for raising, examining, and enforcing questions of privilege. In this way, the procedural framework of Parliament will be directly aligned with the reformed constitutional provisions, ensuring that parliamentary privileges are no longer based on assumption or convention, but on clearly articulated constitutional and procedural rules.

A similar structural issue exists beyond Bangladesh. In both India and Pakistan, the Rules of Procedure of the lower houses also contain provisions on questions of privilege and procedural mechanisms for addressing alleged breaches. However, like Bangladesh, these rules do not clearly define what specific privileges and immunities Parliament, MPs, and committee members possess, nor do they comprehensively state the limits of those privileges or the corresponding liabilities. Instead, the rules merely provide procedural routes for raising and examining privilege questions, leaving the substantive content of parliamentary privileges largely undefined and dependent on convention and precedent.

Therefore, the proposed constitutional reform in Bangladesh presents an opportunity not only to clarify the substantive scope of parliamentary privileges but also to modernise the procedural framework governing them. Once the reform determines the precise nature of privileges and immunities and their areas of implication, Rules 163 to 176 of the RoP can be revised to codify those determinations explicitly. This will place Bangladesh in a more coherent and transparent position compared to its regional counterparts, transforming parliamentary privilege from an implied convention into a clearly defined constitutional and procedural guarantee, while also specifying accountability and liability where misuse occurs.

5.2. Areas of Amendment of the National Parliament as per July Charter

As shown in Table 3, several key issues related to the RoP of the Bangladesh Parliament have been debated, but no consensus has been reached among the parties. These issues, including the bar on the Prime Minister

parliamentarians, and legal scholars in January 2026.

holding dual office, the ban on floor crossing, and the ratification of international treaties, have faced varying degrees of dissent and objection from different political parties. The July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Order 2025 outlines that these issues will be considered for implementation in the 13th Parliament. For these reform proposals to be enacted, the relevant bills must be passed by a majority vote in Parliament. Achieving such a majority will require unanimous or near-unanimous agreement among political parties, making inter-party consensus a necessary condition for the successful implementation of these constitutional and procedural reforms.

Table 3 Areas of Amendment in the RoP of Lower House and Parties' Stance

Issues	Parties Stance (Dissent & Objection)	Note of Dissent
Restriction on PM's dual role	BNP, NDM, 12-Party Alliance, Jatiyatabadi Samomona Jote- dissented	The PM can simultaneously remain the head of the party. [If any political party or alliance mentions this in their electoral manifesto and receives a public mandate, they may take arrangements accordingly]
Bar on Floor Crossing	BNP- dissented	If any political party or alliance mentions this in their electoral manifesto and receives a public mandate, they may take arrangements accordingly

Source: July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Order, 2025.

5.2.1. Bar on Prime Minister's Dual Position Holding

The issue of restricting the Prime Minister's dual role (i.e., serving simultaneously as both the head of the government and the head of a political party) does not currently have any constitutional provision or specific rule in the RoP of the Bangladesh Parliament. While the Constitution and RoP do not address such restriction, this issue has emerged as part of the reform proposals. As per the July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Order, 2025, this matter would require a constitutional amendment (Article- 58A, 58) to formally restrict the Prime Minister's dual role. Once such an amendment is made, the issue can be incorporated into the RoP for the 13th Parliament to ensure its enforcement and clear procedural guidelines. Therefore, the restriction on dual office holding will only become a formal rule in the RoP once it is enacted through constitutional reform.

Expert recommendations⁸ indicate that even if the formal structure of dual office holding remains largely unchanged, reform initiatives may still contribute to a more balanced distribution of power. In the Westminster tradition, which Bangladesh follows, the Prime Minister typically serves as party leader and parliamentary leader; however, accountability is expected to operate through internal party mechanisms and parliamentary democracy. Strengthening political democracy within parties such as encouraging leadership renewal at regular intervals, for example every five years- has been highlighted as a complementary reform measure applicable across all political parties. Such practices could foster healthier leadership turnover, enhance internal accountability, and indirectly rebalance executive authority without necessarily disrupting the constitutional design of the Westminster model.

5.2.2. Bar on Floor Crossing

The issue of floor crossing is not explicitly addressed in the RoP of the Bangladesh Parliament. However, Rule 178(1) currently deals with the vacation of seats under Article 70 of the Constitution, which prevents MPs from switching parties' opinion. To formally address floor crossing in the RoP, Article 70 of the Constitution must first be amended to explicitly prohibit this practice. Following this constitutional amendment, Rule 178(1) of the RoP should be updated to incorporate the new provision, ensuring that the vacation of seats due to floor crossing is clearly revised in the parliamentary rules. This approach would align the RoP with the constitutional reform on floor crossing, while also considering the democratic rights of MPs within their political parties.

⁸Based on Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) with constitutional experts, former parliamentarians, and legal scholars in January 2026.



Beyond Referendum Ordinance: Areas of Amendment in the RoP as per CPD's Study Recommendations

6

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), in its previous study (Moazzem et al., 2026), has identified several critical areas for reform in the existing parliamentary system, which are directly linked to the functioning of parliamentary procedures and the effective operation of governance. The issues highlighted in the Table 4, Expanding Private Members' Participation and Legislative Balance, Overcoming Weaknesses in Scrutiny of Legislation, Restructuring the Prime Minister's Question Time, Strengthening Committee Oversight of the Executive, Ensuring Opposition Participation and Ending Parliamentary Boycott, Enhancing Budgetary Oversight and Financial Accountability, and Budgetary Allocation of the Parliament - represent vital areas in need of revision in the RoP. These recommendations stress the importance of making the parliamentary processes more inclusive, transparent, and efficient. However, while these issues have been identified as critical by CPD, their incorporation into the parliamentary system has yet to produce significant change, as the rules, though mentioned in the RoP, are not effectively operationalised in practice.

Despite the existence of provisions for these issues within the RoP, they have not been fully addressed in a manner that aligns with their intended purpose. For example, the issue of expanding private members' participation and balancing legislative power remains largely unfulfilled, as non-governmental members are still sidelined in key legislative processes. Similarly, while there are rules for scrutinising legislation, the process lacks the robustness needed to ensure that all bills are thoroughly examined and amended where necessary. The Prime Minister's Question Time, although outlined, does not operate in a way that effectively holds the executive accountable. The mechanisms for committee oversight of the executive are similarly underutilised, limiting their effectiveness. Furthermore, opposition participation and the resolution of parliamentary boycotts are outlined in the RoP but have not been operationalised to ensure the full and active involvement of all political parties. Budgetary oversight and the allocation of resources within Parliament are also included in the rules but are not implemented with the level of scrutiny and accountability needed. These gaps in the operationalisation of the RoP reflect the need for comprehensive reform to ensure that these areas are addressed effectively.

6.1. Expanding Private Members' Participation and Legislative Balance

Although the current RoP provide provisions for private members' bills, these rules are often ignored in practice, reflecting the challenges and constraints that private members face within the legislative process. Rule-27, 31, 72-74, and 222-224 of the RoP specifically address private members' bills, yet their application remains limited. Rules 72-74 outline the process for submitting notices, the procedure for obtaining and communicating the President's recommendations, and the introduction of private members' bills. Furthermore, Rules 222-224 call for the establishment of separate committee to handle private members' bills and specify their functions. Despite these provisions, the reality of private members' legislative activity is far from what is intended as outlined in Table 4.

Table 4 Status of Private Members' Bills (1991-2011)

Indicator	Parliament			
	Fifth N=71	Seventh N=51	Eighth N=54	Ninth N=21
Status of private members bills				
Bills introduced	24	23.5	18.5	66.7
Bills awaiting introduction	-	9.8	24.0	-
Bills refused the first reading	10.8	25.5	1.9	4.7
Bills rejected by CPMBR	4.0	7.8	3.7	4.7
Bills under committee scrutiny	6.8	7.8	38.9	4.7
Bills returned	1.4	0.0	-	0.0
Bills withdrawn	22.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Bills becoming redundant	5.4	2.0	3.7	19.2
Others	24.4	23.6	9.3	-
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Ahmed, 2013.

Note: N=Number of private members' bills submitted to Parliament Secretariat

One of the key reasons behind the lack of proactive participation in introducing private members' bills is the demotivating political and procedural environment. Private members, especially those from opposition parties, are often discouraged from proposing bills because they know the bills are unlikely to be passed. The procedural constraints and political dynamics of a party-dominated system exacerbate this issue. In many cases, the ruling party either prevents its members from introducing bills or uses strategies to delay the consideration of bills put forward by private members, such as introducing 'parallel' bills, as identified by Weiss and Brichta (1969). The establishment of separate committees for private members' bills, as outlined in Rules 222-224, is rarely functional, further discouraging MPs from initiating legislation. This lack of practical implementation of the rules results in private members' bills being marginalised, further undermining their potential role in the legislative process and reflecting a significant gap between the theoretical framework in the RoP and the realities of parliamentary practice in Bangladesh.

In light of these challenges, the 13th New Parliament should consider establishing a 'Parliamentary Commission for Democracy, Legislative, Executive, and Legal Affairs' that could play a constructive role in strengthening the participation of private members in the legislative process. The Commission may review whether the procedural provisions relating to private members' bills under the RoP are being implemented in practice, particularly those concerning notice submission, committee referral, and scheduling for debate. By periodically assessing how these provisions are applied, the Commission could identify procedural bottlenecks, institutional barriers, or political practices that discourage MPs from introducing private members' legislation.

The Commission could also examine cases where private members' bills are delayed, sidelined, or rejected, and provide structured feedback on whether such decisions were consistent with the procedural framework of the RoP. Through analytical reports and advisory opinions, it may recommend improvements to parliamentary procedures to ensure that private members receive a fair opportunity to initiate legislative proposals. Such oversight would not interfere with Parliament's legislative authority; rather, it would promote greater transparency, encourage adherence to procedural standards and help restore a more balanced legislative environment.

6.2. Overcoming Weakness in Scrutiny of Legislation

The legislative process in Bangladesh has historically been characterised by the swift passage of bills with minimal deliberation. Bills introduced in the JS were often passed without undergoing comprehensive committee-stage scrutiny, despite the detailed procedures laid out in the RoP. For example, Article 77 of the RoP offers provisions for a variety of motions, such as the immediate consideration of bills or their referral to committees. However,

past parliamentary practices (Table 5), especially during the tenure of the ruling party, frequently bypassed these stages in favour of expedited passage, leaving little room for informed debate or public input. Even when bills were referred to committees, the scrutiny often remained cursory, with reports being rushed through in a single meeting and limited time allowed for meaningful deliberation. This haste, coupled with the lack of public participation and expert feedback, has significantly hindered the efficacy of the legislative process, perpetuating a culture of government domination over lawmaking.

Table 5 Parliamentary Scrutiny of Government Bills

Parliament	Government Bills Passed (% of total)	Bills referred to Committees (% of total)	Amendments (Per bill)	Amendments passed (Per bill)
First	100	2.0	0.7	0.5
Fifth	99.4	4.0	4.0	1.1
Seventh	99.5	100	2.2	2.2
Eighth	99.5	62.7	5.9	5.9
Ninth	100	87.6	5.6	5.6

Source: (Ahmed, 2020).

Despite the existing RoP (Rules 75-98) offering a more structured approach for passing bills, the reality of legislative scrutiny remains flawed. Rules such as Rule 80 and Rule 81 do provide mechanisms for more thorough review, such as arranging debates on committee reports and soliciting expert opinions during the drafting phase of a bill. Furthermore, Rule 88 offers the opportunity for detailed clause-by-clause scrutiny. Rule 94 even permits the opposition to vote on specific provisions of a bill. However, these provisions are rarely implemented in practice. The general tendency to rush legislation through without proper scrutiny undermines the effectiveness of these rules. The lack of a consistent and transparent procedure for legislative examination has led to a diminished role for opposition members and a lack of checks and balances in the legislative process. As a result, the principles laid out in the RoP are not reflected in the actual workings of the Parliament, contributing to a less democratic and accountable legislative environment.

To address the existing gaps in legislative scrutiny and enhance parliamentary processes, a parliamentary commission would serve as an independent body to provide both pre-legislative and post-legislative support, ensuring impartial scrutiny, stronger accountability and more democratic practices. The proposed commission would operate independently, focusing on strengthening democratic institutions, offering constitutional, legislative, and administrative guidance, and overseeing the legislative process to ensure compliance with the established RoP. Through regular assessments and feedback, the commission would recommend corrective actions to maintain transparency and accountability, ensuring that bills undergo thorough review, proper debate and alignment with democratic principles. Additionally, it would provide expert reports and conduct confidential discussions with stakeholders, offering vital support to Parliament and ensuring that laws are made with full consideration and public participation.

6.3. Restructuring Prime Minister's Question Time

In Bangladesh, the Prime Minister's Question Time (PMQT), as outlined in Rule 41 of the Rules of Procedure (RoP), suffers from several procedural issues that hinder its effectiveness as a tool for executive oversight. The parliament members MPs attending a Bangladesh Parliament/UNDP-sponsored orientation programme on ROP in 2009 expressed serious concern about the effectiveness of questions and call attention motions in making the government accountable. Many members complained that ministers often abuse question time by making long-winded replies; whilst many members also take more time than necessary to frame questions often as a strategy to denying time to other members.

They thus suggested that the Speaker should enforce rules strictly so that neither ministers nor members could misuse parliamentary time while asking/answering questions. One of the main concerns is the practice of question selection. Although the Speaker is formally tasked with selecting questions for the Prime Minister, in reality, the Prime Ministers are observed often exercising this power, undermining the impartiality of the process. This leads to the risk of the PMQT being used more as a platform for counterattacking the opposition than for holding the government accountable. Additionally, the questions posed during PMQT tend to be less substantive and more rhetorical, with many of them addressing issues that could be more appropriately directed to departmental ministers. The current system fails to align with the established norms for question times, such as those in the UK, where questions are selected through a ballot to ensure fairness and focus on substantive government policies.

In comparison, other countries have more structured and consistent practices for their Prime Minister's Question Time, highlighting the need for reform in Bangladesh. In the UK, Rule 21(2) of the House of Commons RoP allocates one hour every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday specifically for PMQT, ensuring regular and meaningful oversight. Similarly, Italy's lower house allocates 40 minutes for Question Time in each sitting, as stipulated in Rule 130 of the RoP. Pakistan's National Assembly also dedicates one hour for PMQT in each sitting under Rule 69 of its RoP. These countries ensure that question times are not only regular but also consistently focused on holding the executive accountable. Therefore, to improve the functionality of PMQT in Bangladesh, Rule 41 should be amended to increase the duration of the session and introduce a more transparent and standardised method for selecting questions. This would align Bangladesh's practices with international standards and enhance the accountability of the government.

6.4. Strengthening Committee Oversight of the Executive

The current practices of committee oversight in the Bangladesh Parliament, specifically through the Committee on Public Accounts (PAC), the Committee on Public Undertakings (PUC), and the Committee on Estimates (EC), reveal several critical gaps in both the procedural framework and the execution of their roles. The PAC, while mandated to review audit reports from the Comptroller and Auditor General, is currently limited to handling audit reports without addressing other key functions, such as examining financial irregularities in autonomous bodies or addressing excess grants (Moazzem & Morshed, 2023). The PUC, although conducting some meetings and producing a report with recommendations, has largely failed to follow its assigned functions, sometimes addressing institutions not included in the 4th schedule and struggling with insufficient manpower (Moazzem & Mohiuddin, 2024). Similarly, the Estimate Committee (EC), though issuing reports on various public institutions, has not effectively engaged in discussions around administrative reforms or ensured that its recommendations align with government policies (Moazzem et al., 2024). These shortcomings suggest that while committees theoretically possess significant oversight powers, their effectiveness is undermined by unclear jurisdictions, inadequate resources, and a lack of structured engagement with broader issues such as policy alignment or institutional reforms.

The existing RoP from Rule 233 to Rule 239 provide for the establishment and functioning of these committees, but they fall short in clearly defining the committees' jurisdictions and areas of focus. The current rules lack specificity in outlining concrete and defined areas of responsibility for each committee. As a result, these committees often operate in a fragmented and inefficient manner, with overlapping functions and unclear boundaries regarding their jurisdiction. To ensure that these committees perform their duties effectively and remain focused on their core responsibilities, it is essential to amend the RoP. Clear clauses should be added to specify the distinct and detailed functions of each committee, alongside a concrete list of jurisdictional boundaries.

To enhance clarity and efficiency, a Parliamentary Commission would recommend the adoption of such templates to ensure uniformity in reporting of these committees as experts find their reports unnecessarily lengthy. The Commission could also review specific government policies, assess their implementation and offer non-binding

recommendations for improvements. This role would help ensure that committee reports are concise and focused and that government actions are scrutinised effectively, while maintaining the balance between parliamentary oversight and the executive’s independence.

6.5. Ensuring Participation of Parliament Members in the Sitting of the House

The attendance of Members of Parliament (MPs) in legislative affairs in Bangladesh has been a persistent issue, further exacerbated by the practice of parliamentary boycotts (Morium, 2024). As shown in Table 6, in the 8th Parliament, the maximum attendance was 274 MPs, the minimum 90, and the average was just 187 MPs, slightly above 50 per cent of the total 345 members. While the 9th Parliament saw a slight improvement with the maximum attendance reaching 305 MPs and the minimum 117, the average still remained at 220 MPs, about 60 per cent of the total members (Morium, 2024). These low attendance rates are compounded by the common practice of opposition parties boycotting parliamentary sessions, particularly the Prime Minister’s Question Time (PMQT), which leaves the government side with more opportunities to dominate parliamentary proceedings. This boycott culture, along with weak institutional checks and executive dominance, further diminishes the effectiveness of Parliament, turning it into an arena for partisan politics rather than a space for meaningful debate and decision-making (Ahmed, 2013).

Table 6 Attendance of MPs in 8th and 9th Parliament

Parliament	Total Session	Total Working Days	Maximum Number Present	Minimum Number Present	Average Number Present
8th	23	373	274	90	183 (53%)
9th	19	418	305	117	220 (63%)

Source: Bangladesh Parliament, 2001-2006; 2009-2013.

The constitutional provisions in Article 67(1) and Article 75(2) only serve to reinforce these issues. Article 67(1) allows MPs to be absent for up to 90 consecutive days without any serious consequences, a provision that does little to incentivise regular participation. In addition, Article 75(2) requires only 60 members (17 per cent of the total 350 MPs) to be present to conduct parliamentary business, a threshold that is far too low and insufficient to ensure robust legislative scrutiny. These provisions, coupled with the frequent boycotts by opposition parties, significantly reduce the overall participation in parliamentary activities (Morium, 2024).

To address these challenges, amendments are needed: reducing the absentee limit from 90 to 45 days in Article 67(1) and raising the minimum attendance requirement to 80-85 members in Article 75(2). Furthermore, Rule 179(1) should be amended accordingly to ensure stricter attendance requirements and discourage the practice of boycotts, thereby encouraging more consistent participation and strengthening parliamentary oversight.

Beyond constitutional amendment, procedural realignment is also necessary to address chronic absenteeism. It has been suggested that the quorum threshold for parliamentary sittings should be raised to approximately 45–50 per cent of total membership to ensure broader representation during deliberations and to foster more substantive debate. Increasing quorum alone, however, may not be sufficient unless accompanied by greater executive engagement; consistent participation of the Prime Minister in sittings particularly during key debates could incentivise higher attendance across party lines. While party whips should play a more assertive role in mobilising members, attendance-based punitive measures should not be rigidly embedded within the RoP. Instead, carefully designed incentive-based mechanisms such as recognition or structured participation opportunities tied to attendance may encourage engagement without formalising coercive sanctions. Such calibrated reforms would aim to strengthen parliamentary culture while preserving institutional flexibility.

6.6. Enhancing Budgetary Oversight and Financial Accountability

The budgetary process in Bangladesh is a critical aspect of parliamentary functioning, yet the practical reality of its formulation and scrutiny reveals significant gaps. Article 83 of the Constitution mandates that no tax or

expenditure can occur without the authority of Parliament, granting it theoretical sovereignty over public finance. However, in practice, Parliament's role is limited to deliberating on the budget after it has already been prepared by the executive. The budget process involves several steps: the presentation of the budget, general discussion, deliberation on demands and appropriations, and the passage of the appropriation and finance bills. While provisions for quarterly reports on the implementation of the budget exist, MPs rarely make use of these reports during discussions. Moreover, the time allocated for budget scrutiny is minimal - approximately three weeks - while the budget itself is prepared over a much longer period with extensive support from government staff. This short timeframe, combined with excessive party control over MPs, undermines the quality of deliberation and reduces the process to a mere formality, with insufficient opportunities for in-depth scrutiny (Ahmed, 2006).

The existing RoP, specifically Rules 111-129, lay out clear guidelines for the formulation and scrutiny of the budget, but there is a significant disconnect between these prescribed procedures and the actual practices observed in Parliament. These rules outline essential stages in the budget process, yet the executive largely dominates budget preparation with little meaningful involvement from the legislature. To address this issue, a commission can play a vital role in monitoring and overseeing the budget preparation process, offering advisory input to ensure that the procedures outlined in the RoP are followed. While the commission would not have direct authority over budget preparation, its advisory role would help ensure that the legislature adheres to the established procedures and timelines, strengthening transparency and legislative oversight in budget formulation. Additionally, the commission could advise on the budgetary allocations to different sectors, taking into account the specific needs and situations of those sectors, ensuring that the allocations align with national priorities and foster equitable development.



The referendum held on February 12, 2026, was focused on a basic yes/no question regarding the bundling of multiple reform agendas related to the July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Order, 2025. (Implementation order of the July National Charter (Constitutional Reform), 2025) The referendum's results were recently updated by the Election Commission (EC) through an amended gazette notification. The corrected number of 'Yes' votes stood at 4,72,25,980, while the 'No' votes were 2,19,60,231, and the number of rejected votes was 74,35,196. The total number of votes cast in the referendum was revised to 76,621,407 (EC publishes amended gazette on referendum results, 2026). This public mandate signals strong support for constitutional reform, especially the continuation of the Constitution Reform Council as outlined in the National July Charter Implementation Order, 2025. Therefore, the referendum results indicate a clear public consensus for advancing constitutional reform efforts (Referendum Ordinance, 2025).

The Constitution Reform Council was established under the July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Order, 2025 to guide the reform process. Members of the 13th Parliament were required to take two oaths: first, as elected Members of Parliament, and second, as members of the Constitution Reform Council. This dual oath was meant to signal a commitment to both legislative and constitutional reforms. However, the implementation of this process has led to significant political disputes.

Parties and MPs that took the oath as both Members of Parliament and Council members, including Jamaat-e-Islami and National Citizen Party (NCP), did so on the basis of supporting the reform mandate laid out by the referendum. They viewed the formation of the Council as a necessary step to implement the will of the people, as demonstrated in the referendum. For these parties, the constitutional legitimacy of the process was not in question, and they were committed to ensuring that the reforms proceed as planned.

In contrast, BNP and several independent MPs refused to take the second oath, citing constitutional concerns. They argued that the Constitution Reform Council had not yet been properly incorporated into the Constitution through a formal amendment, and thus, taking the oath as Council members would be premature and potentially unconstitutional. They viewed this as a procedural issue, emphasising that until the Council's role is constitutionally recognised, participating in it could undermine legal norms and create a potential constitutional crisis. Despite supporting the broader constitutional reform agenda, the BNP expressed that it was essential to adhere to the established constitutional procedures before fully committing to the Council.

CPD's analysis identifies significant contradictions in the July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Order, 2025, which hinder the effective implementation of constitutional reforms. Article 10(3) of the Order allows a majority vote within the Constitution Reform Council to approve constitutional reforms, conflicting with Article 142 of the Constitution, which requires a two-thirds majority in Parliament for amendments. This misalignment needs to be addressed by amending the Implementation Order to ensure compliance with constitutional procedures.

Another issue lies in Paragraph 14 of the Order, which states that any constitutional reform adopted by the Constitution Reform Council will be considered final, without requiring further approval or consent. However, this conflicts with the Constitution, which mandates that constitutional amendments must be approved by Parliament. Given the importance of these reforms, it is essential that the decisions made by the Council are presented to Parliament for approval. As the Constitution requires, any amendment must be passed by a two-third majority in the Parliament. Therefore, Paragraph 14 must be revised to ensure that the Council's decisions are subject to Parliamentary approval as part of the formal process, and this amendment should take place in the first session of the new Parliament.

The July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Order, 2025 mandates that the Constitutional Reform Council complete its work within 180 working days from the commencement of the first session, based on the results of the referendum. However, this timeline conflicts with constitutional norms and parliamentary customs. According to the Constitution, any bill, including constitutional amendments, must be introduced in Parliament, undergo thorough discussion, and, if necessary, be reviewed by the Parliamentary Standing Committee before it is brought to Parliament for approval. This process is time-consuming, particularly for constitutional reforms that involve multiple complex issues, including those arising from decrees and referendums. Out of the 30 issues addressed in the referendum, only a few have broad agreement, and many remain contentious, such as the 'Note of Dissent' on the PR system and the selection of upper house members. Therefore, the 180-day deadline set by Article 7(1)(c) of the Implementation Order is unrealistic and should be amended or omitted to allow for adequate time for debate, scrutiny, and consensus-building in Parliament.

Additionally, the oath-taking process for members of the Constitution Reform Council is constitutionally flawed. According to Article 9 of the Order, MPs are required to take the oath as Council members before the necessary constitutional amendments have been passed. This premature action violates constitutional procedures, as reforms should first be ratified by Parliament before members take the oath. The oath-taking process should be postponed until the necessary constitutional amendments are formally approved by a two-thirds majority in Parliament (Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. (1972). *Article 142(a)(ii)*). Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. <https://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/act-print-367.html>.



Conclusion and Recommendations

8

This study highlights the procedural gaps and institutional shortcomings in the Bangladesh Parliament's current RoP. The framework, while functional within the existing unicameral system, is increasingly inadequate to meet the demands of reform and inclusive governance. The necessity to revise the RoP is underscored by proposals that have emerged from the 2026 referendum and the ongoing discussions around parliamentary reforms. Issues such as limiting the Prime Minister's term, enhancing women's representation, strengthening the role of the opposition, and improving committee oversight reflect the need for substantial amendments. Despite the theoretical provisions laid out in the RoP, their practical implementation remains ineffective, with issues like private members' bills, legislative scrutiny, and the Prime Minister's Question Time (PMQT) suffering from inefficiencies and a lack of enforceability.

The proposed reforms, which aim to amend and supplement the RoP, will modernise parliamentary practices and ensure the legislative process is more transparent, accountable, and efficient. If these reforms are successfully implemented through constitutional, they will correct existing imbalances in executive power, improve oversight mechanisms and promote a more inclusive and participatory parliamentary system. These changes, once incorporated, will provide a more dynamic framework where all members, irrespective of their political affiliation, can contribute meaningfully to the legislative process.

Following the aftermath of the recent electoral process and the subsequent Referendum results, a critical situation has emerged, shedding light on the pressing need for parliamentary reform within the existing system. It is important to note that the issues previously identified regarding parliamentary reform have now received broad consensus across major political parties and received a clear public mandate through the Referendum. Furthermore, many of these issues are explicitly reflected in the manifesto of the winning party. This indicates that, upon the commencement of the new parliamentary session, these matters will be brought before Parliament for detailed deliberation, with an eye towards potential constitutional amendments.

Subsequently, these agreed-upon reforms can be seamlessly incorporated into the RoP, either through the amendment of existing provisions or by adding new clauses to address the subject matter at hand. Considering these developments, the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) offers the following recommendations to ensure that these reforms are effectively integrated into the functioning of Parliament and contribute to a more transparent, accountable, and efficient legislative process:

- a) **Prime Minister's Term Limits:** While some presidential systems constitutionally mandate executive term limits, introducing a procedural or constitutional restriction on the tenure of the Prime Minister would represent a significant departure from established parliamentary practice. This reform should be approached cautiously to avoid future political instability.
- b) **Increase Reserved Seats for Women:** The increase of reserved seats for women to 100 should be clearly defined through a constitutional amendment, specifying that the allocation is based on total parliamentary

seats rather than vote share. The RoP of the Bangladesh Parliament should then establish the mechanism to implement this allocation, ensuring clarity, stability, and effective representation.

- c) **Deputy Speaker Nomination:** Rule 9 should be amended to require that one Deputy Speaker be nominated from the opposition, with a gender balance to be ensured by electing at least one male MP and one female MP across the Speaker and Deputy Speaker positions, promoting bipartisan representation and inclusivity.
- d) **Oversight Committee Chairmanship:** The RoP should be amended to ensure that the Chairman of key parliamentary committees, particularly oversight committees like the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and Estimates Committee (EC), be nominated from opposition parties. A structured nomination and review process should be established to ensure transparency, prevent executive dominance, and strengthen institutional balance and accountability.
- e) **Clarification of Parliamentary Privileges:** As part of the significant legal reform proposals in the Referendum Ordinance, a constitutional amendment should be made to Article 78(5) to explicitly define the specific privileges and immunities of Parliament, its members, and committees. Following this, Rules 163 to 176 of the RoP should be revised to align with these newly defined privileges, ensuring clarity in constitutional and procedural rules.
- f) **Prime Minister's Dual Leadership Roles:** The restriction on the Prime Minister holding both government and party leadership positions should be introduced only after a constitutional amendment, accompanied by regular party leadership renewal to strengthen internal accountability and balance executive power.
- g) **Prohibit Floor Crossing:** The reform proposal to prohibit floor crossing should be considered with a constitutional amendment and corresponding update to Rule 178(1) of the Rules of Procedure. This will support independent decision-making of MPs within their parties, strengthen internal party democracy, and maintain stability and coherence in parliamentary proceedings.
- h) **Private Members' Bills:** Rules 27, 31, 72–74, and 222–224 of the RoP provide procedural space for private members' bills, but these provisions remain largely underutilised. A Parliamentary Commission should review whether these provisions are being followed, examine cases of delayed or rejected private members' bills, identify procedural bottlenecks, and provide advisory recommendations to ensure consistent application of the Rules of Procedure in the legislative process.
- i) **Committee Scrutiny Procedures:** The Parliamentary Commission should review whether the scrutiny procedures prescribed in Rules 75–98 of the Rules of Procedure are being followed, particularly regarding committee-stage examination, clause-by-clause review, and debate on committee reports. The Commission would provide advisory feedback where these procedures are bypassed or inadequately applied.
- j) **Prime Minister's Question Time (PMQT):** Amend Rule 41 of the RoP to increase the duration of PMQT from 30 minutes and implement a more transparent, standardised method for selecting questions, such as a ballot system. The Speaker's authority in selecting questions should be strictly enforced to ensure impartiality and prevent the misuse of time by both ministers and MPs.
- k) **Committee Oversight of the Executive:** Revise Rules 233–239 of the RoP to clearly define the distinct jurisdictional boundaries of the Committee on Public Accounts (PAC), Committee on Public Undertakings (PUC), and Committee on Estimates (EC) to reduce overlapping functions and improve operational efficiency. A Parliamentary Commission could recommend standardized and concise formats for committee reports. It could also monitor that government actions are scrutinised effectively while maintaining the balance of power between parliamentary oversight and the executive's independence.
- l) **Enhance MPs' Participation:** Amend Article 67(1) to reduce the absentee limit from 90 to 45 days, and revise Article 75(2) to raise the minimum attendance requirement to 80–85 members. Update Rule 179(1) to enforce stricter attendance guidelines and discourage boycotts. Additionally, raise the quorum threshold for parliamentary sittings to 45–50 per cent to ensure broader representation and more substantial debate. The Prime Minister's consistent participation, particularly in key debates, alongside more assertive roles for party whips, can further incentivize attendance.
- m) **Strengthen Budgetary Oversight:** The Parliamentary Commission should monitor the budget preparation process, ensure compliance with the RoP, specifically Rules 111–129, and provide advisory input on ensuring that the legislature adheres to the established procedures and timelines. The Commission could also advise on budgetary allocations to various sectors, ensuring alignment with national priorities and promoting equitable development.



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Bangladesh's evolving constitutional and political landscape has renewed attention to the institutional rules that govern parliamentary democracy. While recent reform initiatives, including the 2026 Referendum and the July National Charter, have introduced important proposals to rebalance executive-legislative relations, many of these reforms cannot be effectively implemented without corresponding changes to the Rules of Procedure (RoP) of the National Parliament. This study examines the procedural and institutional implications of these reforms and identifies the amendments necessary to make Parliament more transparent, accountable, representative, and effective.

Drawing on expert consultations, comparative analysis of parliamentary practices, and the Centre for Policy Dialogue's (CPD) research on parliamentary governance, the report proposes a comprehensive framework for revising the Rules of Procedure. It addresses both referendum-driven reforms, such as Prime Ministerial term limits, enhanced opposition roles, women's representation, and parliamentary privileges, as well as long-standing procedural weaknesses in legislative scrutiny, committee oversight, private members' participation, budgetary oversight, and parliamentary accountability. By offering practical and evidence-based recommendations, the study provides a timely roadmap for modernising parliamentary procedures and strengthening democratic governance in Bangladesh.



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