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2.3. Reform agenda

The interim government announced six reform commissions on 11 September 2024,106 tasked with bringing forward proposals on reforming the constitution, police, judiciary, the election commission, public administration and to combat corruption.107 Later in October 2024,108 another four reform commissions were announced, tasked with bringing forward reform proposals on health, media, labour rights and women affairs.109 Yunus has stated that the reports of these commissions would form a charter for a 'new Bangladesh' built on consensus, and it will form the basis for the upcoming election.110

All of the 'main'111 six reform commissions (on the constitution, police, judiciary, elections, public administration and anti-corruption) submitted their reports with recommendations to Yunus in January–February 2025.112 Thereafter, Yunus formed another commission, the National Consensus Commission, that consists of the heads of the first six commissions, and is chaired by Yunus himself.113 The purpose of this commission is to find national consensus around reform initiatives and their implementation.114 The commission started working on 15 February 2025115 and has a deadline of six months to reach consensus.116 The remaining commissions submitted their reports in March–May 2025.117

The reform commissions have proposed extensive changes to key institutions.118 Some of the commissions' many proposals include:

- Constitutional amendments, inter alia to establish an improved balance of powers among top government positions, as well as a bicameral parliament.119
- Decentralising the judiciary.120
- Reducing bureaucracy by restructuring administrative divisions and provinces, and reducing the number of ministries and directorates to 25 (from 40).121
- Reforming the police.122
- Introducing new anti-corruption laws (including introducing public asset declarations, and criminalising private sector bribery).123
- Reforming labour laws (inter alia by harmonising national laws with international standards on occupational safety, compensation, and maternity protection).124
- Establishing an independent regulatory body to oversee the media sector.125

At the time of writing, the National Consensus Commission had not forged consensus around a reform plan.126

The interim government has reshuffled hundreds of public officials to depoliticise government institutions.127 Officials in 'constitutional and statutory institutions, public administration, the

judiciary, law enforcement agencies, financial institutions, and service sectors'128 have been re-assigned, transferred, forced into retirement or dismissed.129 International Crisis Group reported that 850 leaders in local governance bodies had been replaced as of mid-August 2024. 130 In November 2024, TIB reported on a persisting 'culture of partisan control of political and governance space, extortion and dominance' leading to internal conflicts, that sometimes included violence.131 International Crisis Group also reported on the bureaucracy remaining politicised and 'highly inefficient', which may pose a challenge to enforce reforms.132

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