



## **Towards an Inclusive, Accountable, and Corruption-Free Bangladesh:**

### **TIB's Proposals for Political Party Manifestos for the 13th Parliamentary Elections**

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## **Towards an Inclusive, Accountable, and Corruption-Free Bangladesh: TIB's Proposals for Political Party Manifestos for the 13th Parliamentary Election**

### *Advisors*

Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, *Executive Director, TIB*

Professor Dr. Sumaiya Khair, *Adviser, Executive Management, TIB*

### *Supervisor*

Muhammad Badiuzzaman, *Director, Research and Policy, TIB*

### *Prepared by*

Md. Julkarnayeen, *Senior Research Fellow, Research and Policy, TIB*

Kawsher Ahamed, *Research Associate, Research and Policy, TIB*

### *Special Support*

Kazi Aminul Hasan, *Research Associate- Qualitative, Research & Policy (R&P)*

Md. Newazul Moula, *Coordinator, Energy Governance Project, TIB*

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### *Contact*

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB)

Midas Center (4th & 5th Floor)

House # 5, Road # 16 (New) 27 (Old), Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1209

Phone: (+8802) 41021267-70 Fax: (+8802) 41021272

Email: [info@ti-bangladesh.org](mailto:info@ti-bangladesh.org)

Website: [www.ti-bangladesh.org](http://www.ti-bangladesh.org)

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## Background

Since its independence in 1971, Bangladesh has made significant progress in the socio-economic domain over the last 54 years, notably in the areas of poverty reduction, economy, education, health, agriculture, industry, and information technology. Nevertheless, in terms of political development, the country remains beset by uncertainty and unrest. The recurrent emergence of undemocratic forces after independence disrupted the democratic process and development. After several years of struggle, democracy was restored in 1991, and an outline of commitments was put together by the three major political alliances in the course of restoring democracy. The three prominent political alliances signed the outline with a view to upholding the democratic practices based on the principles of taking responsibility to govern through free and fair elections, establishing a sovereign parliament, and an accountable executive branch, protecting the people's fundamental rights, the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, freedom of media, and establishing the rule of law. Later on, despite restoring a parliamentary form of democracy and conducting regular parliamentary elections, the lack of practice of democratic values among political parties has led to recurrent deviations from democratic norms and creating the risk of electoral violence.

In particular, between 2009 and 2024, the judiciary, police, administration, Election Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, and all other state institutions were rendered ineffective due to their politicisation by the ruling party. This destroyed democratic governance and integrity mechanisms, paving the way for an authoritarian regime. During this period, the rule of law was trampled, resulting in widespread human rights violations and unprecedented repression of different opinions and criticism of the government. Through the abuse of power, all sectors of the state were turned into safe havens for corruption, and state institutions were transformed into tools for granting impunity to those in power while persecuting opponents. One of the primary motives behind the attempt to perpetuate authoritarian rule during this period was to ensure impunity for multidimensional corruption, misappropriation of state resources, money laundering, and various forms of wrongdoing carried out through the unaccountable abuse of power.

The student-led quota reform anti-discrimination movement transformed into a mass uprising, which eventually led to the fall of the authoritarian government on August 5, 2024. Following this, an Interim Government took over on August 8, 2024. The fall of the authoritarian government, achieved through unprecedented loss of lives and sacrifice, is a glorious achievement in Bangladesh's history. It has created an extraordinary opportunity to build a 'New Bangladesh' through state reforms and a new political and social settlement. The principal aspirations of the July Uprising were state reform and a new settlement of a political framework to create a 'New Bangladesh' characterised by non-discrimination, equal rights, and inclusiveness. The main objectives of the aspirations include radical reforms in public representation, government, and administrative systems and practices, ensuring that the government operates based on public mandate and the authority entrusted by the people, with effective accountability to the people.

To establish good governance, democracy, and social justice through state reforms in line with the expectations of students and citizens—and to prevent any recurrence of authoritarian and fascist rule—the Interim Government formed eleven reform commissions on the Constitution, the electoral system, public administration, the judiciary, the police, anti-corruption system, local government, the media, women, health, and labour rights. To build national consensus on the recommendations included in the reports of the first six reform commissions, a National Consensus Commission was formed on 12 February 2025. Through several rounds of discussions with all

political parties and alliances that participated in the July mass uprising, and based on political agreements among them, the Consensus Commission prepared and finalised the July National Charter 2025, which contained recommendations for constitutional and other state reforms. Almost all political parties and alliances jointly signed the Charter on 17 October 2025, pledging to implement it. To implement the proposals on constitutional reform included in the July National Charter, the July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Order, 2025, was issued. This order provides for conducting a referendum to obtain approval from the people, the owner of sovereign authority, along with the formation of a Constitutional Reform Council and the Council's mandate to carry out the reform.

However, the rigid and opposite positions of some political parties on certain reform issues and on the implementation process of the July Charter have created public doubt and uncertainty about the continuation of this state-reform process after the upcoming 13<sup>th</sup> Parliament election. Without strong commitment from political parties, it is neither possible to implement and sustain the recommended reforms for democracy, governance, and integrity systems, nor to continue their advancement. As part of its efforts to strengthen an accountable democratic system, establish good governance, and contribute to effective corruption prevention, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has been regularly conducting research and evidence-based policy advocacy activities. In this context, ahead of the upcoming Thirteenth National Parliamentary Election, TIB is presenting this set of recommendations in alignment with the contemporary political and socio-economic context, so that political parties incorporate the commitment to building an inclusive, accountable, and corruption-free Bangladesh in their election manifestos and ensure its effective implementation by upholding the spirit of the July Movement and the public aspiration for state reforms.

### **Process Followed for Formulating Recommendations**

To formulate these recommendations on political commitment to democracy and the practice of good governance and integrity, the following documents were studied and examined in light of the current political and socioeconomic context.

- Previous TIB research and advocacy papers on institutions/organisations considered in the National Integrity Strategy
- Reports of 11 Reform Commissions, July National Charter 2025, the Consensus Commission's Recommendations for the July Charter Implementation.
- Constitution, declarations, and previous manifestos of major political parties
- TIB's previous research and proposed recommendations on Governance and Integrity in Election Manifestos of Political Parties in Bangladesh
- Relevant laws, newspapers, articles, and books
- Research reports of government and private organisations

## Recommendations of TIB

### Elements of Core Strategic Principles and Pathways for Electoral Commitments

Based on continuous research, observation, and analysis of the relevant issues, TIB proposes the following elements as the core strategic principles and pathways for the electoral commitments of political parties for the 13th National Parliamentary Election:

- Equality, human dignity, and social justice in state governance;
- Corruption prevention, accountability, and good governance in the government functions;
- Position on the use of money and muscle power, and religion as the basis of political power;
- Promoting pro-people socio-economic development;
- A discrimination-free Bangladesh—particularly ensuring equal rights, harmony, and coexistence for marginalised communities, all genders including women and men, persons with disabilities (physical and mental), and all social, cultural, and ethnic groups;
- Commitment to the full implementation of the spirit and aspiration of the July Uprising and the July Charter and supporting it in the referendum.

### Commitment to Building a ‘New Bangladesh’ through State Reform and Political Settlement

All political parties must pledge in their election manifestos—upholding the spirit of the July Movement and the public aspiration for state reform—to implement the following issues through a time-bound and accountable process:

1. The reform proposals/recommendations included in the July National Charter 2025.
2. The recommendations proposed by the six reform commissions (Constitution, Electoral System, ACC, Public Administration, Police, and Judiciary) that are not covered by the July National Charter 2025.
3. The recommendations proposed by other reform commissions, namely those on Local Government, Media, Women, Health, and Labour.
4. The recommendations from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights’ fact-finding report, the White Paper on the State of the Bangladesh Economy, and other committees and task forces.
5. To ensure the implementation and continuation of the ordinances/orders issued and measures taken based on the July Charter and other reform commissions; and to amend the ordinances that have failed to meet public expectations.

## **Commitment to Justice for Human Rights Violations and State Recognition and Compensation for July Martyrs and Wounded**

6. To continue impartial investigations and judicial proceedings—beyond partisan political considerations—into all mass killings, enforced disappearances, torture, crimes, and human rights violations committed during the July mass uprising and the authoritarian regime; and to commit to taking effective initiatives and measures to prevent such grave human rights violations in the future.
7. To ensure and continue state honours for the martyrs, formally recognise the wounded of July as national heroes, and provide appropriate support to all martyrs' families and injured July warriors, including monthly stipends, comprehensive medical care, and full rehabilitation. Ensuring legal immunity, protection of fundamental rights, and personal security for the families of the martyrs and the wounded fighters.

## **Commitment to Preventing Irregularities and Corruption**

Since no reform initiative can be effective or sustainable without successfully preventing irregularities and corruption, political parties must pledge to give due importance to implementing the recommendations proposed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Reform Commission—particularly the following initiatives, legal measures, and institutional reforms.

8. The ACC must be granted constitutional status through constitutional amendment.
9. Ensuring the independence, capacity, and accountability of the ACC by reforming relevant laws and institutions.
10. A National Anti-Corruption Strategy must be adopted that shall specify the anti-corruption roles and responsibilities of various State and non-State institutions.
11. Recognise private sector bribery as a distinct offence consistent with Bangladesh's commitment under Article 21 of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).
12. Take steps for Bangladesh to officially join the Open Government Partnership (OGP) initiative.
13. Enact 'Conflict of Interest Law' to prevent abuse of state and legal power, corruption, nepotism, and favouritism.
14. Ensuring accountability regarding the income and assets of public representatives at all levels, employees of the Republic, and members and staff of constitutional and statutory institutions.
15. Permanently abolish any state practice that legitimises income from illegal sources.
16. To prevent money laundering-
  - Increase the capacity and ensure accountability of BFIU, NBR, Bangladesh Bank, Office of the Attorney General, CID, Bangladesh Police, and relevant offices.
  - Take initiatives for Bangladesh to accede to the Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters to adopt and implement the Common Reporting Standards (CRS) to ensure transparency in financial transactions, both national and international.

- Enact the ‘Beneficial Ownership Transparency Act’ aligned with international best practices to ensure transparency of beneficial ownerships of companies, trusts, and foundations, and to prevent default loans and money laundering.
17. The political parties should be committed to achieving the desired success in preventing corruption. The proposed National Anti-Corruption Strategy must clearly define the specific roles of various state and non-state institutions/actors, and ensure the transparency, accountability, and effectiveness of these institutions. These institutions include, but not limited to, the following:

State Institutions		Non-state Institutions
National Parliament	Executive Branch	Political Parties
Judiciary	Comptroller and Auditor General	Private Sector
Office of the Attorney General	Public Service Commission	NGO and Civil Society
Local Government	Law Enforcing Agencies	Mass Media
Armed Forces	Human Rights Commission	Educational Institutions
Election Commission	Information Commission	Religious Institutions
Bangladesh Bank	NBR	Professional’s Associations
Other institutions (BFIU, BTRC, BSEC, etc.)		

### **Commitment to Practicing Democracy, Good Governance, and Integrity in Political Party Activities**

18. Reforming necessary laws, including enacting the ‘Political Financing Act,’ to ensure transparency and accountability, particularly in political financing within political party activities.
19. All political parties must pledge, alongside state reform, to establish democracy, good governance, and integrity within their own party structures, including:
- Ensuring transparency and accountability in all forms of party donations, income, and expenditures.
  - Maintaining internal democratic practices and good governance within the party and selecting party leadership/committees at all levels through a participatory electoral process.
  - Eliminating criminalised political practices in party activities (such as using money or muscle power to obtain party positions or nominations for elections).
  - Taking effective measures to prevent the increasing dominance of business interests and financial influence in politics and public representation.
  - Not appointing individuals involved in corruption or irregularities to any party position or nominating them as election candidates.



20. Ensuring representation of diverse groups—such as youth, women, indigenous and other marginalised communities, and various professional groups—when forming party committees and nominating election candidates; in particular, nominating at least one-third women members in national elections.
21. Moving away from ‘zero-sum politics,’ political parties must pledge to base their political practice on mutual agreement, collaboration, cooperation, tolerance, positive engagement, and healthy competition.
22. Political parties should pledge to end all forms of party-driven clientelism or partisan politics in educational institutions (both students and teachers) and within professional associations, particularly among doctors, lawyers, media workers, and other professionals.

### **Commitment to Adopting a Transparent, Accountable, and Pro-people Development Strategy**

23. Political parties pledge in their election manifestos to adopt a development strategy anchored on transparent, accountable, and pro-people governance, equality and justice for all, free from corruption and any form of discrimination.
24. Identifying and reforming legal and institutional weaknesses that hinder the achievements of “value for money” and create opportunities for irregularities and corruption in public procurement and the planning and implementation of development projects.
25. Ensuring the highest level of transparency and accountability in the use of public money.
26. Improving efficiency in domestic resource and revenue mobilisation while ensuring transparency and accountability.
27. Undertaking effective initiatives to develop skilled human resources and create employment opportunities for the educated youth.

### **Commitment to the Establishment of Equal Rights and Social Justice**

28. Undertaking specific, implementable, and time-bound action plans to ensure that the benefits of socio-economic development reach all, particularly the poor, marginalised, and disadvantaged groups, and to reduce income and wealth inequality.
29. Ratifying the ILO Convention 169 and other relevant international conventions for constitutional recognition of distinct ethnic identities as indigenous people in the constitution.
30. Establishing an independent ‘Diversity Commission’ to ensure the protection of fundamental rights while preserving the identities of various ethnic, religious, racial, linguistic, and occupational groups, and to promote a culture and environment of mutual respect, empathy, and cooperation within state and social institutions.
31. Including issues related to the rights and other interests of indigenous and Dalit communities under the jurisdiction of a specialised ministry.
32. Establishing a separate ‘Land Commission’ to resolve land-related issues of indigenous peoples living in the plains.
33. Formulating and implementing a roadmap for the immediate implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord, 1997.

34. Enacting and implementing ‘Anti-discrimination Laws’ to remove barriers to the inclusion of marginalised communities in accessing public services and to ensure inclusive and accountable service delivery.
35. Refraining from any activities that undermine freedom of thought and conscience, freedom of expression, the practice of diverse indigenous and folk cultures, peaceful assembly, and freedom of religion and belief.

### **Commitment Related to Social Protection**

36. Expanding the coverage and budgetary allocation of social protection programmes in light of international best practices and ensuring their proper and effective utilisation.
37. Revising social protection programmes by discontinuing those that are non-relevant schemes and introducing inclusive, need-based, and necessary interventions for the genuinely poor, Dalits, indigenous peoples, the urban poor, including homeless/floating and street children, and other vulnerable groups, and implementing these programmes through a transparent, accountable, corruption-free, and non-discriminatory way.
38. Committing to avoid political interference in the selection of beneficiaries of social protection programmes and refraining from treating beneficiaries as an electoral vote bank.

### **Commitment Related to Education Sector Reform**

39. To commit to establishing a quality, up-to-date, universal, and equity-based education system:
  - Establish a permanent and independent Education Commission for tasks such as formulating and updating the education policy, planning and implementing education, and reviewing the curriculum.
  - Formulate a unified, contemporary, modern, and inclusive education policy.
  - Allocate 15-20% of the national budget or 4-6% of the GDP for sustainable development in the education sector, in line with the nation's obligation as a signatory to the UNESCO declaration.
  - Identify existing problems, lack of coordination, irregularities, and corruption, as well as the challenges to good governance in the education sector, and initiate reform measures.
  - Eliminate all forms of discrimination in access to education for children from tea worker communities, Dalits, Indigenous peoples, and all other marginalized, disadvantaged, hard-to-reach, and disaster-prone areas.
  - Establish an independent and permanent ‘Pay Commission’ to determine a salary structure for teachers at all levels that is aligned with the cost of living.
  - Formulate a uniform law for the administration of universities and grant full autonomy to all universities

## **Commitment Related to Health Sector Reform**

40. Considering healthcare as a fundamental right of the people, the following commitments must be made, in addition to the recommendations of the Health Sector Reform Commission, to ensure corruption-free, accountable, inclusive, and quality healthcare for all at all levels through a reform in the health sector-
- Reform relevant laws and policies while remaining free from the influence of vested interest individuals/groups/organisations in the health sector.
  - Identify individuals and syndicates involved in irregularities and corruption in all forms of procurement, project implementation, recruitment, posting, and transfer within the health sector, and take appropriate measures to prevent irregularities and corruption.
  - Ensure the proper utilisation of allocated funds in the health sector by preventing irregularities and corruption and ensuring transparency and accountability.

## **Commitment Related to the Agricultural Sector**

41. To ensure fair prices for farmers by reducing the dominance of middlemen in the agricultural sector-
- Ensuring transparency and accountability in the spending of subsidies in the agriculture sector.
  - Ensuring the supply of agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, and irrigation facilities) at fair prices.
  - Establishing an efficient and effective agricultural market system.
  - Procuring agricultural products directly from farmers.
  - Strengthening cooperative-based production and marketing systems through increased state patronage and support.
  - Enhancing the capacity of agricultural product storage and processing systems.
  - Introducing Crop Insurance' in the agriculture sector
  - Ensuring access to agricultural credit at low interest rates through hassle-free procedures.

## **Commitment Related to Ensuring Governance in the Business and Private Sectors**

42. To prevent irregularities, corruption, plunder, and money laundering through policy capture, collusion, and syndicates by a segment of the business and private sectors, and to build an accountable and sustainable economic system, prepare a roadmap for formulating and implementing a Business Integrity Strategy (BIS) to promote the practice of integrity in the private business sector.
43. Undertake legal and institutional reforms in the relevant regulatory and oversight systems to ensure transparent, accountable, and corruption-free private sector services, especially in private education, health, telecommunications, and mobile financial services.

44. Identify all forms of irregularities and corruption existing in the transport sector, including owner-worker associations, politically influential groups, toll-collection syndicates, and private transport businesses, and take strict measures to stop them and ensure commuter-friendly and safe transport services.
45. End syndicate control over daily essential commodities and establish an efficient, competitive market system through necessary legal reforms and coordinated efforts among relevant institutions to maintain prices at an affordable level.

### **Bank and Financial Sector Reform**

46. For the reform of the banking sector:

- Establish an 'Independent Bank Commission' comprised of neutral, reputable, conflict-of-interest-free, and skilled experts capable of working independently on banking sector issues.
- Eliminate the dual governance system in the regulation and supervision of the banking sector, especially state-owned banks, by dissolving the Financial Institutions Division under the Ministry of Finance.
- Ensure exemplary punishment for individuals, as well as officials and directors of the Bangladesh Bank and commercial banks, involved in loan fraud, all types of deception, irregularities, and corruption in the banking sector.
- Free the bank and financial sectors from group and family control (cronyism/nepotism); remove politically and business-interested individuals from the board of directors and management of the Bangladesh Bank and all commercial banks and stop this practice.

47. Investigate the irregularities and corruption that occurred in the capital market in the past and bring those involved in corruption to justice; create an independent, transparent, and accountable regulatory framework for the capital market, freeing it from syndicates and corruption.

### **Commitment to the Power and Energy Sector**

48. Political parties must commit to gradually phasing out the use of fossil fuels and increasing the share of renewable energy in the energy mix. This includes:
  - Cancelling the existing energy master plan, the 'Integrated Energy and Power Master Plan (IEPMP 2023)', and formulating a new master plan that strategically prioritises renewable energy.
  - To achieve the 'Net-Zero' target by 2050, including the transition to renewable energy, establish an independent oversight and regulatory authority comprised of relevant experts and civil society representatives to stop policy capture, prevent conflicts of interest, and ensure accountability in the decision-making process for the energy sector.
  - Set time-bound targets for gradually reducing the financing and use of fossil fuel-dependent projects to implement international commitments and achieve renewable energy goals.

- Enhance the capacity of the Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority (SREDA) and grant it the status of an autonomous institution to lead activities related to the transition to renewable energy.

### **Commitment to Environment, Climate vulnerability, Climate justice, and Climate Finance Governance**

49. Strengthen the demand that the funds Bangladesh is entitled to, as a country affected by climate change, should be provided as compensation (loss and damage), and not as loans, insurance, or grants.
50. To meet the expectations of the Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF), increase its financial and technical capacity in alignment with its goals and objectives, and implement projects with transparency and accountability.
51. Ensure transparency and accountability in the management of the Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund and other climate funds to prevent wastage of funds, irregularities, and corruption.
52. Refrain from adopting development projects in environmentally sensitive and protected forest areas and ecologically critical areas that are harmful to the environment and biodiversity and cause environmental pollution.

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