

NSU Hosts Dialogue on “The Quest for a Fair and Representative Electoral System for Bangladesh”

02 August 2025, Dhaka

A dialogue titled “**The Quest for a Fair and Representative Electoral System for Bangladesh** (একটি গণতান্ত্রিক ও প্রতিনিধিত্বমূলক নির্বাচন পদ্ধতির সন্ধানে)” was held on Saturday, 2 August 2025, at 11:00 AM at Audi 801, North South University, jointly organized by the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG) of North South University and the Private University Teachers Association of Bangladesh (PUTAB).

This timely dialogue is being organised against the backdrop of the historic July Revolution. The seminar seeks to explore necessary reforms to build a democratic, inclusive, and representative electoral system for a new Bangladesh.

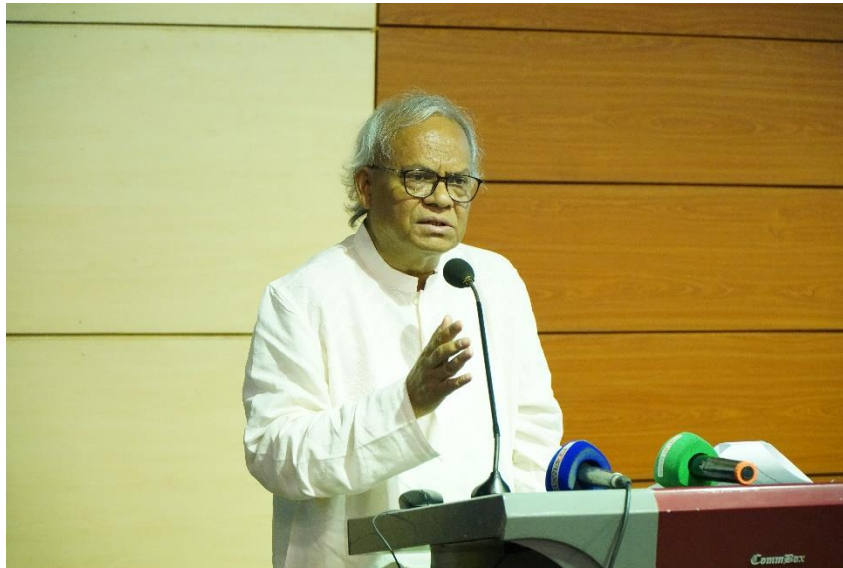
Professor Dr. AKM Waresul Karim, Dean, School of Business & Economics, NSU, delivered the keynote presentation. He proposed a **Weighted Mixed Member Proportional Representation** system, where all 300 seats would continue to be filled through direct election, but an additional “winner’s premium” would be applied based on the proportion of votes earned. This system, he argued, would preserve individual accountability while ensuring proportional fairness.



Dr. Badiul Alam Majumdar, Head, Election System Reform Commission, served as **Chief Guest**. He emphasised the importance of youth in political reform and challenged the assumption that age necessarily brings wisdom. Citing global examples, he noted that PR systems may increase representation but could also risk instability without institutional maturity, drawing comparisons with Nepal’s frequent leadership changes.

Advocate Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, Senior Joint Secretary General of the **Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)**, expressed appreciation for the platform. He emphasised the need to restore democratic culture, highlighting the suppression of dissent over the past 15 years. Rizvi

underscored that without repairing institutional foundations, even the best-designed reforms could fall short.



Bobby Hajjaj, Chairman, Nationalist Democratic Movement (NDM), commended the academic value of the keynote but critiqued the distance between academic theory and political reality. He warned of "**ivory tower syndrome**" in civil society and academia, emphasising that electoral reforms must be informed by local experimentation rather than foreign imitation.

Dr. Abdullah-Al-Mamun, Associate Professor, University of Dhaka, called for **immediate electoral reform and swift elections**, referencing a study of 26 post-crisis countries. He noted that 16 of these held elections within 10 months, achieving relative stability. He urged Bangladesh to act quickly to avoid uncertainty and a prolonged political vacuum.

Dr. Tasnim Jara, Senior Joint Member Secretary, National Citizen Party (NCP) highlighted the **vote-seat disparity** seen in the 2001 and 2008 elections, where parties like the BNP and Awami League received disproportionate parliamentary representation. She called for greater **youth and women representation** and emphasised the need to harness the country's demographic dividend in governance.

Mamunul Haque, President, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, criticised the current electoral setup as a "**two-team match**," where voters are reduced to spectators. He argued that only genuine **proportional representation** could correct this imbalance and meet the public's expectations in post-revolution Bangladesh.

Professor Dr. Dilara Chowdhury, Academic and Political Analyst, reflected on her experience in post-Ershad democratic movements, expressing frustration at the lack of progress. She praised Dr. Karim's academic initiative and stressed the need for structured discussions on **PR systems**,

especially as a mechanism for ensuring **women's representation**. She also advised caution on lowering the voting age, arguing that youth require guidance at formative ages.

Professor Dr. Mahbubur Rahman, Chair, Department of History and Philosophy, NSU, celebrated the cooperation among **30 political parties** post-revolution and praised the keynote's balanced approach. He argued that **no democratic system is legitimate without proper representation**, calling Dr. Karim's proposal a "win-win" for all stakeholders.

Barrister Fuad, Senior Leader of the Amar Bangladesh (AB) Party, expressed support for a **mixed** proportional representation (PR) system for the lower house of parliament, but opposed the idea of a bicameral legislature. He cautioned that, in the absence of visionary statesmen, the upper house could turn into a "political parking spot."



The event opened with a welcome address by **Professor Sk. Tawfique M. Haque**, Director of SIPG, who emphasized the role of universities in facilitating dialogue on national governance.

The dialogue was **moderated by Dr. Md. Taufiqul Islam Mithil**, Professor of Political Science & Sociology at NSU and President of PUTAB.

The program concluded with a **vote of thanks from Professor Abdul Hannan Chowdhury**, Vice-Chancellor of NSU, who praised the diversity of perspectives and reaffirmed the university's commitment to supporting policy-relevant academic discourse.