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## Consensus key to reforms, election

Says chief adviser, proposes 17yrs as minimum age for voter eligibility

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus yesterday said reforms without consensus and elections without reforms would not be able to take Bangladesh forward.

"We need consensus to make reforms. There is no other way," he said in his address to a national dialogue on unity, reform, and election.

In his video message, Yunus urged citizens, political parties and civil society members to join the reform process with resolve.

The two-day event is being organised by Forum for Bangladesh Studies at the Krishibid Institution Bangladesh.

"The sacrifices of the martyrs of July [uprising] will not be meaningful unless we



"Fascism led Bangladesh astray from all kinds of idealistic goals and took us into deep darkness. We are working to bring Bangladesh back on the path to equality, human dignity, and justice."

Muhammad Yunus, chief adviser

"Reform commissions will hold discussions with the government, which will take time. In our view, the more the time passes, the bigger the problems grow."

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, BNP secretary general



"We must move towards elections. But before that, people need relief. Don't mislead people favouring reforms. Attention must be given to these issues."

Debapriya Bhattacharya, CPD distinguished fellow

build a just society. Fascism led Bangladesh astray from all kinds of idealistic goals and took us into deep darkness. We are working to bring Bangladesh back on the path to equality, human dignity, and justice," he said.

Referring to the three topics of discussion -- unity, reform, and election -- he said none of these would succeed without the other.

"Half a century after independence, we have created an extraordinary moment of opportunity through immense sacrifices. If we are unwilling or unable to seize this opportunity, future generations will not forgive us.

"Unity is our core strength. The July uprising has empowered us on a historic scale. Over the past five months, this unity has grown even stronger. As the forces that oppose people's uprising continuously try to divide us, our unity has grown stronger."

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## Talks with parties necessary before placing reports

Fakhrul on reform commissions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The reform commissions' works would have been more effective had they held discussions with political parties before submitting their reports, BNP leader Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said.

"We have heard that the commissions will prepare their proposals and submit them to the government, and then the government will discuss those with political parties. If discussions with political parties had been held beforehand, it would have been more effective and better," Fakhrul said.

The BNP secretary general made the remarks at a dialogue on "Which Path to Unity", organised by the Forum for Bangladesh Studies at the Krishibid Institution in Dhaka yesterday.

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## LAST 3 NATIONAL POLLS Election commissioners breached oath of office

Says chief of polls reform commission; probe into irregularities to be recommended

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Electoral Reform Commission is likely to recommend an investigation into irregularities during the last three national polls held under ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

It is also of the opinion that the election commissioners who oversaw those polls breached their oath of office to preserve the constitution, according to commission Chairman Badiul Alam Majumdar.

The reform commission may recommend appointing election commissioners through a search committee with representatives from the government, the opposition, and

the third-largest party in parliament.

Besides the restoration of the caretaker government system, capping the tenures of a prime minister at two terms and a proportional representation system, the reform commission is likely to recommend giving more powers to the Election Commission.

While discussing the updates on the reform commission's work with The Daily Star recently, Badiul said the other points under consideration include increasing women's seats in parliament, the reintroduction of "no vote" on ballot papers, and allowing Bangladeshi migrants to cast their votes from abroad.

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