



**Parliament Watch**  
**11<sup>th</sup> Parliament**  
**1<sup>st</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> Sessions (January 2019 – April 2023)**

**Executive Summary**

**01 October 2023**

## Parliament Watch: 11<sup>th</sup> Parliament – 1<sup>st</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> Sessions (January 2019 – April 2023)

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## Parliament Watch: 11<sup>th</sup> Parliament

1<sup>st</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> Sessions (January 2019 – April 2023)\*

### Executive Summary

#### 1. Background and Rationale

In a parliamentary government system, the National Parliament, the highest legislative body of the state, acts as the focal point for all kinds of state affairs. The National Parliament is one of the fundamental pillars of democracy, good governance, and national integrity. It plays a crucial role in reflecting public expectations, enacting people-oriented laws, ensuring government accountability, and combating corruption. Objectives 16.6 and 16.7 of "Sustainable Development Goal 2030" emphasize the development of effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels and ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making. Moreover, "National Integrity Strategy 2012" recognises the matter of consolidating the parliamentary democratic system reflecting the hopes and expectations of the people through the enactment of laws in the parliament and monitoring the government's activities. Besides, being a member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Bangladesh is committed to ensuring the active participation of parliament members in national development and integrating various constructive initiatives in the country's governance system in line with international good practice.

The various political parties that participated in the eleventh National Parliament election had commitments to ensuring an effective Parliament. On 30 December 2018, through the eleventh National Parliament election, the grand alliance led by the Bangladesh Awami League achieved an overwhelming majority. Although the election was participatory, it was not competitive. On 30 January 2019, with the elected members, the first session of the eleventh National Parliament was held, and until September 2023, a total of 24 sessions has been held.

Globally, 200 parliamentary monitoring organisations (PMOs) observe parliamentary activities and propose various evidence-based recommendations to make the parliament more effective. Since the first session of the eighth national parliament, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has been monitoring parliamentary activities on a regular basis and continuing its advocacy efforts. As part of TIB's ongoing activities, this report on the eleventh National Parliament has been published, reviewing the activities and efficacy of the 1<sup>st</sup> through 22<sup>nd</sup> sessions of this parliament.

#### 1.1 Objective of the Research

The overall objective of this research was to observe and analyse the proceedings and the roles of the members of the Eleventh National Parliament (from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> sessions). The specific objectives were the following-

- To observe and review the various business of parliamentary sessions and the activities of parliamentary standing committees;
- To observe the role of parliament members in representing the people, establishing government accountability, and legislative process; and
- To review the role of the Speaker and the members in managing parliamentary affairs.

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\* Executive summary of the report published through a press conference on 01 October 2023.

## 1.2 Scope of the Research

Review of the various parliamentary business, including the activities of the standing committee, from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> session (January 2019 - April 2023) of the Eleventh National Parliament.

## 1.3 Research Methodology and Issues Covered

A mixed-method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative strategies, was employed. Data were systematically gathered from a variety of primary and secondary sources to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research subject. Data source includes records of parliamentary proceedings broadcasted, and interviews with key informants such as Members of Parliament, government officials, and researchers, among others. In addition, data were extracted from the daily bulletin of the proceedings and committee reports published by the parliament, government gazettes, published research reports, books, articles, and newspapers. From January 2019 to April 2023, approximately 744 hours of recordings from the first to the twenty-second parliamentary sessions were transcribed; based on the transcriptions and documents, the specific subject-based database was compiled.

**Table: Issues Covered under the Study**

Main issues	Sub-Issues
Introduction to the Parliament and its Members	Composition of Member of Parliament and Arrangement of Activities; and Members' Age, Gender, Educational Qualification and Occupation
Presidential Speech and Vote of Thanks	Key Issues in the President's Speech and Members' Speeches
Legislative Processes and Budget	Rate of Passing Bills and Time Spent; Members' Participation in legislative procedure; and Budget Discussions
Activities Related to people's Representation and Accountability	Question-Answer Session; Various Procedural Rules (62, 71, 147, 164, 274, and 300); Point of Order; Members' Participation in Private Members' Resolution Proposals; Topics of Discussion and Time Spent, and Committee Activities
Management of Parliamentary Affairs	Members' Proficiency and Preparation in Presenting Speeches and Opinions According to Procedural Rules; Members' Conduct; Attendance; Parliament Boycott; Walkout; Time Spent in Quorum Crisis and its estimated monetary value; and Speaker's Role in managing Parliamentary affairs
Openness of Parliamentary Activities	Public Broadcasting of Parliamentary Activities and Openness of Information
Other Issues	Sub-Issues
Women's Participation and Development	Participation and presence of female members in parliamentary activities and discussions related to women's development and rights
Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)	Specific discussion on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the parliament

## 2. Basic information

### 2.1 Seat Arrangement and Basic Information of Members

#### 2.1.1 Seat Arrangement (350)

The ruling party secured a significant majority with 89.2% of the seats, while the main opposition party held 7.4%, and other opposition parties collectively accounted for 3.5%.

### **2.1.2 Gender Ratio**

Among the elected 300 seats, 92.3% were occupied by males and 7.7% by females. Out of 350 seats including the reserved seats for women, the male and female representation was 79.1% and 20.9% respectively.

### **2.1.3 Age**

The average age of the members of the Eleventh National Parliament is 63 years. The proportion of members aged over 60 (61.8%) is higher compared to those between 26-60 years of age (38.2%). On the other hand, in the 17th Lok Sabha of India, the rate of members aged 26-60 years (55.5%) is higher compared to those aged over 60 (44.5%). In the House of Commons of the United Kingdom, the rate of members aged 26-60 years (72.8%) is the highest compared to those aged over 60 (27.2%).

### **2.1.4 Educational Qualification and Occupation**

Regarding educational qualifications, a significant proportion of members (41.1%) hold postgraduate degree. Twelve members are self-educated, and one member is literate. In the Eleventh National Parliament, the majority of members (62.3%) are businessmen (considering multiple occupations).

### **2.1.5 Other Information**

The majority of the members were elected for the first term (35.4%), and 10% of the members were elected for the fifth or more term. Twenty-one of the elected members had criminal cases against them.

## **2.2 Utilization of Workdays and Work Hours**

During 232 total working days, 823 hours and 6 minutes were spent, averaging 3 hours and 32 minutes daily. The inter-session breaks average was 55 days, ranging from 41 to 59 days. A variety of activities consumed 744 hours and 13 minutes where representation and accountability-related issues occupied 26.6% of the time (190 hours, 26 minutes), and discussions on the President's speech accounts for 25.7% (191 hours, 23 minutes). Legislative activities took 124 hours and 18 minutes (16.7%), and special activities accounted for 1.2% (9 hours, 17 minutes). Additionally, other parliamentary activities, including the election of Speaker and Deputy Speaker, committee formations, and condolence motions, took up 11.6% of the time (86 hours, 18 minutes).

## **3. The President's Address and the Discussion on President's Address**

### **3.1 President's Address**

In the first sessions of each year, it is customary to have President's Address in the parliament. A total of 4 hours and 57 minutes, which is 0.7% of the total parliamentary proceedings, was spent on the President's Address. Analyzing the President's speech, it was observed that discussions on the government's achievements were primarily focus. Nearly four-fifths of the time was spent on discussions on this subject. On the other hand, discussions on future planning and direction were received separate significance.

### **3.2 Discussion on President's Address**

During the discussion on the vote of thanks to the President's speech, a total of 186 hours and 26 minutes were spent, which is 25.0% of the total parliamentary proceedings time. Out of this, the members of the ruling party used a total of 156 hours and 28 minutes (86.2%), the main opposition party used 20 hours and 18 minutes (11.2%), and other opposition parties used 4 hours and 48 minutes (2.6%). Analyzing the speeches of the members of the ruling party, a significant amount of time was spent praising the Prime Minister and various achievements of the government, consuming respectively 19.8% and 19.4% of the total time. Analyzing the speeches of the members of the main opposition party, the highest time (44.4%) was spent reviewing the current situation of the country and offering various proposals to the government. Additionally, 11.9% of the time was spent praising various achievements of the current government and different measures taken by the Prime Minister,

and 11.6% of the time was spent in criticizing the government and other parties. On the other hand, members of other opposition parties spent the majority of their time, 58.6%, in criticizing the government, and 25.3% of the time was spent in making various claims and proposals.

#### **4. The Legislative Process (Budget and Other Laws Excluding the Budget)**

##### **4.1 Legislation (Other Laws Excluding the Budget)**

A total of 124 hours and 18 minutes were spent on legislative affairs, which is almost 16.7% of the total time spent in parliamentary proceedings. Notably, in 2019-20, this rate was nearly 49.3% in the United Kingdom, and in 2018-19, it was 45.0% in the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha of India. Excluding the 12 budget-related bills, the total number of bills introduced was 108 (107 government bills and 1 private bill), and the number of bills passed was 96 (68 new bills, 26 amendment bills, and 2 repeal bills). On average, it took nearly 70 minutes to pass a bill in the parliament, where the minimum time was almost 28 minutes, and the maximum time was nearly 3 hours and 25 minutes. The bill passed in the shortest time was the "Voter List (Amendment) Bill, 2020", and the bill that took the longest time was the "Appointment of Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners Bill, 2022".

There was a lack of spontaneous participation by members in the discussion of legislation. By giving notice, only 24 members (6.9%) participated in the discussion. However, 95% of the total notices were given by 11 members of the main and other opposition parties. From the ruling party, a total of 6 members participated in the discussion giving amendment proposals on 2 bills. On average, for each bill, approximately 8 members proposed for scrutinizing public opinion, and 6 members put forward amendment proposals. All objections and proposals of eliciting public opinion raised on the bill were rejected.

Of the passed bills, no amendments were adopted in 52% (50 bills) of cases, partial amendments were adopted in 47% (45 bills) of cases, and in 1 case, all proposers withdrew their proposed amendments, calling for not passing the bill. Even though there were notable and important proposals among the proposed amendments, priority was given to the addition and replacements of specific words in the adoption of amendments. Analysing the adopted amendments, about 67% were word additions, deletions, or arrangements, and 33% were insertions or replacements of various sections/sub-sections/paragraphs. In most cases, the Ministers had dismissed the notices on the bills without providing specific answers to the raised objections or questions, citing reasons such as the opposition party's past history, the necessity of the bill, the proposal of the bill being raised after adequate scrutiny, etc.

In the case of dismissing the notices, failing to present a logical and sufficient explanation leads to the dissatisfaction of some of the notice providers. Ultimately, due to the overwhelming majority of the ruling party, most of the raised notices were dismissed, and the bills were observed to be passed without any notable amendments.

##### **4.2 Budget**

For the budget session, a total of 142 hours 30 minutes were spent, which is 19.2% of the total parliamentary session time and 60.0% of the allocated budget session time. Of the time spent on budget proceedings, 80.1% was spent on general discussions on the budget, 15.8% on discussions regarding approval demands, and 4.1% on presenting the budget. 35.7% of the time spent on budget discussions was used for discussions related to the budget, and the remaining time was spent on other discussions, praising one's own party, and criticizing other parties. It took 4 hours 6 minutes for the "Finance Bill 2019" to pass, and on average, it took about 1 hour 21 minutes for the other three finance bills to pass. It took around 5 minutes on average for the appropriation bills to pass.

In the First to Twenty-Second sessions of the Eleventh National Parliament, a total of 288 members participated in the budget discussions. Among them, 253 were members of the ruling party (87.9%),

24 were members of the main opposition party (8.3%), and 11 were members of other opposition parties (3.8%).

Both ruling and opposition party members discussed several budget-related topics in their speeches, including bringing laundered money back to the country, the poor state of banking sector and loan defaulters, universal pension scheme, inflation, changes in monetary policy, deficit financing of the budget, reducing dependency on imports, implementing progressive tax policies, increasing the tax-free income limit, and simplifying the tax payment system, etc. Controversial topics of the budget session included the proposal to bring laundered money back to the country and the size of the budget, among others.

## **5. People's Representation and Accountability Related Activities/Representation and Oversight Function of the Parliament**

### **5.1 Question-Answer Motion of the Prime Minister**

A total of 13 hours and 2 minutes were spent in the Prime Minister's question-answer period, which is 1.8% of the total parliamentary session time. Eleven sessions, including seven consecutive sessions from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup>, did not directly host the question-answer period. A total of 33 main and 83 supplementary questions were raised. More than double the average time was spent raising supplementary questions (almost two minutes on average) than main questions (less than one minute on average). 48.7% of the questioners discussed other matters outside the questions, including praising the Prime Minister, commending their party, criticising other parties, etc., which accounted for nearly 80% of the total time spent on raising questions. Conversely, while answering, discussions outside of the answers took up around 39.1% of the time.

### **5.2 Question-Answer Motion of the Ministers**

44 hours and 49 minutes were spent in the Ministers' question-answer motion, which is 6.0% of the total parliamentary session time. Thirteen sessions, including eleven consecutive sessions from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup>, did not directly host this activity. A total of 139 members of parliament raised a total of 200 main questions and 564 supplementary questions directly to the ministers of 31 ministries. Raising supplementary questions (averaging more than 1 minute) took more than four times the time compared to raising main questions (averaging 14–15 seconds). A 56.7% of the questioners discussed other matters outside the questions (praising the Prime Minister, praising their party, criticising other parties, etc.), which accounted for nearly 65% of the total time spent on raising questions. On the contrary, about 39.8% of the time was spent on discussing irrelevant matters to the answers.

### **5.3 Point of Order**

Between the 1st and the 22nd sessions of the Eleventh National Parliament, points of order were held in all but the 7<sup>th</sup> session, making a total of 21 sessions. A total of 22 hours and 11 minutes spent on this segment which is 3.0% of the total parliamentary session time. A total of 52 members (14.8%) of the parliament participated in these discussions. Of the subjects discussed during these sessions, 43.5% were related to recent events, accountability, and urgent measures; 12.4% were related to irregularities and corruption; 12.0% were related to the deterioration of human rights and law and order, and the rest were related to parliamentary activities and various other topics. During this segment, it was observed that there were debates and disputes over speeches and discussion times on various topics. Allegations were made and criticisms were directed by naming the direct opposition party and any member of the party. During this discussion segment, one of the other opposition parties walked out twice due to contentious and critical speeches.

#### **5.4 Motions (General) - Rule 146 (Discussion on a Matter of Public Interest) and Rule 147 (Notice of Motions)**

In the 22 sessions of the Eleventh National Parliament, nearly 69 hours and 33 minutes of discussion were conducted on a total of 19 working days in 9 sessions, accounting for 9.3% of the total parliamentary session time. The discussion agenda/issues were put forward by 8 Parliament members; apart from one, all were from the ruling party. Observing the contents of the discussions, it can be seen that nearly half of the time of this segment (45.1%) was spent solely on discussions related to Bangabandhu. Around 31.7% of the time was spent on discussions marking the golden jubilee of independence and the Parliament, and the remaining time was spent on various other topics including terrorist attacks, COVID-19, global instability, etc. However, while having topic-based discussions, members spent nearly one-third of the time in self-praising and criticising other parties.

#### **5.5 Calling Attention to Matters of Urgent Public Importance (Rule-71)**

In this segment, a total time of 21 hours and 37 minutes was spent, which is 2.9% of the total time of the parliamentary proceedings. The activity was suspended on approximately 80% of the days it was scheduled to be conducted. In a total of 14 sessions (7th and from the 9th to the 21st), this activity was not directly conducted. The total number of notices was 1,880. The number of notices accepted was 50, among which 42 (84%) were raised and 8 (16%) were postponed. The highest number of notices discussed and accepted were under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (70 discussed, 6 accepted, and 2 suspended). On the other hand, the number of unaccepted notices was 1,830, among which discussions were conducted for 2 minutes each on 425 (23.0%) notices.

#### **5.6 Resolutions**

This business consumed 11 hours and 27 minutes, which constitutes 1.5% of the total session time. This segment was not addressed in a total of 15 sessions, ranging from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup>. In this period, a total of 55 proposals were submitted, of which two were accepted. The two accepted proposals were both raised by the ruling party, focusing on arrangements for shipping and establishing technical training centers. The majority of the proposals were related to infrastructure development, accounting for 47.1%.

#### **5.7 Adjournment Motions**

In 17 sessions, this segment was not conducted. For the remaining sessions, five members submitted 22 notices of adjournment motions, among which three were raised by the main opposition party and 19 by other opposition parties. 14 notices were given by a female member of the other opposition parties. In this phase, the highest number of proposals were made regarding enforced disappearance, extrajudicial killing, irregularities, and prevention of corruption (40.9%). Showing the reasons such as the opportunity for discussion in another segment, having already been discussed in another segment, limitations of raising under this segment, etc., all notices were rejected by the Speaker.

#### **5.8 Personal Explanation (Rule 274) and Statement made by a Minister (Rule 300)**

A total of 2 statements were presented under Rule 274. Despite the condition of not presenting controversial discussions in the procedural rule, a minister raised criticisms of the opposition in his statement. Under Rule 300, a total of 14 statements were presented, of which 2 included against the claims of the Members of Parliament. No statements were provided from the concerned ministries against 9 more claims of the members. Unaddressed claims under Rule 300 include the Saudi Arabia-Bangladesh defense agreement, Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant's pillow budget, negligence in coronavirus testing at the airport, and judge recruitment, etc.



### **5.9 Activities of the Parliamentary Standing Committee**

Among the 50 committees, the opposition party has been the chairman in 4 committees (Public Account, Labour and Employment, Road Transport & Bridges, and Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment); there are no members from the opposition party in 17 committees. Several ministers from the tenth parliament have been kept as members or chairmen in the same ministry-related committee in the eleventh parliament. According to the rule, each of the 50 committees should hold at least one meeting per month, totaling 2700 meetings in 48 months, but only 1187 were held. A total of 66.1% of the minimum required number of meetings were not held. No committee followed the rule of holding at least one meeting per month. A significant gap in the regular meeting of the relevant committees was observed during the COVID-19 situation. The Standing Committee on the Ministry of Finance did not have a single meeting during COVID-19\*, and the Standing Committee on the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare did not have any meetings for 13 months of the first 18 months of COVID-related restrictions.

On average, 60 percent of the members were present in the meetings. A total of 48 reports from 31 committees were presented in the parliament; based on the availability of the reports, 26 reports from 19 committees were reviewed. According to the information from these reports, the rate of implementation of the committee's recommendation was 51 percent; the rate of unknown or unimplemented was 4 percent; and the rest were under implementation and/or ongoing. Although the Petition Committee provides an opportunity for the public to file complaints directly on important issues, it was not effective due to the weakness in publicity. On the other hand, there was a gap in efforts to hold the executive (government) accountable for the implementation of committee recommendations. Lastly, although the parliamentary committees provide an opportunity to ensure accountability of the executive, it was not effective at the expected level.

### **5.10 Ensuring Representation and Accountability: The Role of the Main Opposition Party**

Against the absolute majority of the ruling party, the position of the main opposition party was marginal, and their role was overall negligible in holding the government accountable. While a few members of the main opposition party notably criticised various actions of the government, most members remained relatively silent in this regard. In some perspectives, the role of other opposition parties was more noticeable than that of the main opposition party. Due to the lack of cohesion with other opposition parties, their scope to hold the government accountable was further limited. Sometimes, their statements focused more on criticizing and analyzing other opposition parties, which further questioned the dual role and identity of the main opposition party.

## **6. Representation, Presence, and Participation of Women Members**

In the elected seats, 23 women (7.7%), and including the reserved seats, 73 women (20.3%) were represented in the parliament. 4.3% of the ministers, 11.1% of the state ministers, and one of the total three deputy ministers were women. According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2023 of the World Economic Forum, Bangladesh is ranked first in the category of female heads of government, but 91st and 123rd in the representation of women in parliament and the cabinet respectively.

The average attendance of women Members of Parliament was 46 (63%) per working day, which was higher compared to men (53%). With regard to attendance on 75% or more of the overall working days, the female presence rate was notably higher than that of the male presence rate. Women participated at a rate of 91.8%, 89.0% and 45.2% respectively in the discussions on the President's Address, Budget and under procedural rule 71, which were higher compared to male members. 16.7% of the passed bills (out of 96 bills) were introduced by two female members. A total of 6 female

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\* "During COVID-19" refers to the 18 months spanning the three phases of the corona outbreak (March'2020-August'2021).

members proposed amendments and requested to scrutinize bills. Women-related discussions were made in different proceedings on various topics including job creation for women, women empowerment, gender budget, child marriage and violence against women, and increasing allocation for women entrepreneurs, etc.

## **7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

There was a noticeable gap in discussions regarding the measures taken, goals achieved, and challenges faced in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in a holistic manner. There were specific discussions on quality education; clean water and sanitation; climate action; peace, justice, and strong institutions in a limited context. Indirect discussions on other goals of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were also observed through various segments. In this regard, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, and climate action were prioritised in discussions.

## **8. Parliamentary Proceedings Management and Member's Participation**

### **8.1 Members' Attendance in Parliamentary Proceedings<sup>1</sup>**

The average attendance per working day was 192 members (54.9%). The ruling party members had an average attendance of 55.8%, the main opposition party 50.0%, and other opposition parties 43.0% per working day. The highest attendance rate was in the fourth session (September 2019), where an average of 269 members were present on the working days. On the other hand, the eighth session (June-July 2020) had the lowest average attendance, with 91 members present per working day over nine days.

Overall, the average party-wise participation in various activities was 84.3% for the ruling party, 10.3% for the main opposition party, and 5.5% for other opposition parties. Three members participated in the highest number of proceedings (10 or more), two from the main opposition party, and one from another opposition party. Twenty seven members participated in only one proceeding, 26 from the ruling party, and one from another opposition party. The highest participation (82.9%) was in the discussion on the President's address to the parliament. In terms of party representation, the opposition parties had a higher participation rate in almost all proceedings compared to the ruling party. Although the government party had significant participation in other programmes, only 1.9% of members (except the minister) participated in legislative proceedings.

### **8.2 Responsibility and Efficiency of Members in Parliamentary Sessions**

In parliamentary activities, a gap in the readiness and participation of the members was observed. Due to a lack of preparation, instances such as not presenting proposals, not properly vetting during the question-answer segments, and providing incorrect information were noticed. Due to members' absence on multiple working days after giving notice, notices were repeatedly postponed, amendments remained unraised, and responses were given by ministers of another ministry in the absence of the relevant minister. Moreover, complications and delays were seen when one person presented a notice on behalf of another. After voting against their party in a significant number on a resolution and a law adoption, attracting the Speaker's attention led members to vote in favour of their party in the second round, indicating an inconsistency in the proceedings. There was a gap in proficiency among members participating in various activities. Notable instances include raising topics from one activity to another, making mistakes in the order of presenting proposals, inability to deliver speeches, etc. A gap in training for enhancing members' proficiency was noticed. It is worth

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<sup>1</sup> The 13 proceedings (Questions-Answers Motion Prime Minister, Questions-Answers Motion Ministers, Legislation, Budget, Discussion on President's Address, Point of Order, Resolution, Adjournment Motion, Discussion under Rule-71, Rule-147, Rule-164, Rule-274 and Rule-300) have been considered.

mentioning that, in the fiscal year 2019-20, out of a total of 28 training sessions offered by the parliament, only two were for parliament members.

### **8.3 The Behavior of the Members during the Parliamentary Session**

The use of aggressive language against civil society members and the political opposition, and the use of offensive language against some female MPs or the political opposition, were noticed, which violates the rules of procedure of the parliament. This violation was observed more in the case of members of the ruling party compared to the opposition. Obstructing a member's speech through disorderly conduct during the session, playing unrelated audio/video clips, moving around the parliamentary chamber during the session, conversing among themselves during a member's speech, indiscipline among members in parliamentary sessions (using mobile phones, chatting, sleeping, etc.), and making targeted comments and remarks against parliament members were also notable.

### **8.4 Parliament Abstention, Walkout, and Resignation**

Until the 22<sup>nd</sup> session of the Eleventh Parliament, members of the main opposition party or other opposition parties did not boycott the Parliament. Members of other opposition parties walked out a total of 5 times. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) walked out collectively 3 times and once individually by a member, and a member of the Gono Forum walked out individually once. The members who walked out were absent from the parliamentary proceedings for a minimum of 3 minutes to 21 minutes. After the 20<sup>th</sup> session, all the members (7 persons) of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) resigned. In the by-elections for the vacant seats, 5 members from the ruling party, 1 member from the main opposition party, and 1 member from the other opposition party secured the seats.

### **8.5 Quorum Crisis**

A total of 54 hours and 38 minutes were spent due to inadequate quorum, which is 6.5% of the total parliamentary proceedings time. On average, 14 minutes 08 seconds were lost due to quorum crisis per working day. The session started late on 84% of the working days from the scheduled time. In the case of resuming the session after a break, it was observed to start late on 100% of the working days from the scheduled time. The average monetary value per minute of managing the parliament was approximately 2,726,364 Taka. Accordingly, the estimated monetary value of the total time spent due to quorum crisis was nearly 89 crore 28 Lakh 8 thousand and 779 Taka.

### **8.6 Role of the Speaker\***

The Speaker was found maintaining a silent role regarding cautioning members or expunging words when members use inappropriate language in the parliament. Sometimes Speaker failed to play a role above party affiliations while reacting to the statements of some members of the opposition party. Providing spontaneous explanations against objections raised by members on the bill was also noted. Deficiencies in maintaining order in the gallery during the session and ensuring regular meetings of the standing committee were observed. In the absence of the regular speaker, a lack of skill among individuals responsible for conducting parliamentary proceedings (with regard to maintaining order, managing the floor, etc.) was noticeable.

### **8.7 Openness of Information**

The direct broadcast of parliamentary proceedings is going on as usual. However, some parts of the recorded session were absent on the parliament's own social media page. Reports of committees along with the bulletin of parliamentary proceedings were not easily accessible to all. Besides, the updated information of various related reports and the affidavits of parliamentary members were absent on the parliament's website. However, a deficiency was observed in the initiative to voluntarily

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\* Speaker refers to the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, and members of the Panel of Chairmen

disclose the attendance of members in parliament and committees, details of parliamentary activities, and updated information on the asset ownership of parliament members.

### **9. Comparative Analysis with Previous Parliaments (from 8<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> National Parliament)**

MP's involvement in the business has been increasing. Although the average attendance of the members of the parliament increased steadily from the eighth parliament, it decreased again in the eleventh parliament. The average attendance of the Leader of the Parliament (Prime minister) increased progressively to 94%. On the other hand, while the attendance of the opposition leader increased somewhat in the tenth parliament, it significantly decreased again in the eleventh parliament. The number of parliament boycotts reached zero, and the incidence of walkouts was the lowest compared to the last three parliaments. Overall, In the eleventh parliament, the time spent in the question-answer segments was decreased, but it was increased in the legislative proceedings and discussion on the President's address to the parliament members. While the participation rate of the members in the discussion on the President's speech remained almost the same, this rate significantly decreased in the question-answer session and legislative proceedings. The average time spent on passing a bill in parliament was increased. Although the quorum crisis decreased compared to the previous parliaments, this practice still continues. The parliamentary standing committees were formed in the first session, just like the previous two parliaments. There was no significant change in the attendance rate of the members in the committee meetings.

## **10. Overall Observation & Recommendations**

### **10. 1 Overall Observation**

- Due to the overwhelming majority of the ruling party in the uncontested eleventh parliamentary election, a predominance of unilateral power practice in parliamentary activities (legislation, budget, standing committee) was observed.
- The main opposition party (Jatiyo Party) was part of the coalition with the Bangladesh Awami League (now the ruling party) in the 11th Parliament election. In the subsequent period, Jatiyo Party as the main opposition party played a dual role in parliamentary activities, showing a deficit in playing a significant role in making the parliament effective.
- A comparatively lower level of importance was given to People's representation and Accountability-related activities (halting activities, ongoing significant issues remaining undiscussed, etc.), and overall, the amount of time spent and participation rate compared to previous parliaments (ninth and tenth) have been reduced.
- Despite an increase in average time in law enactment (bill passing) compared to previous parliaments, there was a shortfall in spontaneous participation of members and constructive debates; the majority of members from the ruling party only limited their participation to voting in favour of passing the bills.
- Analysis and accountability on the proposed budget were absent as usual. The budget and financial bills were passed with minor amendments within a short time.
- Overall, in various parliamentary proceedings, the emphasis was more on praising government and party achievements and criticising the opposition, instead of issue-based, relevant, and constructive discussions.
- The effectiveness of various proceedings was reduced due to members' absenteeism, not participating with due importance, obstacles in expressing opposition's views, and a tendency not to accept opinions.
- A serious lack of regular meetings of the standing committees was observed; even in the country's crucial situations (Covid-19 period), there was negligence towards holding meetings of the concerned committees.

- The reports of the standing committees were not easily accessible, and due to the lack of a uniform format for report preparation, the content of committee recommendations and their implementation rate were not clear.
- Although the representation of female members in the parliament was high, according to the Representation of the People Order (RPO), 1972, it was not possible to ensure 33% by 2020.
- Despite an increase in women's participation in various parliamentary activities, there was a shortfall in effective participation.
- A deficiency in specific discussions on the measures taken, goals achieved, and challenges faced in achieving the sustainable development goals was observed.

## **10. 2 Recommendations**

1. The national parliamentary elections must be participatory, fair, and impartial in true sense so that the parliament can achieve the expected standards for its fundamental functions such as the representation of the people, legislation, and accountable activities.
2. To ensure the free expression of opinions by the members, Article 70 of the constitution needs to be amended, where, apart from no-confidence votes and the budget, members will have the opportunity to express opinions, participate in debates, and vote according to their own judgement in all other areas, contrary to their party's stance.
3. Ensure the effective participation of the opposition party instead of the unilateral control process of the ruling party in the parliament.
4. A 'Code of Conduct for MPs' should be enacted, which will include guidelines regarding the conduct and activities of the members according to international best practices.
5. The Speaker must play a strong role in ensuring more discipline in the Parliament and stopping the use of unparliamentary language and inappropriate behaviour in the parliament.
6. The party leader and the whip should play a strong role in ensuring effective participation and fruitful discussion in various important activities and in avoiding irrelevant discussion and unnecessary praise and criticism.
7. Arrangements for adequate training for MPs on parliamentary activities should be made, and specific measures should be taken to ensure appropriate parliamentary practice and behaviour and active and effective participation in legislation, and people's representation and accountability-related activities.
8. The President's Address to the parliament should review and focus on the overall situation of the country and provide clear future direction for the politicians and policymakers.
9. There need to be more opportunities created in the parliament for discussing the progress of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
10. All international contracts should be presented in parliament for discussion
11. All bills introduced in the session for public opinion must be published on the parliament's website, and adequate time and procedures must be ensured for the analysis and acceptance of the stakeholders' opinions.
12. Regular meetings and report preparation of the parliamentary standing committees should be ensured.
13. The petition committee should also be strengthened to increase the opportunity for public participation in parliamentary activities.
14. The following information should be published and updated on the website proactively:
  - Information on members' attendance in parliamentary sessions and committee meetings should be published separately through the dashboard
  - Full affidavit and updated asset information of all parliament members
  - Complete information on the activities of Parliament and the parliamentary standing committees
  - All reports related to the parliamentary standing committee

- Detailed information on international agreements, except those are not publishable due to national security.