

Inactivity of Parliamentarians in National Parliament of Bangladesh: Impacts on Parliamentary Democracy

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Abstract

There is a growing interest in the inactive role of parliamentarians in measuring the success of parliamentary democracy. In this research firstly, it explored the inactive role of the parliamentarians among the eighth, ninth and tenth parliament of Bangladesh national parliament, where it observed that the parliamentarians of both oppositions and the ruling party remained inactive in lawmaking to oversight functions. The main causes of this inactivity of the parliamentarians is apathy to discuss and debate in the parliament, seventy articles of the constitution, the dearth of knowledge of the parliamentary norms, and business politics nexus. The impacts of this inactivity of the parliamentarians are the declining of parliament, which is taking place by the executive and this inactivity serves as a barrier to the process of institutionalization of parliamentary democracy.

Key Words: *Inactivity, Parliament, Parliamentarians and Democracy*

1. Introduction

Parliament and its members are closely tied with each other for making parliamentary democracy very effective or it would be rational to say that parliamentarians are an inalienable part of parliament, which is a must for breathing parliament as well as for acting as ventilator of demands of the common people, who elected them as a representative. In general, the government has three branches and parliament is one of them, which is a legislative body comprised of the elected representative of the common people. On the one hand, a parliamentarian is a person, who is the Member of Parliament(MP) as well as s/he is elected body by the mass people for serving their interest absence of them in the legislature. The very common objectives of parliament and parliamentarians, as well as the parliamentary system of government or parliamentary democracy, are rulemaking, rule adjudication, and oversight functions. These functions are performed by the parliamentarians through several activities holding “discussions and thereby take decisions on important national issues, enactment of necessary laws for the interests of the country, reach consensus on issues concerning national interests and lead the country keeping people’s aspirations and world context under consideration.”(TIB, 2017, p. 4) In addition to over-sight as well as accountable the government for their business the parliament also permit the parliamentarians to do some activities which are questions to the prime minister, questions to the minister, discussion on president address, unscheduled discussion, adjournment motion, notice on matters of public importance, debate on the budget and several other committee activities.

Along with several other South Asian countries, Bangladesh also began its democratic journey through the west minister system after the very first beginning of its independence by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman when he returned to Bangladesh from the prison of Pakistan and issued the constitution of the people's republic of Bangladesh. (Obaidullah, 2019, p. 1) However, the scene had changed dramatically in the year 1975 and it remained until 1991 when the parliamentary system was occupied by the unconstitutional ruler and they proclaimed it as a presidential form of government. "From 1975, the peoples of Bangladesh struggled to re-establish democracy in the face of a succession of civil and military autocracies that ended in 1990, at a time when the third wave of democracy was sweeping over most of the third-world countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Bangladesh restored democracy in 1991."(Obaidullah, 2019, p. 1) The constitution of Bangladesh also proclaimed in its article no. 65 that "there shall be a Parliament for Bangladesh (to be known as the House of the Nation) in which subject to the provisions of this Constitution, shall be vested the legislative powers of the Republic." It also proclaimed that "Parliament shall consist of three hundred members to be elected following law from single territorial constituencies by direct election...the members provided for in that clause; the member shall be designated as Members of Parliament." On the one hand, according to the constitution, the parliament of Bangladesh passed a "rules of procedure(RoP)" on 1 April 1973 for regulating the business of the parliament as well as for conducting activities of the parliamentarians. This RoP permits the parliamentarians to discuss "president's address(33-40 articles of the rules of procedure)," "questions and short notice questions(41-59)," "half an hour discussion(60)," "motion for adjournment on a matter of public importance(61-67)," "Discussion on matters of urgent public importance(68-70)," calling attention to urgent public importance(71)," and on several other motions. (Bangladesh National Parliament, 2007) Besides, political parties and members of the parliament also promise to the common people for making the parliament very effective and serving their demands in the parliamentary process. Furthermore, Bangladesh also joined with several global institutions like Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) to secure the proper participation of the members of the parliament for working as a ventilator of demands of the citizens. Nevertheless, it has been observed that since independence the role of parliamentarians is not very significant, which the theorist illustrated as inactivity of the parliamentarians. Because of this inactivity, the level of parliamentary democracy is very low, which is also a dark sign in the process of institutionalization of the parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh. In this manner, firstly, the proposed study is objected to explore the inactive role of parliamentarians; secondly, find out the causes of this inactivity of parliamentarians in the national parliament and finally, this projected study will be conducted to explore the impacts on parliamentary democracy, which are the result of this inactivity of parliamentarians in Bangladesh.

2

2. Methodology and Data Sources

Methodologically this research work mainly used secondary sources of data, but in several cases, the primary sources of data were also used, where it was necessary. In the case of secondary sources of data, this piece of research mainly used Parliamentary Watch reports, which were published by Transparency International-Bangladesh(TIB), and several other secondary sources of data were also used, which includes published books, articles, daily newspapers, government gazettes, and bulletins published by Bangladesh parliament. In the case of primary data, on the other hand, it followed the parliamentary sessions, which were telecasted by Parliament Television of Bangladesh, and in some case, observation method also applied, where the activities of the members of the parliament were observed by participating directly in the different sessions of parliament. Finally, the collected data both

from primary and secondary were systemized and prepared through different software for writing the final report.

3. Inactive Role of Parliamentarians of Bangladesh Parliament

The term parliament is used to describe a representative assembly, on one hand, the concept of parliament also originated from the Latin word “parliamentum” and the French “parler,” which means a talk; and talking is, actually parliament performs its activities through talking or discussion. (Laundy, 1989, p. 1) Parliamentarians must participate in the discussion or talking in favor of their constituency as well as for keeping their promises to the citizens. Like many other parliaments, Bangladesh parliament also made provisions in 1973 for a question period and different motions where the parliamentarians could participate in the discussion process, which provides an important means of calling the government and individual minister to account. In this discussion, I would like to explore the role of parliamentarians in the parliament and how actively they play their role in favor of the people as well as making parliament very effective. In this manner, the discussion will be confined among the eighth, ninth, and the tenth parliament, where it will be an emphasis on the participation of parliamentarians in different questions, motions, the law-making process, and budget session discussion.

3.1. Session Days and Activities

Representation of the people in Parliament is ensured through the presence of Members of Parliament. This applies to members of both the government and the opposition. It is the responsibility of the members to ensure the effectiveness of the parliamentary activities by attending the Parliament regularly and at regular intervals. Furthermore, Participate in the parliamentary sessions and the activities of the parliamentarians in parliament is very crucial for maintaining good governance as well as for the institutionalization of parliamentary democracy. However, lawmaking is the prime responsibility of parliamentarians but they have other responsibilities as well, which are representative and oversight functions. The parliamentarians scrutinize the business of government and government departments and thus the parliamentarians confirm the accountability of the government to the parliament. These types of activities perform by the parliamentarians through participating in debate or discussion in the house; here it is interesting to note that parliamentarians always talk either in support of the government or in opposition to the government policy. The success of the parliamentary democracy depends upon the duration of the discussion or debate of parliamentarians in the chamber. In Bangladesh, the President convenes all sessions following article 72 (1) of the Constitution. In the eighth parliament, the total number of days was 75, where the number of hours was 1189; accordingly, the average hours of each working day were 3 hours and 11 minutes.(TIB, 2007, p. 3) The attendance in the eighth parliament, On the one hand, wasn't very remarkable where it observed that 113 MPs were present on 50 percent working days of which 16.1 percent were present on only one-fourth working day. 64 MPs were present on 76 percent or more working days. 46 MPs were absent for more than three-quarters of the working day, including 18 from the ruling party, 28 from the opposition, and three from other parties. Up to three-quarters, 61 MPs were absent on working days, including 30 from the ruling party, 28 from the opposition, and three from other opposition parties. In other words, more than 104 MPs were absent out of which 47 MPs were absent from the government party.(TIB, 2007, p. 7) In the ninth parliament, on the other hand, the total number of working days from the first to the nineteenth session 417 days. The average working day was 74 days a year. The longest working day (7 days) was in 2010 and the shortest (60 days) was in 2011. Whereas, overall, 221 people were present on each working

day, which is 63 percent of the total members. Besides, 41 percent of the members were present in Parliament on more than 75 percent of the total working days and 14 percent of the members were present in Parliament on 25 percent or less. Among the ruling party MPs, 46.9 percent were present in Parliament on more than three-quarters of the sessions or more than 75 percent of the total working days. Members of the ruling party were present in Parliament for 417 working days (99.76 percent) out of 418 working days of 19 sessions of the Ninth Parliament. All members of the main opposition party attended one-fourth of the 19 working sessions (25 percent). However, independent members from other opposition parties outside the main opposition party attended Parliament for 65.5 percent working days and participated in various functions of Parliament. LDP members were present for 74 working days (17.70 percent). Besides, individual members were present for 62 (76.54 percent) working days out of 81 working days. (TIB, 2014, pp. 7–8) Furthermore, if we look back to the tenth parliament it could be seen that 23 sessions were held in this parliament in 410 working days. The average working day in a year was 72 days. Of the 23 sessions, four were held in 2014, four in 2015, five in 2016, five in 2016, and five in 2017. Out of the total 23 sessions, five were budget sessions. Whereas, the total time spent on various issues from the first to the twenty-third session of the Tenth National Assembly is 1410 hours and 9 minutes. The average meeting time per working day was 3 hours 26 minutes. Most (60 percent) of the time is spent on activities related to public representation and accountability. Besides, an average of 222 people was present on each working day, which is 63 percent of the total members. Analyzing the attendance data of the members in the session, it was found that overall, 32 percent of the members were present in Parliament on more than 75 percent of the total working days and 3 percent of the members were present on 25 percent or less. On the one hand, in 51-65 percent of the working days, the ruling party MPs were present the maximum (48 percent) and on more than 75 percent of working days, the other opposition members were present the most (36 percent). The highest attendance of members of the main opposition in the ninth parliament was less than 25 percent on working days. Until the session of the Jatiya Sangsad (14th to 23rd), one member of the ruling party and one member of the main opposition party were not present in the parliament. Both of them are on trial for criminal offenses. (TIB, 2019, p. 32) Accordingly, the parliament leader and the opposition leader are very crucial for parliamentary debate and discussion. In the tenth parliament, Out of 410 working days, the Leader of Parliament was present for 337 working days (about 72 percent). On the other hand, the Leader of the Opposition was present for 242 days (about 59 percent) of the total working days. Although the presence of both the Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition increased compared to the Ninth Parliament, the presence of the Leader of the Opposition was significantly lower than that of the Leader of the Parliament. If we consider these three parliaments comparatively then it could be seen that the attendance of the parliamentarians of each parliament significantly low, though the sessions and time duration, as well as members' participation in the ninth and tenth parliament, were comparatively remarkable. In other words, the presence of the main opposition party has increased comparatively in the tenth parliament. It also observed that in the tenth parliament two parliamentarians were absent most of the time, which is a dark sign for the parliamentary democracy. If we relate this with the other parliamentary democratic countries like the UK and India, it could be said that Bangladesh's parliament and its parliamentarians are more inactive than the UK and India. Here, parliamentary working days of UK and India could be cited, which is only a year's statistics that the total number of working days in the UK House of Commons in 2012-13 was 143 working days and an average of 140 working days per year. In India, in 2011 both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha held an average of 63 working days a year. The total time

spent on various subjects of these 19 sessions was 1331 hours 54 minutes. (Quoted in TIB, 2019, p. 7) The average meeting time per working day is about 3 hours 11 minutes. Therefore, it would be very reasonable to say with comparing with UK and India's parliament that the parliamentary democracy of Bangladesh has not been institutionalized yet because of the inactive role of the parliamentarians.

3.2. Discussion on President Speech

The president is the nominal head of the people's republic of Bangladesh. According to article 48(1) of the constitution of Bangladesh, "There shall be a President of Bangladesh who shall be elected by members of Parliament following the law." (The Government of the Peoples of Bangladesh, 1972, p. 94) Therefore, the president and parliament are correlated with each other, as well as the president invites the session of the parliament to the parliamentarians with a speech. According to article 73, "(1) the President may address Parliament and may send messages thereto. (2) At the commencement of the first session after a general election of members of Parliament and at the commencement of the first session of each year the President shall address Parliament. (3) Parliament shall, after the presentation of an address by the President, or the receipt of a message from him, discuss the matter referred to in such address or message." (The Government of the Peoples of Bangladesh, 1972, p. 100) The rules of Procedure, on the one hand, also declared in its article number 33 that "on receipt of an intimation from the President of his intention to address Parliament, the Speaker shall cause the item 'Address by the President' to be included in the Orders of the Day for a date and time intimated by the President." (Bangladesh National Parliament, 2007, p. 34) After the president's address, the speaker allows the time for the member for discussion as well as a thanksgiving to the president. In the eighth parliament, 118 members of the parliament participated in the discussion, whereas 182 members did not participate at all, which could be illustrated as the inactive role of parliamentarians. Besides, those who did not participate in the discussion 151 were from the ruling party, whereas 21 from the main opposition party and 10 from the other opposition party, (TIB, 2007, p. 8) which could be illustrated as apathetic behavior of parliamentarians relating to the president address. Furthermore, in the ninth parliament during the discussion on the President's speech, the MPs spoke for about 220 hours and 6 minutes, which is 16.5 percent of the total time. 299 people have participated to address in different sessions in which 31 from the main opposition party, 265 from the government party, and 3 from other opposition parties (LDP) and independent members. (TIB, 2014, p. 14) In the tenth parliament, on the other hand, During the discussion on the President's speech, the members of Parliament spoke for about 308 hours and 14 minutes which is 21.6 percent of the total time. Whereas near about three hundred members spoke in a different session, in which a maximum of 197 members of the ruling party spoke in the fifth session and a maximum of 30 members of the main opposition party spoke in the first session, on the one hand, maximum 33 members of the other opposition party spoke in the first session. Thought the participation in the president speech increased gradually but the attitude and subject matters of talking were very unconventional and unparliamentary as well. Overall, it has been observed that in the discussion on the motion of thanks on the President's speech, most of the MPs have spoken on various issues outside the subject matter, which were much broader. Some even spend the entire time allotted to them for their constituency-related speeches, criticizing the government, criticizing political parties outside parliament, and praising their party. On the other hand, members of the ruling party are also spending most of their time criticizing political parties outside the parliament as well as praising the party leader in their speeches.

3.3. Quorum Crisis and Walkout

The lexical meaning of the word quorum is a public meeting, which means the presence of a minimum number of members in a meeting by which the meeting could be conducted smoothly. According to article 75(2) of the constitution of Bangladesh, “if at any time during which Parliament is in session the attention of the person presiding is drawn to the fact that the number of members present is less than sixty, he (president) shall either suspend the meeting until at least sixty members are present or adjourn it.” (The Government of the Peoples of Bangladesh, 1972, p. 101) when this type of situation would arise then it would be called a quorum crisis if there is not a minimum number of members present in the Parliament House to conduct the activities of the Parliament. Accordingly, at least 60 members are required to be present in the sitting room to start the session of the National parliament. The Quorum crisis was acute in the eighth parliament and it was observed that the parliament had been adjourned several times because of this quorum crisis. Because of this quorum crisis, the then prime minister threatened to dissolve the parliament but the crisis remained until the end of the parliament. Due to the quorum crisis 13635 minutes or about 227 hours wasted, if we consider it in taka then it is estimated that the total from this crisis was about 20.50 crore. (TIB, 2014, p. 4) In the ninth parliament, on the other hand, a total of 222 hours and 36 minutes were wasted in 19 sessions due to a quorum crisis. In other words, an average of 32 minutes per working day was wasted due to the quorum crisis. The total value of time spent in quorum crisis is about 104 crores 16 lakh 7 thousand takas and the average value of time spent per session in quorum crisis was about 24 lakh 96 thousand takas. (TIB, 2014, pp. 9–10) Contrarily, in the tenth parliament because of the late presence of members and ministers has hampered the conduct of parliamentary proceedings in general. From the first to the 23rd session, a total quorum crisis of 194 hours and 30 minutes was estimated, which is 12 percent of the actual total time spent in 23 sessions. In 23 sessions, the average quorum crisis is 26 minutes per working day. The total value of time spent on the quorum crisis from the first to the twenty-third session was 183 crore 57 lakh 55 thousand 373 takas. (TIB, 2019, pp. 33–34) In comparison, it could be said that eighth parliament was most vernaly in the sense of quorum crisis, diversely in ninth and tenth parliament it also decreased slightly but not in a significant level, on the other hand, the loss of the quorum crisis was increased dramatically in ninth and tenth parliament than the eight parliaments, which was the result of inactiveness of the parliamentarians.

Walkout, however, is a technique that is applied by the opposition party, when the opposition party would not able to agree with the government policy then they apply this technique. Thought it a very common technique for every parliamentary system but in the underdeveloped parliamentary country try to apply it for nominal opposition, not in a constructive way, which could be seen only in a developed parliamentary democratic country like the UK, or even it also could be seen in India. But in the less institutionalized parliamentary democratic system, it's a myth as well, because they apply it very rapidly for their evil political will not for the sake of the citizen or even for increasing the checks and balance in the parliament. This scenario could be seen in Bangladesh parliament, here in the eighth parliament number of times the opposition party walked out from the parliament, though they had claimed that they did it for opposing the ruling party but actually, it was a lame excuse only. The same scenario also observed in the ninth parliament a total of 36 working days, the main opposition coalition and other opposition members (independents) walked out a total of 54 times. The main opposition alliance walked out 41 times and independent member Fazlul Azim alone walked out of the session 13 times for various

reasons. (TIB, 2014, p. 9) Contrarily, in the tenth parliament, the intensity of walkout from the parliament was decreased significantly. Where it could be seen that the main opposition party and other opposition members held 13 walkouts during the working days of the 23rd session. Among the reasons for the walkout, were protests against the increase in electricity prices per unit, the removal of the chairperson of Biman, accusing Begum Khaleda Zia of burning people during the blockade, and not accusing her of the order, 'Khagrachhari Hill District Council (Amendment) Bill, 2014; Pass, not giving enough opportunity to speak on the point of order, demanding a reduction in gas and electricity prices, despite the flaws in the 'Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation Bill 2018' in protest of its passage in Parliament. (TIB, 2019, p. 33) Though they had walked out several times from the parliament, the frequency of that rate wasn't very remarkable. On the one hand, they had taken this strategy as a constructive and conventional way of opposition, but there was common blame against that the opposition party was one kind of homespun political party. From a comparative perspective, among this three parliament, the tenth parliament showed some positive signs in the process of the parliamentary system of government.

3.4. Enactment of Laws

Lawmaking is the basic function of the parliament, including constitution-making, constitutional amendment, budget making, and several other laws relating to the republic are made by the parliament. "Legislation helps to establish the basic political and institutional 'rules of the game' where the opposition is presumed to play a constructive role in debates and deliberations." (Jahan, 2012a, p. 42) Article 65 of the Constitution states that Bangladesh will have a legislature called the Jatiya Sangsad and the legislative power of the Republic will be vested in it. According to the constitution, the parliament can make any new law and change, amend and amend the existing law. Parliament may by law empower anybody or authority to make orders, make rules, bye-laws, and regulations. (The Government of the Peoples of Bangladesh, 1972, p. 101) only in the 15-19 sessions 28 bills were passed, where only 8.3 percent of amendments were accepted those were raised by the non-boycotting opposition, on the one hand, 100 percent of amendments were accepted, which were raised by the treasury bench. (TIB, 2006, p. 2) In the eight parliament total of 185 bills were passed, where 8.04 sessions were taken for passing a bill. (Jahan, 2012a, p. 44) Here it is interesting to note that most of the MPs praised their leader except discussing the laws in the process of the law-making process. Contrarily, In 19 sessions of the ninth parliament, a total of 281 bills were passed in 418 working days, of which 26 were government bills and 3 were private bills. A total of 109 hours and 44 minutes were spent on legislation on May 7, which is 8.2 percent of the total time spent in the sessions. During this period, the MPs spent 26 hours and 36 minutes objecting to the introduction of various bills and speaking on public opinion verification-selection and clause-by-clause amendments, which is about 25 percent of the total time spent on legislation. (TIB, 2014, p. 10) The tenth parliament, on the other hand, has passed more laws than the previous ones. A total of 193 bills were passed in 410 working days in 23 sessions of this Parliament and 51 of them were amendment bills. Of these, 2 in the first session, 6 in the second session, 5 in the third session, 6 in the fourth session, 8 in the fifth session, 6 in the sixth session, 6 in the seventh session, 10 in the eighth session, 9 in the ninth session, 1 in the tenth session, 14 in the tenth session, 5 in the thirteenth session, 10 in the fourteenth session, 2 in the fifteenth session, 6 in the sixteenth session, 2 in the seventeenth session, 3 bills were passed in the 18th session, 15 in the 19th session, 5 in the 20th session, 14 in the 21st session, 16 in the 22nd session and 19 in the 23rd session. The tenth parliament has set a record by passing 18 bills in the 22nd session and 19 bills in the

23rd session. (TIB, 2019, p. 18) Never before have there been such a large number of bills passed in two consecutive sessions. The bill was tabled in Parliament within 24 to 48 hours for the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee. Besides, almost every night the bill report was presented with a supplementary schedule, or the bill was seen to be passed. This means that in the last two sessions, more bills had been passed than in working days, which had not been seen in the previous sessions. In comparison with these three parliaments, the tenth parliament was much active in passing acts than the previous two, but in the case of legislative discussion, the controversial attacking remained in each parliament, which is unparliamentary in a sense. If we consider the Indian and UK parliament, it could be seen that in most cases both of these countries parliament behaved very constructive way, it is to be noted that during the period 2014-2019, the 16th Lok Sabha of India spent 32 percent of its time in enacting laws and in 2017-18, the United Kingdom about 47 percent of the time in the House of Commons was spent on legislation(UKP, 2020). Therefore, it would be very rational to say that the Bangladesh parliament is far behind in the question of parliamentary business. Because there is a practice of rejecting the proposal of public opinion on the bill by the members of parliament through voice vote. After the introduction of the bill, the majority of the voice of the majority party was reflected in the final approval of the bill, including the objections, amendments, and rejections of the opposition members of the parliament. It also could be seen that the participation of the people in the process of lawmaking did not ensure in a single case.

3.5. Budget Discussion

The term budget comes from the French word *bougette*, a small or “a little bag, which in English had its literal meaning from the fifteenth century; later, ‘to open one’s budget,’ meant ‘to speak one’s mind.’”(Rogers, 2015, p. 253) In general, a budget is a calculation of a country’s potential income and expenditure for a year, which also deals with wide financial matters, managing of the economy and taxation as well as its authority. (Rogers, 2015, p. 253) Like many other laws, the budget is also raised or initiated, discussed, processed, and passed by the MPs in the parliament. “However, the budget is more than just a single document; it is a year-long cycle whose different phases offer citizens and their representative’s opportunities to influence how public resources are raised and spent.”(Jahan, 2012a, p. 45) According to article 87 of the constitution of Bangladesh, the parliament passes a financial budget for a single fiscal year. In the eighth parliament, 201 parliamentarians were participated in the budget discussion, whereas 99 MPs did not take part in this discussion, in which 80 from the ruling party, 15 from the main opposition party, and 4 from other parties. (TIB, 2007, p. 8) In the ninth parliament, contrarily, the total time spent in the budget discussion is about 289 hours 57 minutes, which was about 21.8 percent of the total time. In these 19 sessions, 318 members participated in one or more budget sessions, while 32 members (about 9 percent) did not participate in any budget session. In 5 sessions, 91 members got the opportunity to discuss the budget, out of which 90 were from government parties and one was an independent member. Despite the boycott of the main opposition parliament, 33 members of the main opposition alliance participated in various rounds of budget discussions in the last budget session. (TIB, 2014, p. 11) On the other hand, in the tenth parliament, the total time spent in the discussion of the five budget sessions was about 337 hours and 56 minutes, which was about 24 percent of the total time of the Parliament. 89 percent of the total members took part in the budget discussion and spoke on the sector-wise budget allocation, amendment proposals, new plans, and failures of the previous financial years in implementing the plans. Of these, 77 percent were members of the ruling party, 18 percent were members of the main

opposition and 5 percent were members of other opposition parties. Here, it could be seen that criticisms against the faults of the budget, debate, and discussion were increased respectively, but the nature of the criticism and praise of the chief leader of the ruling remained as it was in the previous, which is unparliamentary as well as unconventional for a parliamentary system of government.

3.6. Oversight and Accountability

The parliament of Bangladesh is empowered by the constitution of lawmaking and budgeting along with several other powers like oversight and accountability of the government. "It is given wide-ranging authority to scrutinize the actions of the executive who remains accountable to the parliament." (Jahan, 2012b) There are several techniques to the MPs those who given by the constitutions and RoP as well like- questions, discussions, and motions. In this clause, the concentration is going to be on these techniques.

3.6.1. Questions to the Prime Minister

Half an hour has been allotted for the question and answers session of the Prime Minister once a week during the Parliament from the seventh Parliament. It is to be noted that there is a provision to include the question and answer session of the Prime Minister only on Wednesdays during the Parliament. (Bangladesh National Parliament, 2007, p. 36) In the eighth parliament 47 MPs, key questions to the prime minister, whereas 44 MPs were from the ruling party and 3 were from other opposition party but no questions from the main opposition party's MPs arose. On the other hand, on a supplementary question to the prime minister 87 members participated, whereas 70 questions arose by the ruling party members and 17 from other opposition party's MPs, like the previous one the main opposition party did not question the prime minister. Except for the minister's total of 203 MPs from different parties questioned the prime minister. (TIB, 2007, p. 8) Contrarily, in the ninth parliament, the question and answer session of the Prime Minister was not held in the sixth session out of 19 sessions. In 48 working days, the total time spent in the question and answer session of the Prime Minister is about 36 hours and 08 minutes. Members of the ruling party asked 99 main questions and 261 supplementary questions. Members of the main opposition asked 3 main questions and 6 supplementary questions. 10 main questions and 16 supplementary questions were raised by other opposition independent members. (TIB, 2014, p. 11)

In the tenth parliament, from the first to the twenty-third session, the MPs took about 6 hours 12 minutes, and 48 seconds to question the Prime Minister. A total of 98 MPs asked a question to the prime minister, out of which 63 were from the ruling party, 15 from the main opposition party, and 6 from other opposition independent members. Members of the ruling party asked 85 main questions and 151 supplementary questions. Members of the main opposition asked 20 main questions and 52 supplementary questions. 25 main questions and 46 supplementary questions were raised by other opposition independent members. (TIB, 2019, p. 23) Comparatively, among these three parliament, the eighth parliament was very unconventional as unparliamentary and the MPs were much inactive. Thought the activity of ninth and tenth parliament was increased but it was very slightly not dramatically, relating to the UK and Indian parliament. Here it also observed that in maximum cases the MPs from the opposition party boycotted the parliament or even there were apathetic to question the prime minister. Furthermore, in most cases, members of the opposition were not allowed to question the prime minister. In this case, the members of the ruling party got more opportunities, which is a threat to the parliamentary system of democracy.

3.6.2. Questions to the Minister

The first hour of every sitting of Parliament is set aside for the Ministers to raise questions and answer them. On the day the Prime Minister answers the 30-minute question, the other ministers answer the question for the next hour. As per the rules of procedure, other members including the concerned main questioner can raise supplementary questions against each main question. In the eighth parliament, it had been observed that in the question and answer session of the ministers, 209 MPs participated in the main question and 215 in the supplementary question. Except 50 of the Ministers, State Ministers, and Deputy Ministers, the remaining 35 MPs did not participate in the main question and 41 in the supplementary question, in which, 14 from the ruling party didn't ask any main question and 13 in the supplementary question, whereas 25 members of the main opposition party didn't ask the main question to the minister and 16 members of them didn't participate in the supplementary question contrarily 2 members of other opposition parties did not participate in any question at all. (TIB, 2007, p. 8) In the ninth parliament, out of the total 389 working days fixed in 19 sessions, wherein 271 working days were directly answered questions by the Ministers of different Ministries. The questions of the remaining 162 working days members are presented in the table. In the meantime, MPs from different parties raised a total of 138 key questions and 4392 supplementary questions directly to the ministers. Members of the main opposition asked 23 key questions and 87 supplementary questions. Here it is notable that a total of 26 main questions and 41 supplementary questions were raised by a single member of the other opposition parties. (TIB, 2014, p. 12) On the other hand, in the tenth parliament, a total of 256 MPs raised a total of 1229 main questions and 3950 supplementary questions directly to the ministers of different ministries. 210 members of the ruling party, 35 members of the main opposition party, and 11 other independent opposition members participated in the question and answer session of the ministers. Members of the main opposition asked 148 key questions and 583 supplementary questions. A total of 121 key questions and 413 supplementary questions were raised by individual members of other opposition parties.

During the question and answer session of the ministers, a total of 221 hours, 8 minutes, and 30 seconds were spent in 23 sessions where the members took about 75 hours, 19 minutes, and 16 seconds to ask questions and the ministers of different ministries took about 116 hours, 39 minutes and 39 seconds to answer the questions. (TIB, 2014, p. 25) Among these three parliaments, eight parliaments did spend a few hours answering the question of MPs, whereas in most of the cases opposition MPs' questions were neglected or did not answer the minister. However, these unparliamentary issues were decreased in the ninth and tenth parliament but not significantly. If it is being considered with the British parliament, it could be seen that only in one session in 2020 "MPs spent over 130 hours putting questions to Government ministers, including the Prime Minister." (UKP, 2020) If it is critically, examines it could be observed that the parliamentary methods of oversight and scrutiny developed slightly than the previous parliament of Bangladesh, but it is far behind the British parliament or even the Indian parliament.

3.6.3 Notices on Issues of Public Importance

According to article 60 of the Rules of Procedure of the national parliament, any member wishing to discuss any matter of urgent public importance may give written notice to the Secretary at least two days before the raising of the signature of at least five other members and mentioning the matter. (Bangladesh National Parliament, 2007, p. 42) Accordingly, as a people's representative members of parliament could draw the minister's attention to various issues of s/his constituencies and important issues, including development projects, with the

permission of the speaker, but in the eight parliaments, 110 MPs did not participate at all, in which 82 were from the ruling party and 28 from the opposition party. In which, about 66 percent of the ruling party and 68 percent of the opposition party did not participate in the resolution. 151 MPs did not participate in the discussion of unscheduled notices, including 113 from the ruling party, 28 from the main opposition party, and 11 from other opposition parties. (TIB, 2007, p. 8) Perversely, in the ninth parliament, the scenario changed lightly, where it could be seen that a total of 7380 notices were issued out of which 6205 were presented by members of the ruling party, 998 by the main opposition party, and 162 by other opposition(independent) members in which, 442 were accepted for discussion. Among the accepted notice, 419 were from government parties, 13 from main opposition parties, and 10 from other independent opposition members. On the one hand, among the accepted notices received, 284 notices were debated in Parliament by 126 members and the ministers responded directly to them. Observing the subject of notices, it could be seen that the highest number of notices (35) is related to the Ministry of Communications. (TIB, 2014, p. 12) Contrarily, these flow also remained in the tenth parliament, where a total of 4751 notices were issued under Rule 71 of the Rules of Procedure in 23 sessions, out of which 3755 were presented by members of government parties, 497 by main opposition parties, and 499 by other opposition (independent) members. Of which, 289 were accepted for discussion among them 202 were from the ruling party, 70 from the main opposition, and 17 from other opposition members. On the one hand, six members discussed 170 in Parliament and the ministers responded directly to them. Observing the subject of notices, it could be seen that the highest number of notices (33) is related to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Out of the total time spent in discussing the 289 accepted notices, the MPs spent about 7 hours and 55 minutes, and the ministers of the concerned ministries about 12 hours and 27 minutes to make statements. The discussion was attended by 51 members of the ruling party, 14 members of the main opposition party, and three independent members of the opposition. (TIB, 2019, p. 30) The eighth parliament remained underdeveloped in this factor also than the ninth and tenth parliament relatively. Where in the House of Commons of UK parliament spent only in a session “more than 70 hours debating urgent questions, with over 60 MPs asking an urgent question.”(UKP, 2020) Therefore, it is very alarming that in every case the parliamentarians of Bangladesh parliament remained very inactive, though the last two parliaments showed some positive sign but which is not enough to success the parliamentary democracy.

3.6.4. Adjournment Motion

Discussion on specific issues of contemporary urgency and public importance with the consent of the Speaker following Rule 61 of the RoP. Members of Parliament could propose to postpone the work of Parliament. Accordingly, “Subject to the provisions of these rules, a motion for an adjournment of the business of the House to discuss a definite matter of recent and urgent public importance may be made with the consent of the Speaker.”(Bangladesh National Parliament, 2007, p. 43) As per Rule 75, the Speaker considers the notice of the members as lawful consent. If so, the concerned member can raise a proposal. Again, to adjourn the Parliament for discussion on the notice received under that rule Proposals can propose for a vote. In the ninth parliament, a total of 917 adjournment motion notices were issued but were rejected due to the absence of members of the main opposition party and the Speaker's inability to comply with the rules. (TIB, 2014, p. 13) Contrarily, 30 notices were received from the first to the twenty-third session of the Tenth National parliament, which were related to irregularities and corruption of various organizations and individuals,

deterioration of law and order situation, construction of various facilities, and improvement of quality of services. As per the rules of procedure, there was an opportunity to discuss in another episode; the speaker canceled the notices. (TIB, 2019, p. 30) Overall, the participation of the ruling party, as well as the main opposition, was not observed to ensure representation and oversight in the three main functions of the parliament. As a result, their views were not reflected in the final decision on many important public interest issues.

3.6.5. Parliamentary committee

There shall be a standing committee for each ministry, which is confirmed by the constitution. The Rules of Procedure discusses the composition, tenure, procedure, and scope of work of the parliamentary committee. The members of the committee are appointed as per the proposal passed in the Parliament. The chairman of the committee is nominated from among the members of parliament. The term of the committee is valid until the end of the term of the Parliament except for any special committee constituted by the Parliament for carrying out special purposes. The percentages of the members of the committee were 65 percent, 63 percent, and 55 percent in the eighth, ninth and tenth parliament respectively, on the one hand, the ratio also seen in the implementation of the recommendations of the committee which were 58 percent, 43 percent, and 45 percent respectively. Though the committee worked for being accountable the government to the parliament their recommendations were not implemented properly as well as the attendance of the committee members was not remarkable at all, which could be illustrated as the inactivity of the parliamentarians.

3.6.6. Discussions under Point of Order

During the proceedings of the Parliament, if any MP feels that the customary rules have been bypassed, s/he may immediately draw attention to the matter. According to article 301 of RoP, “a point of order shall relate to the interpretation or enforcement of these rules or such Articles of the Constitution to regulate the business of the House and shall raise a question, which is within the cognizance of the Speaker.”(Bangladesh National Parliament, 2007, p. 115) Nevertheless, the discussion under this provision is a very rare case. In the eighth parliament, 147 members took part in discussion under the point of order, whereas 104 were from the ruling party, 30 were from the main opposition party, and 13 from other opposition parties. (TIB, 2007, p. 8) Here, Maximum members did not participate in this motion from both ruling and opposition parties as well. Conversely, in the ninth parliament, 191 working days took place on the point of order discussion, which was about 69 hours and 54 minutes. In this discussion, 119 members participated, where 103 members of the ruling party, 14 members of the main opposition party, and 2 members of other opposition parties. Further observations showed that one member of the ruling party spoke on points of order a maximum of 58 times. (TIB, 2014, p. 13) However, in the tenth parliament, the flow also remained as it was in the ninth parliament. Here, in the tenth parliament, time spent in 214 working days is about 69 hours 36 minutes 30 seconds which is about 5 percent of the total time spent. During this time, 133 members participated in discussions on various topics for about 65 hours and 30 minutes, in which 102 members of the ruling party, 22 members of the main opposition party, and 9 members of the other opposition parties took part. (TIB, 2019, p. 25) It has observed that the discussion on point of order, which included the call for the cooperation of the Speaker and the ruling party for the participation of the opposition in Parliament, protest against the use of unparliamentary language in Parliament, discussion on national issues, international agreements, the contemporary situation in the country. Finally, it is to be noted that the issue of controlling the behavior of the members inside and outside the parliament and

the use of obscene and unparliamentary language was discussed in this episode but the practice of criticizing the opposition using unparliamentary and obscene language continued in that discussion as well.

Finally, after all, discussion it is very easy to comments or rational to say that in every case the parliamentarians of the national parliament showed their inactive role from lawmaking to oversight functions. In the case of lawmaking, the role of parliamentarians or their involvement did not make any changed in the process, because the chief of the executive made all decisions and the parliamentarians just voted in favor of passing the law, which was ordered by the party leader. The same scenario could be seen in the case of Budgeting as well. On the one hand, in the matter of oversight and scrutiny functions, it was also observed that they remained very inactive, and those who participated in the discussion or debate always tried to criticize the opposition party and praised the party's policy and the chief of the party. Furthermore, in the session of the budget discussion, discussion of president's speech, and discussion on lawmaking process MPs praised the party leader and the historical role of their party and the party funder instead of representing the peoples will or correcting and criticizing the policy, which is unparliamentary and loss of peoples expectation and money as well. Therefore, it could be said that in some cases, the role of the parliamentarians changed slightly, but mostly it remained very inactive, which is not a good sign at all for the citizens of Bangladesh and parliamentary democracy as well.

4. Causes of Inactivity

There are several types of functions of parliamentarians, which are lawmaking, representative, oversight, and accountability, and these functions are performed by the parliamentarians through participating in the discussion, debate, and questioning in the parliament, but it has been observed that the parliamentarians of Bangladesh national parliament didn't take part in these activities properly, which could be illustrated as inactivity of the parliamentarians. There are several reasons behind this, which are; Firstly, the apathy of the parliamentarians for debating or discussing in the parliament is one of the prime factors for this inactivity. As they are the representative of the common people and they must represent the common will in the parliament, but because of this apathy, they just participate in the sessions as an ornamental instrument, though it is not applicable for each member of the parliament. Secondly, Occupational criteria play a vital role in this inactive behavior. Recently, it has been observed that businesspersons are very much interested to get involved in politics than in the previous parliament. In the parliament of 1970 and 1973 businessman were 26.9 percent and 23.7 percent respectively,(Jahan, 1976, p. 359) but the scenario has been changed dramatically in the recent parliament. If we assess the occupation of the MPs of the tenth parliament it could be seen that among the total MPs 59 percent were from business.(TIB, 2019, p. 14) They are involved in politics, not because of the welfare of the people and represent their will in the parliament, but for the safeguard of their business. As a result, parliamentarians are used to act in their business not in the parliament, though this is not applicable for all the parliamentarians. Thirdly, the parliamentarians are very much active outside the parliament and they generally serve the group's interest in his constituency. Rounaq Jahan showed her research that MPs "had set up schools and colleges in their constituencies and used their political contacts with the ministers to get government affiliation and government grants for the educational institutions of their region... Additionally, the MPs talked of their role in the distribution of relief materials in their constituencies. The MPs were

generally members of relief committees in their districts. The funds for relief and rehabilitation were channeled through the relief committees, and the MPs had a significant voice in the disbursement of these funds.”(Jahan, 1976, p. 366) Thus, the parliamentarians are used to involve in their region, and most of the time they stay at the local level, as a result, they remain inactive in the parliamentary process. Fourthly, article number 70 of the constitution forbids them to talk against the policy of its party, if it is against the state interest or even against the public interest. Accordingly, “A person elected as a member of Parliament at an election at which he was nominated as a candidate by a political party shall vacate his seat if he – (a) resigns from that party; or (b) votes in Parliament against that party.”(The Government of the Peoples of Bangladesh, 1972, p. 98) This provision makes the MPs very inactive in oversight functions and accountable for the activities of the government to the parliament. Furthermore, experience and lack of parliamentary norms and skills also make them inactive in the parliamentary process. It also observed that several parliamentarians were not able to talk in the parliamentary sessions because of their low level of education and lack of parliamentary knowledge as well. All of the above-mentioned reasons are working behind the inactive role of parliamentarians.

5. Impacts on Parliamentary Democracy

There has a remarkable impact on the development of parliamentary democracy, as because of the inactive role of parliamentarians of both the ruling and opposition parties in the national parliament of Bangladesh since the restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1991, here the discussion will be focus on impacts of the inactivity. Firstly, it has observed that the executive controls the actual power, “not exactly to make the executive behave, but to fulfill its own agenda.” (Chowdhury 2013) from lawmaking to other crucial, decisions are primarily decided by the cabinet and finally parliament nominally pass it. Though they have the power to scrutiny the bills and the constitutions also empowered them to accountable the government to the parliament but the parliamentarians are incapable of doing that because they are very much inactive in the parliament. On the one hand, “the growth of the party system, cabinet government, “presidentialization” of the office of the Prime Minister (in the American sense) and the enormous expansion of the functions and area of government,”(Singh, 2015) is becoming less important to parliamentarians. Secondly, as we observed that parliamentarians are not willing to participate in different motions like questions to the prime minister, questions to the ministers, half an hour discussion as well as several other motions, as parliamentary practice of questions are getting lost its signification and applicability, which makes the parliament vulnerable. Thirdly, the sessions and its durations are becoming quite short because of this inactive role of the parliamentarians, it has been observed that in the eighth, ninth, and tenth parliament the total time spent in an average for a bill 20 minutes(9 percent), 12 minutes(8 percent) and 31 minutes(12 percent) respectively, as results the executive try to make the laws by ordinance, which is a very dark sign for parliamentary democracy. Fourthly, as because of this inactivity, the government since 1991 have been concentrating on gaining power than strengthening the pillars of parliament. Results are obvious, that the parliamentary mechanism are not institutionalized yet. According to Samuel P Huntington, the level of institutionalization of any political system can be defined by the adaptability, complexity, autonomy, and coherence of its organizations and procedures. (Huntington, 1965, p. 394) If it is applied in the Bangladesh parliament it could be seen that, **adaptability**; “the more challenges which have arisen in its environment and the greater its age, the more adaptable it is,” but as a result of this inactivity there is no challenging environment in the parliament. Also, the age of the parliament of Bangladesh is not old enough to be adaptable to the challenging situation, though it’s been 50 years it has

experienced military rule for a couple of time. **Complexity**; “the more complicated an organization is, the more highly institutionalized it is.” Which may include “multiplication of organizational subunit,” separation of “organizational subunit” and “hierarchical differentiation.” Be the cause of inactive role of the MPs and committee system(it had observed that the recommendation of the committee in the eighth, ninth, and tenth parliament only implemented a little portion which are 58, 43, and 45 percent respectively) the government would not face any complex situations, as a result, they could do anything without any hindrance, which would be against the welfare of the people. On the one hand, in maximum cases, the committee members are from the ruling party and the chair of the committee is from the government party. Here it is interesting to note that the committee always tries to save the government's policy and if sometimes the committee objects to the government policy, the government just ignores the recommendations, which doesn't make any complications. **Autonomy**; the third elements of institutionlization is the autonomy, a parliament is “independent to the extent that is adheres to distinctly parliamentary norms and to the extent that its perspectives and behavior are independent of those of other political institutions.” However, in every action of parliamentary body like speaker and other bodies has to face obligations and directions from the executive body. So, it is very wise to say that parliament is suffering from auonomy because of the inactive role of the parliamentary bodies, which is affecting institutionalization of parliament. **Coherence**; the more unified and harmoious an organization is, the more institutionalize it would be, where is important to have some prerequisites, which is consensus among the active actors, but not necessarily those who are not active or non-participants. The consensus of the parliament is dependent on the reciprocity between the ruling party and main as well as other opposition parties, which is not visisble in Bangladesh parliament. Since 1991 in each and every parliament “the major opposition party or alliance has considered it their primary role to storm the government, while the government has cynically concluded that suppressing any kind of dissent is their chief concern,”(Obaidullah, 2019, p. 316) While ruling party blame the oppositon for “unwilling and indifferent” to play their constitutional role, contrarily, the oppositon blame them for noncooperation, thus the institutionalization process lost its rhythm. Accordingly, due to the inactive role of the prliamentarians Bangadesh parliament has not institutionalized yet. So, overall, since the restoration of parliamentary democracy it has been observed that because of the inactivity of the parliamentarians bangladesh nationaal parliament has not institutionalized yet and declining the parliament day by day.

6. Concluding Remaks

On the question of the inactivity of the parliamentarians in the national parliament of Bangladesh and its impacts on parliamentary democracy, this paper propounds several arguments. Throughout the whirlwind tour, firstly, it explored the inactive role of the parliamentarians among the three parliaments like the eighth, ninth, and tenth parliaments. Where the average attendance of the parliamentarians was 55 percent, 63 percent, and 63 percent respectively. In the law-making process, the average time was respectively 9, 8, and 12 percent, whereas the average time spent on each bill 20, 12, and 31 minutes respectively. On the other hand, there was a common quorum crisis, where the average quorum crisis per working day was 37, 32, and 28 minutes respectively. In the case of the parliamentary standing committee in the sixth parliament, there was no chairman of the committee from the opposition party, and the committee was formed about one and a half year later of the formation of the parliament, on the one hand, in the ninth and tenth parliament all the committee were formed in the day of the session and several chairmen of the committee were headed by other oppositions party, but the attendance in the meeting was not satisfiable and

the same scenario was seen in the application of recommendations of the committee. Furthermore, the remarkable inactive role of both ruling and opposition party's parliamentarians was seen in the discussion on president's speech, questions to the prime minister, questions to the minister, half an hour discussion, notices on issues of public importance, discussions under the point of order and several other motions.

However, the causes of this inactivity of the parliamentarians are mainly apathetic to discuss or debate in the parliament, the applicability of 70 article of the constitutions, business politics nexus as well as lack of knowledge of parliamentary norms also responsible for this inactivity. Impacts of this inactive role are declining of the parliament and far behind of institutionalization of parliamentary democracy.

Finally, among the parliamentarians of the analyzed three parliaments, the eighth parliament was very inactive, where other two that's mean ninth and tenth parliament showed some positive activity to establish public representation and accountability of the government, financial and other irregularities, and corruption have been discussed in detail in various discussion sessions, which is a positive exercise in parliamentary functioning. But in every parliament, the uses of non-parliamentary language in the discussion using harsh and offensive words were also noticeable as in the previous parliament. Some of the directives of the parliamentary activities of these Parliament, especially quorum crisis, average little time spent on each bill, call not taken for action by both parties highlighting financial and other irregularities of the government were also noticed, which is not favorable for developing parliamentary democracy.

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