

What's on today

Seminar: Poribesh Rokkha Shopoth (Porosh) in association with Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) will hold a seminar on "Compact Townships". Venue: Porosh office premises. Time: 4.00 pm.

Blood donation: Social Service Club of North South University (NSU) has organised a blood and eye donation programme in collaboration with Sandhani. Venue: NSU campus. Time: 10 am to 6 pm.

Freshers' reception: Jagannath University unit of Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) will hold a freshers' reception. Venue: University campus. Time: 10 am.
Chief guest: Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury.

..... and tomorrow

Book launching ceremony: The Bangladesh Geological Society will host the launching ceremony of "Arsenic Poisoning in Bangladesh: End of Civilization?" a book published by Palash Prokashoni. It will also hold a discussion on latest developments of arsenic poisoning in the country. Chief guest Minister for Science and Technology Lt Gen (ret) Noor Uddin Khan. Venue: Jatiya Press Club, 18 Tophkhana Road. Time: 6.00 pm.

Folk theatre festival: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy inaugurates a week long folk theatre festival on the first day today. *Kusum Tara* by Banishha Showkhin Natty. Dal from Narsingdi will be staged. Venue: Shawkat Osman memorial auditorium of Begum Sufia Kamal Library Directorate (The Central Public Library). Time: 7.00 pm.

Weather

Moderate rain likely

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at many places over Chittagong, Barisal and Khulna divisions and at one or two places over Dhaka. Sylhet and Rajshahi divisions with moderately heavy falls at places over Chittagong division till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

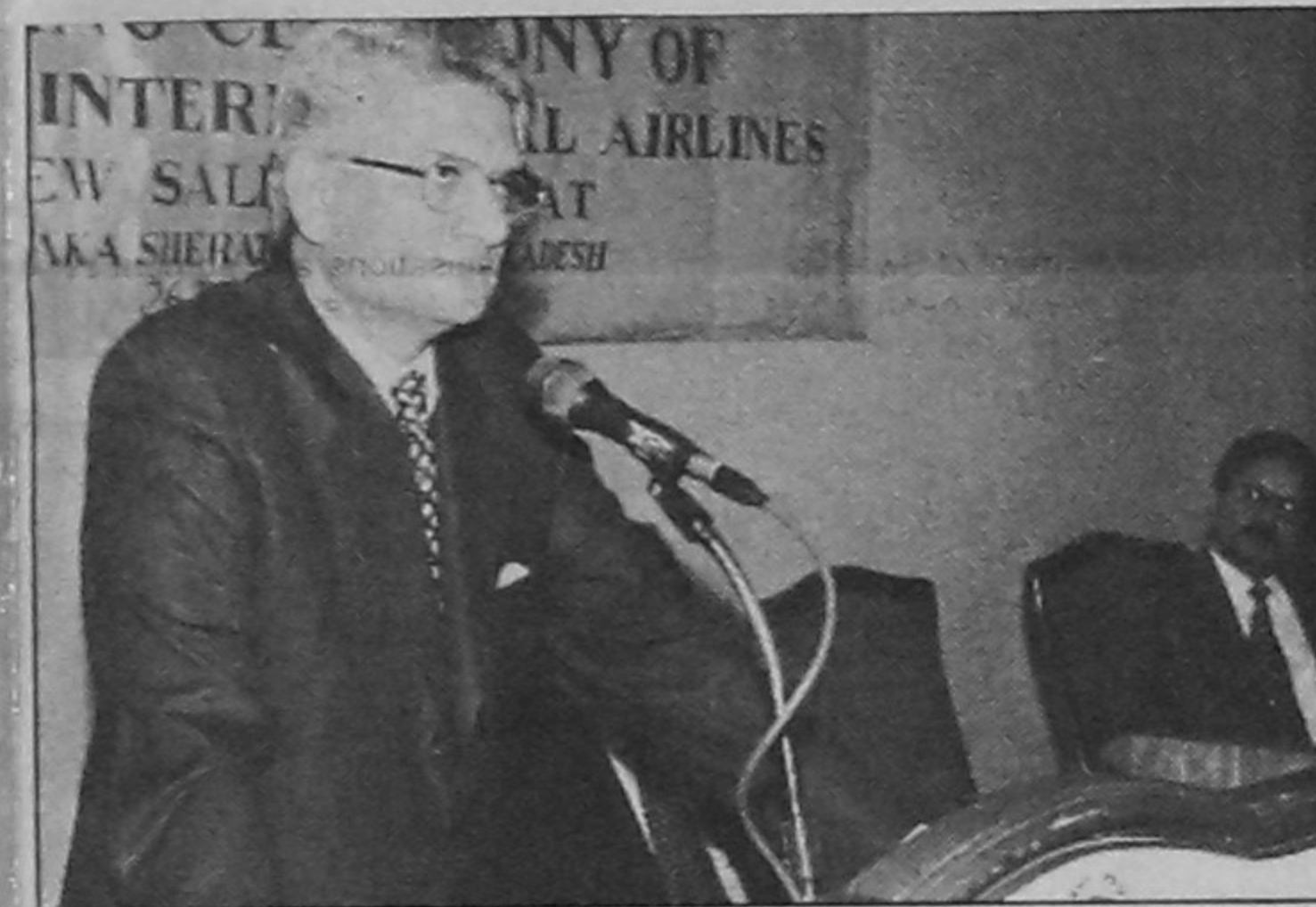
South-west monsoon is likely to sweep over central part of the country during the period. Met office said.

The country's highest temperature 36.6 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday in Chittagong and the lowest 22.0 degree Celsius at Chittagong.

The sun sets in the capital today at 6.44 pm and rises on Wednesday at 5.10 am.

Maximum and minimum temperatures and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	34.6	26.6	71	60
Chittagong	35.5	22.0	84	92
Rajshahi	34.0	25.0	82	69
Khulna	32.1	24.8	74	83
Barisal	32.8	25.0	80	71
Sylhet	35.4	25.9	54	67
Cox's Bazar	-	25.4	66	82



Iqbal Ahmed Khan, Pakistan High Commissioner in Bangladesh, speaks at the inaugural function of a new sales office of Pakistan International Airlines in the city recently. —PIA photo

Govt busy plundering public assets

It's infringing democratic rights of citizens, BMS alleges

By Staff Correspondent

Leaders of Bangladesh Muktojuddha Sangsad (BMS), an organisation of the freedom fighters, yesterday alleged that the government is involved in a competition of plundering public assets.

They alleged that a chaotic situation is prevailing in the country as the government is marring the fundamental democratic rights of the people through killing, creating terror and kidnapping.

During a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium yesterday, the leaders of BMS, one of the factions of freedom fighters, complained that many anti-liberation people had been given room in the cabinet although it had come to power with a promise to try war criminals.

Appeal for help

M A Mannan, a freedom fighter of Sector-2 (No 010707349) and father of two school-going children has been suffering from serious heart ailments. Doctors of different national medical institutions have determined that Mannan has three blockages of which two are one hundred per cent blocked while another 85 per cent. He needs immediate open heart surgery, they advised.

Mannan has already had three heart attacks and the expensive treatment has left him empty-handed. He now needs about Tk 1 lakh for the surgery and has appealed to all, including the Prime Minister, to help him.

Mannan lives at 20/F Monehsar Road, Jhigatola, Dhaka-1209.

Obituary

Lutfunnessa Ibrahim, wife of late Justice Mohammad Ibrahim, Law Minister and Vice-Chancellor of the Dhaka University of erstwhile Pakistan, died in the city yesterday of old age complications. She was 86, reports BSS.



Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikhya Parishad observed a token hunger strike at the Central Shaheed Minar demanding repeal of Vested Property Act. —Star photo

I won't spare anyone: PM

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back the misguided sons on the right track. However, I have already instructed law enforcers to book those responsible for deterioration of law and order, irrespective of political colour and identity."

Asked whether her instructions were being carried out properly, she said, "I think the police are making genuine efforts to contain the situation. But it is very difficult to contain law and order when a person arrested on charge of a killing gets bail from the court and then commits two murders."

Asked whether she considered it a failure on the part of the police that the unruly sons of certain ruling party MPs were not yet arrested, the PM said, "Maybe, yes." But she refused to link the law and order situation with the appointment of the new inspector general of police.

Opposition Movement, elections

The PM once again ruled out the possibility of early general elections.

"There is no question of holding general election this year. The opposition has announced to oust my government through agitation, but its programme has failed. So the question of early election does not arise. It would take place in the constitutionally scheduled time."

Asked whether she would take any step to make the boycotting opposition return to the budget session, she said that it was their responsibility to come to budget session and speak for those who have voted them to parliament.

Rebel Raihan

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Forty-one days after he was elected on April 22, the rebel leader received a letter from Awami League General Secretary Zillur Rahman, charging him for breaching party discipline by contesting the Rajshahi balloting against its nominee, sources close to Raihan said.

The AL had spared him of disciplinary action considering his contributions to the party, said the letter issued on June 3. It also advised Raihan to work for the party as per the chief's directives and not to repeat the act in future.

Awami League did not punish its Rajshahi leader when he revolted against the party, unlike it did in two other similar cases earlier.

The ruling party expelled Chayan Islam and Panchanan Biswas, who had revolted against the party to contest by-elections in Sirajganj and Khulna respectively. After they were elected, it brought Panchanan back to the fold and in the process of absorbing Chayan in the party ranks.

Strengthening JS security

Asked to explain reasons behind a recent attempt to further strengthen the security system inside parliament, the prime minister said almost all the parliaments in the world take the security matters very seriously. "We are just trying to plug the loopholes in the security system in our parliament. Besides, as you are aware of reports, I am the target of those who have failed to launch movement against me."

Repeal of Vested Property Act

When her attention was drawn to yesterday's hunger strike by the religious minority communities for repeal of the controversial Vested Property Act, Hasina said, "A parliamentary committee is working on it, while the bill seeking repeal of the act has to come to the House through a process. We would pass the bill when introduced in parliament."

The prime minister criticised "those shedding crocodile tears for the minority communities."

Earlier in the parliamentary committee meeting, the prime minister warned "Thirty-five party MPs who seldom visit their constituencies."

"I have a list of 35 MPs who have reportedly been isolated from the people of their respective constituencies. With general elections ahead, I would advise them to start visiting the electorates frequently." In case of failures, I would disclose their names while they face music after announcement of the schedules of general election," Hasina was quoted to have told the meeting.

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BNP won't return to JS

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not boycotted the parliament but refrained from attending its sessions as the government is not allowing the Opposition to members to play their due role in the House and take part in discussions on various important national issues, treaties and agreements.

Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury said the government and the Opposition with the mediation of the Speaker had signed 4-point agreements twice but not a single point of those agreements was implemented as yet.

The BNP leaders also said that Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury's partisan role also made the Sangsad ineffective and turned the House into a ruling party office. Moreover, the ruling party leaders including the Prime Minister frequently makes indecent remarks in the House about opposition leaders, MPs and also the Leader of the Opposition.

According to meeting sources, the BNP leaders said that the CEC was 'unilaterally' appointed by the government without consulting the Opposition. All opposition parties have rejected the appointment and launched movement demanding immediate resignation of the CEC, they pointed out.

The leaders further said at the meeting the CEC must have

to be acceptable to all major political parties who represent vast majority of the people. Citing instances, they said whenever a CEC realised that he had lost confidence of a major political party in the country, for whatever reasons, he resigned showing personal reasons or health grounds.

Referring to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's letters to Opposition Leader Khaleda Zia to discuss appointment of CEC, the BNP leaders said she welcomed consultation on this issue but wanted it to be meaningful.

In light of the previous experience, the Opposition Leader felt that a parley with the PM would not be productive and suggested talks with the President. But the suggestion was cancelled on flimsy excuses.

Explaining why BNP and other opposition parties were opposing election of local bodies particularly Upazila polls, the leaders said there is no time to hold local body elections because the parliamentary election is nearing. Moreover, all polls held under this government were rigged and manipulated by the ruling party.

The BNP leaders categorically told the donor representatives that they would not accept holding of local body polls before the parliamentary election.

Budget session

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Minister Sheikh Hasina and top leaders of the Treasury Bench were present.

Opposition lawmakers of BNP and its allies continued their absence while MPs belonging to Jatiya Party faction led by Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Manju joined the session.

The opening sitting lasted a little over an hour when separate obituary references including one on JP lawmaker Zulfikar Ali Bhutto were adopted.

The Prime Minister, Food Minister Anwar Hossain Manju, Fisheries and Livestock Minister ASM Rab, JP Whip Fazle Rabbi and ASM Firoz of the ruling party spoke on Bhutto's life and activities.

The PM said Bhutto devoted his life for the welfare of the people in his constituency.

Recalling the late MP's sense of humour, Sheikh Hasina said he was a critic of the government but he used to make lively deliberations without hurting anybody.

The others also spoke highly about Bhutto's performance in the House.

As per parliamentary convention, the Speaker adjourned the session after the obituary reference on a sitting MP was adopted.

But due to constitutional compulsion, the Chair allowed Education Minister ASHK Sadique to place the annual report of the Public Service Commission.

Earlier, the Speaker nominated a five-member panel of chairmen who will chair the sittings in absence of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker. They are: Prof Ali Ashraf (AL), Prof Abdul Mannan (AL), Fazle Rabbi (JP), Abdul Latif Mirza (AL) and Tasnima Hossain (JP).

The session was adjourned till 9:30 am today.

Hunger strike demanding repeal of Vested Property Act in city

By DU Correspondent

Bangladesh Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikya Parishad (BHBCOP) observed a day-long hunger strike across the country yesterday demanding immediate repeal of the Vested Property Act.

Central unit of BHBCOP has decided to continue their strike at the Central Shaheed Minar till this evening to press home their demand.

The central unit of BHBCOP began their hunger strike at the Central Shaheed Minar at 8 am. Other units of the BHBCOP however, observed the programme at the district headquarters throughout the country.

While addressing a rally at the Central Shaheed Minar, the BHBCOP leaders threatened to turn the programme fast-unto-death if their demand is not met. They also said that the duration of the hunger strike has been extended to exert pressure on the government to repeal the "black" act soon.

Boundary

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well with anybody though. Adnan Mansur, who already had an inkling of what the day was likely to turn out to be, had already left town, leaving terse messages that he could not be sighted before late evening. The slow run rate did not bother even Saadul Musharraf who pointedly observed that condensed milk did not go with the coffee served. Mir Shahidullah complained about everything. As far as he was concerned the giant screen less than three yards from him did not even exist. Asfar and Ibrahim were more concerned with discussing such vital issues as floor plans and blinking lights with someone who did not seem to know one end of a cricket bat from another, to notice Sri Lanka's predicaments. To give him the benefit of doubt, Asfar, who had played league cricket in his time, did however make the point that Aravinda should have continued running to the pavilion and not waited for the third umpire to rule him out. But that was as much concession that he made to the match. It was that kind of afternoon.

The Pakistanis continued to pile on the pressure, bowling a good line and length, with the chemistry of pace and spin both working to perfection and the fielders hitting the stumps. The Sri Lankans had their backs to the wall. In the end a score of 199 was all they managed. The bowling, formidable even on paper, was incisive and deadly in actual practice. The Pakistanis were on top throughout the afternoon. Would they be able to get the runs when they batted? Did anybody care? Not the above mentioned lot, for sure.

Which basically left only one star player who had not been discussed yet. With the Indian run machine out of commission and sent for repairs, attention naturally shifted to the sudden and rapid ascendancy of Musa's stars in the past week. On present form he is undoubtedly the Sachin Tendulkar of the social circuit.

Hard-hitting and aggressive, he has shown enough glimpses of what he has achieved and is likely to do so in the near future.

Whatever the outcome of this match may have been, the Pakistanis look like pursuing the Musa approach. Barring an absolute thunderbolt that may disrupt their plans, Pakistan look well prepared for the final. For that matter, Musa too!

Power tariff

From page 1

crore litres of water per day in Dhaka city against a demand for 150 crore litres, which is increasing every year.

Nearly 96 per cent of it is pumped out of the underground water table. The rest comes from Buriganga and Shitalakhya rivers through eater treatment plants at Lalbagh, Syedabad and Narayanganj.

Prof Islam said that WASA is working on a programme to increase the capacity of Syedabad water treatment plant under a Tk 300 crore project.

Another ambitious programme to bring water from the Padma by a pipeline via Pagla to add 45 crore litres to the daily supply is awaiting government approval. It will cost Tk 1400 crore, he added.

Gully

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Inran Nazir was a man possessed and perished quickly, naturally. Mohammad Wasim, a debut cricketer in Test cricket and the odd man out of the team for poor form, performed reasonably well. But it was once again Yousof Youhana, the confident but sedate Pakistani star who dazzled and put the Lanka bowling to the sword.

Inzamam, trying to redeem himself, was dismissed softly at mid-on and this brought Afridi to the crease. With only two runs short of victory, Shahid Afridi's antics were too much for the spectators. Youhana remained unbeaten on 90, another startling display of power and grace.

Once again not rain but DESA played the villain of the piece. The load-shedding and power failures for hours annoyed the viewers throughout the day. Hope, situation will improve tomorrow.

2nd batch of army leaves for Sierra Leone

The 308-member second batch of the Bangladesh Army's mechanised infantry battalion left the city yesterday for Sierra Leone to join the United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), reports BSS.

Industrial recovery

Imported through underinvoicing and smuggling in the absence of effective regulatory system. This has eroded whatever benefits the industry was to get from reduced duty on raw and intermediary goods," said Dr Bakht.

"I strongly feel that there are still many tariff anomalies between finished goods and raw materials, which should be removed. Duty on raw materials should be reduced further to give the local industries some elbow room. I feel that duty gap between the two should be at least 20 per cent to make our industries become competitive."

On top of it, the overall investment climate, law and order situation and institutional credit problems have been stalling the industry for long.

But Bangladesh's industry now needs export promotion in the South Asia on an urgent basis after having liberalised its own market to a large extent. The potential markets are being denied because of non-tariff barriers, which must be addressed properly.

At the same time, Bangladesh should be well-equipped to face the post-reform world scenario when tariff barriers would be dismantled. When the quota will be gone, it will be logical to assume that buyers will prefer a regimented and well-placed China to source their products, not Bangladesh.

So, we need to take steps in the budget to cut the real rate of interest, keep utility rates low and improve the infrastructure facilities," Says Dr Bakht. "At the same time, the increasing consumer awareness, trade union demands and neo-protectionism will pose new non-tariff, non-price challenges for Bangladesh's exports. The government has to take a proactive role to solve these problems and improve the country's image."

Finished goods are being

duction increased in case of paper, fertiliser and petroleum products by 24.8 per cent, 21.5 per cent and 1.5 per cent respectively over that of the previous month. On the other hand, production declined by 19.9 per cent, 17.7 per cent and 10.7 per cent in garments, jute-textile and MS products. Decline in garments is understandable because of the seasonality of the item. But what about the rest?

"As such the average industrial growth is not anything up to expectation and the growth is largely from the export-oriented industries which actually determine the performance of the total industry sector," says Dr Zaid Bakht of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

On the other hand, import substitution industries continued to show lacklustre performance, mainly because there had not been robust domestic demand. At the same time, the displacement effect was high on the domestic industries because of import liberalisation.

As it now shows, exports were on a double-digit path until it showed down to a single-digit low-level last year. Riding on such high export growths, industry also showed a good 8 per cent growth.

However, on the brighter side there has been a 15.48 per cent surge in disbursement of industrial term-loan during the first six months of this fiscal year compared to the same period last fiscal year. Again, the flood induced loan depression in the previous year may turn this figure looking dim.

In quite a positive way, the government has been lowering duty rates on raw materials. However, economists feel that such reductions did little to help the industry because of what they call 'water in the tariff effect.'

Speaker challenges

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ment. On top of all, as Speaker of the House, I am ready to create scope for discussion between the two sides if they are willing," he said in a written statement read out in the House on the first day of the budget session yesterday.

He also told the House that it was the constitutional right and obligation of all members of parliament to attend the proceedings of the House. He regretted that the Opposition members have been abstaining from attending the proceedings of the last few sessions, although they were enjoying remuneration and other benefits. "They have also participated in different delegations including the first inter-parliamentary conference of the new millennium held in Amman, Jordan," the Speaker said. They have also been attending meetings of the parliamentary standing committees, he added.

Referring to the Opposition "propaganda" that they were not allowed to speak in the House, the Speaker said that it was not true.

He said, in 13 sessions held between 1996 and 1999, Opposition members took part in general discussions on wide ranging subjects including national budgets, Presidential address, stock market scam, Ganges water sharing treaty, transit and regional co-operation, law and order, Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Agreement, Shahid Minar incident, Bangabandhu Bridge, natural calamities including flood, power, gas and mineral resources and foreign policy. The Opposition members were given a total 366 hours and 37 minutes to discuss the issues, he said.

During budget discussion in the first session of the present parliament, the Opposition got 23 hours 43 minutes against the Treasury Bench's 21 hours 52 minutes, he said.

On the Presidential speech in the third session, Opposition lawmakers spoke for 12 hours 22 minutes against 10 hours 06 minutes of the Treasury Bench. During discussion on the share market, the Opposition got one hour 02 minutes, while the Treasury Bench was given one hour. The Opposition spoke for

one hour 10 minutes on sharing of Ganges water against one hour 12 minutes of the Treasury Bench.

During the fourth session that witnessed discussion on transit and regional co-operation, both Treasury and the Opposition benches got one hour eight minutes each.

In the fifth session, the Opposition was allowed 22 hours 46 minutes against 24 hours 53 minutes for the Treasury bench for discussion on the national budget, the Speaker said citing records.

In the eighth session, the Opposition spoke for seven hours 25 minutes, while the Treasury Bench got 13 hours 37 minutes on the thanks-giving motion on the Presidential address.

On the CHT Peace Agreement, the Opposition got 39 minutes against one hour 29 minutes of the Treasury Bench. During discussion on an incident at the Shahid Minar, the Opposition members got one hour 14 minutes, while the Treasury Bench got one hour 12 minutes.

In the ninth session, the Opposition was given nine hours 46 minutes against 11 hours 16 minutes of the Treasury Bench for discussion on the national budget. On the Bangabandhu Bridge, the Opposition got 26 minutes against 39 minutes of the Treasury Bench.

During the 10th session, the Opposition was given two hours 14 minutes against one hour 48 minutes of the Treasury Bench for discussion on the flood situation.

In the twelfth session, the Opposition spoke for four hours 53 minutes against the Treasury Bench's five hours 58 minutes for discussion on the thanks-giving motion on the Presidential address.

During 13th session, Opposition got one hour against 58 minutes of the Treasury Bench for discussion on natural calamities, one hour three minutes against 40 minutes on power and gas, 20 hours 44 minutes against 19 hours 37 minutes on national budget and one hour 18 minutes against one hour 32 minutes of the Treasury Bench for discussion on foreign policy.

The Speaker also pointed out that the Leader of the Opposition Begum Khaleda Zia attended proceedings of the House only for 27 out of 287 working days of the 13 sessions. Besides, the Opposition staged walk out as many as 89 times over the period, he added.

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