

JS body chairmen to seek more power

Allege they don't get ministry cooperation in graft probe

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Chairmen of 44 lawmaker-headed parliamentary standing committees on ministries and Jatiya Sangsad affairs have united in a move to ask the government next month to give them more power to make sure their recommendations are implemented.

The move came after the committees told a meeting at the Sangsad Bhaban on Monday that they did not get cooperation from the ministries when they detected corruption in their affairs.

"Corruption goes unchecked and remedial recommendations are not implemented, as the ministries don't provide the committees with documents," a chairman told The Daily Star, echoing the views of heads of other parliamentary bodies -- all asking not to be named.

A dozen senior chairmen, including some former cabinet members, at Monday's meeting thrashed out plans and expressed common disappointment at the non-cooperation of the ministries. The chairmen will hold a general meeting in early February before they put forward the proposal for upgrading the status of chairmen and strengthening the committees by amending the Jatiya Sangsad rules of procedure, meeting sources said.

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The Bailey Bridge at Sayedabad collapsed at 3:45am yesterday under the weight of these two heavy trucks. No one was wounded in the incident that reportedly caused the state exchequer Tk 5 lakh in losses.

90-day gap between two JS sessions planned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has planned to increase the duration between two sessions of parliament from 60 days to 90 days after its decision to raise the Jatiya Sangsad seats by 150.

"The government has decided to increase the duration as session after two months is not effective," Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed told journalists yesterday.

A draft bill for the constitutional amendment will be placed at the cabinet meeting for final approval soon, he said.

Only on January 14, the four- SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Low budget perk to fight poverty

Perc report contests govt claims

Rejaul Karim Byron

Although the government and donor countries make the propaganda that poverty alleviation is the main objective of budget, the Public Expenditure Review Commission (Perc) finds the fund allotted for it to be meagre, a large chunk of which is misused too.

Only 11 percent of the current fiscal year's budget is earmarked for direct poverty alleviation, the commission observes, of which 30 to 50 percent is being wasted or spent for those who are not poor at all.

The budget for FY2003-04 outlines a total government expenditure of Tk 52,000 crore. Of this, Tk 5,418 crore is being spent directly for poverty alleviation through various programmes like Safety Net Scheme (Tk 1,911 crore), Small Loan Scheme

(Tk 711 crore), Poverty-Oriented Education Scheme (Tk 1,814 crore) and Health and Nutrition for the Poor (Tk 835 crore).

The Perc report submitted to the finance minister Sunday recommends for the budget to clearly spell out the amount of money being spent directly for the poor. The commission says one may interpret the whole development budget as aimed to alleviate poverty, as all development works benefit the poor, more or less. But only the spending that directly focuses on the poor and helps them to survive should be termed as the poverty alleviation budget, it maintains.

To find out whether the budget was being properly spent for the poor or not, the commission conducted a number of sample surveys

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Judge 'scam' Judicial council to file report in a day or two

STAR REPORT

The Supreme Judicial Council is likely to submit its probe report on alleged misconduct of an additional judge of the High Court to the president in a couple of days.

Chief Justice KM Hasan, who also heads the three-member council, will submit the report before he retires on January 27, a highly placed source said.

The council is now giving final touches to the report before its submission to President Iajuddin Ahmed.

If the probe report finds the judge guilty of misconduct, the president will remove him.

However, if the judge proves innocent, he can file a defamation suit against the person making the allegation.

Supreme Court Bar Association President Rokanuddin Mahmud at a meeting of the association on

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3 army brigade HQ, 6 battalions soon

PM announces at close of army winter exercise

UNB, Trishal, Mymensingh

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday announced that three new army brigade headquarters, six infantry battalions and three brigade signal companies would be formed soon

for expansion of the country's armed forces.

"We are now implementing multi-faceted plans for modernisation, strengthening and expansion of the armed forces," Khaleda, also in charge of the defence ministry,

told an army function on completion of winter exercises of the 19 Infantry Division.

Addressing the special 'Darbar' at Kathalia village on the occasion, the prime minister said infantry

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BNP bigwigs wary of PP meet wrath

Lawmakers sit today after 1 1/2 years

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP stalwarts and policymakers are wary of a possible outburst of party lawmakers when they gather at today's Parliamentary Party (BNPP) meeting taking place after over one and a half years.

The lawmakers are reportedly furious about the party's indifference

to hold its parliamentary party meeting, as it is the only forum where they can speak on governance and other issues.

The ruling party, which bagged 195 seats in last general elections, has so far held only two parliamentary party meetings. It did once to elect parliamentary party leader

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