

Multi-party JS body to check ordinances

15-member special body to work till standing committees formed; Hasina, Khaleda may sit to decide business before session resumes today; PM to answer lawmakers

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Parliament will constitute a 15-member special committee today to scrutinise the ordinances to be tabled as bills and make recommendations on those.

To be comprised of senior lawmakers from different political parties, the committee will be authorised to examine legislative proposals till the standing committees are formed.

Officials at the parliament secretariat said the matter has been included in the orders of the day. The legislature sits at 4:45pm today after a two-day recess.

A total of 122 ordinances promulgated by the immediate past caretaker government were placed before the House Sunday for decision within the next 30 days whether they would be ratified.

Parliament, however, will not have the opportunity to scrutinise merits or legality of all the ordinances. The law minister has already announced that only 45 ordinances would be tabled as bills.

The selection of the 45 on recommendations from an expert committee formed by the government means the executive, not the legislature, is determining the fate of the ordinances.

The ones that will not be introduced as bills will lose validity 30 days after placement in parliament.

Talking to The Daily Star at his office yesterday, Chief Whip Abdus Shahid said if the special committee were not formed, the bills would have to be passed without parliamentary scrutiny.

He said the BNP-led ruling alliance passed over 60 bills without examination

by legislators in the last parliament, calling into question the legality of those bills' passage.

The standing committees on different ministries were formed around two years after the eighth parliament had convened. Still, there was no special committee to work in the meantime.

Shahid said the House will determine the terms of references for the special committee to be formed under section 266 of the Rules of Procedure.

The committee will draw two lawmakers from the main opposition BNP Prime Minister and Leader of the House Sheikh Hasina has already given directions to that end, said sources in the treasury bench.

Talking to The Daily Star Monday, BNP

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

JATIYA SANGSAD Govt-opposition talks fail to settle seat plan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Talks between chief whips of the treasury and opposition benches to resolve the row over seating arrangements in the House yesterday ended inconclusively as none agreed to budge on their stance.

Speaker Abdul Hamid, who mediated the discussions, termed the situation difficult and unpleasant, and said he would try to work out a solution before resumption of the session this afternoon.

Informed about the ruling party's rearrangement proposal, opposition Chief Whip Joyanal Abedin Faruk gave a note of dissent and left the meeting at the speaker's office.

After discussions with senior BNP leaders, he told Hamid that his party would not accept any change in the seat plans.

"The ruling party wants to keep us from parliament by

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Govt goes for 4-lane Dhaka-Ctg highway

Restarts the project, fresh tender likely today

M ABUL KALAM AZAD and HASAN JAHID TUSHER

The project for upgrading Dhaka-Chittagong Highway to a four-lane road is about to get a new lease of life, as the Awami League (AL) government is scheduled to publish an international invitation for pre-qualifying tender for it today, following cancellation of the immediate past bids.

Initiated in September 2006, tender for the much needed project were cancelled twice, first in April and then in July of 2007.

The first tender was scrapped by the last caretaker government reportedly due to various loopholes in the procedure while the second one was also cancelled by the same government for violation of Public Procurement Regulation (PPR).

After the cancellation of the second tender, some of the pre-qualified firms filed a writ with the High Court challenging the government's decision which was later upheld by the court.

Due to the delay in the implementation of the project, the government estimated cost is now as high as Tk 2,400 crore compared to the previous estimated cost of Tk 2,168 crore, gov-

ernment officials said. Moreover, the state could have saved an additional Tk 300 crore by finalising the previous bids, as the lowest quote of the pre-qualified firms was Tk 1,700 crore.

The fresh move was sparked by Communication Minister Syed Abul Hossain's instruction to Communication Secretary Iqbal Mahmood for taking measures to restart the project immediately.

The new invitation for pre-qualifying tender, finalised by senior government officials, is likely to be published in today's newspapers and on the website of the communication ministry.

On Sunday, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) gave its nod to the project, directing the communication minister to restart and complete the upgrading of the highway soon, as the government is committed to fulfilling its election pledges to the people.

"The government has taken a fresh initiative to resume the project by solving all previous complexities," Communication Secretary Iqbal Mahmood told The Daily Star in his office yesterday.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Khaleda to pick deputy leader at her convenience

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in parliament Khaleda Zia will nominate deputy leader of the opposition at a convenient time, party Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain said yesterday.

"Our parliamentary party has authorised the chairperson, and she will nominate someone as deputy leader at a suitable time," he said.

Delwar was speaking at a press briefing at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office in the city.

Prior to the inaugural session of parliament on January 25, the BNP parliamentary party picked Joyanal Abedin Faruk as chief whip of the opposition but did not name its deputy leader.

Delwar once again criticised President Iajuddin Ahmed for not mentioning the name of late president Ziaur Rahman in his speech at the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



PHOTO COURTESY

Police beat up a student on Jagannath University campus yesterday after a demonstration by the students over illegally occupied residential halls of the university.

Old Dhaka turned battle zone

Jagannath University students' bid to recover 12 grabbed dormitories; over 100 hurt, 20 vehicles damaged as they clash with cops; institution closed

KAILASH SARKAR

Jagannath University authorities yesterday closed the university sine die following three-hour-long clashes between students and police that left at least 100 people including 25 policemen and 20 female students injured.

The students damaged over 20 vehicles and different offices in the area while police lobbed around 120 teargas canisters, charged truncheons to disperse them and arrested over 10 students.

The students were demonstrating to have 12 of their dormitories returned under the university's control. The dormitories are occupied by powerful people, criminals, police and the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

Activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League, student wing of Awami League, also attacked the agitating students and issued threats to them.

Following the clashes, university's syndicate, the highest body of the university, held an emergency meeting around 5:30pm and decided to close the university for an indefinite period.

State Minister for Home Affairs Tanjim

Ahmed Sohel, however, said a vested quarter in their bid to destabilise the law and order situation of the country caused the planned incident which is part of their "mega plan".

Talking to The Daily Star, he said, "We have specific information that it was an attempt of the vested quarter. But we have directed the law enforcement agencies to take stern actions against them."

Vice-chancellor (VC) of the university Prof Abu Hossain Siddique chaired the syndicate emergency meeting, which also formed a four-member committee to probe the incident.

The syndicate also requested the government to speed up its process of returning the grabbed dormitories under the university's control.

Jagannath University Proctor Kazi Asaduzzaman told The Daily Star that Prof Nuruddin Ahmed, chairman of the chemistry department, is heading the probe committee.

The proctor also said the university authorities would take care of the injured students.

However, a press release issued by university Public Relations Officer Syed Faruk Hossain said the admission process of freshmen would

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Poll results of seven upazilas cancelled

EC probe finds massive irregularities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday suspended poll results of seven upazila parishads on grounds of massive irregularities in the elections, following an investigation sparked by an onslaught of complaints from defeated candidates.

After a series of meetings over the last couple of days, the commission also decided to launch a judicial inquiry to find the details of the irregularities.

Earlier, the commission suspended polling in six other upazilas preceding and during the elections due to similar allegations which will be investigated as well.

The EC also decided to let the judicial inquiry committee investigate alleged involvement of government ministers and ruling party lawmakers in the January 22 local government election irregularities.

He however did not mention which ministers and lawmakers will be investigated, but said the probe will reveal who influenced the elections.

Based on the inquiry report, the commission will decide the fate of the suspended election results of the seven upazilas, and whether any legal action is warranted against the perpetrators.

"We've suspended the results of seven upazilas as we are convinced there were serious problems during the elections," Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakhawat Hossain told reporters in his office after a commission meeting yesterday.

The upazilas -- poll results of which are not being published

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

TRIAL OF WAR CRIMINALS PM seeks UN assistance

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday sought help of the United Nations in holding trial of the war-criminals, saying prosecuting them has become a national demand.

The prime minister placed the request when Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Coordinator in Bangladesh Renata Lok Dessallien called on her at the Prime Minister's Office.

"Prosecuting the war criminals has become a national demand and we have included the issue in our election manifesto," Sheikh Hasina told the UN country chief.

In reply, Renata suggested that her government make extensive study on how other countries across the world handled the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

HC rules on Jamaat registration with EC

Asks for explanation why registration should not be cancelled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule upon the Election Commission (EC) and Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami to explain why the registration of Jamaat as a political party with the EC should not be declared illegal.

Responding to a writ petition filed by Bangladesh Tarikat Federation's Secretary General Rezaul Haque Chandpuri and 24 others, an HC bench comprising Justice ABM Khairul Haque and Justice Md Abdul Hye issued the rule.

The EC, Jamaat-e-Islami and its ameer and secretary general

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Citycell One
It's Simple.

THE LINEMAN

always in a tangle

Who will rescue this Super Hero?

Regular internet wiring is bound to get you in a tangle. When even a super hero becomes helpless, Zoom™ comes to the rescue and untangles all this mess.

On your desktop or laptop, at home and in the office, indoors or outdoors and even on the move, Zoom™ high-speed wireless internet connects you wherever you are. Now available with a Super Duper Offer.

For details, call 011 910 SALES (011 910 72537) or email sales@citycell.com

Super Duper Offer
2GB for Tk 450
5GB for Tk 700
all month long

• Conditions apply • Available with post-paid connection