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Open University Bill passed

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Bangladesh Open University Bill, 1992 moved by Education Minister Barrister Zamiruddin Sircar was passed in the Jatiya Sangsad on Wednesday in amended form.

The House rejected the Opposition demand for circulating the bill for eliciting public opinion by voice vote. A total of 32 members belonging to opposition Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaate-e-Islami took part in the discussion giving their arguments against the passage of the bill. They contended that there was no necessity for an open university in the country when the vast number of people was deprived of the basic primary education. Terming the open university as a luxury for a poor country like Bangladesh, the participants in the discussion said that it would only drain money from the Government exchequer without providing any real benefit to the nation.

Criticising the bill, the Opposition members said without giving the nation an education policy to educate the people and raising the percentage of literacy in the country, the government was going to establish such a university only to serve its narrow political purpose and buy the cheap popularity. They described the poor state of the country's primary schools, secondary schools and colleges. They said it was the main responsibility of the Government to ensure primary education before thinking of higher education.

They said that there was no reason to establish an open university in spite of the existence of four general universities and three other technical universities in the country.

The Opposition members also
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criticised the Government on the structure of the open university which among others include provision for making the head of the Government as Chancellor and the services of the first Vice Chancellor, Pro-Vice Chancellor and registrar as life job.

Jatiya Party leader Barrister Maudud Ahmed, however, congratulated the Education Minister, specially the present Government for the implementation of the projects of Open University, National University and Private University which were initiated during the regime of the Jatiya Party. He only objected to the provision of making the head of the Government as Chancellor of the Open University. He said, the President who is regarded as the symbol of the unity of the nation should be made Chancellor.

Mohammed Nasim, Chief Whip of the Opposition objecting to the passage of the Open University Bill saying that when the Government had failed to manage the existing universities and bring peace on the campuses, the new university would only add to the problem in addition to creating huge number of unemployed educated youths. Demanding a mass oriented education policy, he assured that the Opposition, specially the Awami League would extend its full cooperation to the Government in formulating a pragmatic education policy for the nation.

Mr. Suranjit Sengupta said that the Open University was nothing but a luxury when the entire education system in the country had collapsed due to increased violence and terrorism on the campuses. He said that nation at the moment needed a basic education policy ensuring education for all.

BSS adds: Ten amendments to the Bangladesh Open University Bill, 1992 moved by two Treasury Bench members Mr. Helaluzzaman Talukder Lalu (Bogra) and Mr. Abu Yusuf Md. Khalilur Rahman (Joypurhat) were accepted by the House.

When the House was in progress considering the amendments by voice-votes, the speaker asked the members, those who were for "yes" and those for "nos" to rise in their places. After counting, the speaker said 87 votes were in favour of an amendment and 28 against, the counting was taken following a demand from the opposition as the Treasury Bench's "yes" vote was not loud.

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