

Two Bills passed

By A Staff Reporter

The Jatiya Sangsad on Wednesday passed the University Law (Amendment) Bill, 1979 and the Local Government Law (Amendment) Bill, 1979 by voice vote.

Opposition Bench member Mr A.S.M. Sulaiman, in an amendment motion moved that the bill be circulated for eliciting public opinion. The House rejected the amendment motion. Mr Sulaiman and the Leader of the Independent Group in the Jatiya Sangsad Dr M.O. Ghani spoke in favour of the amendment motion moved by the former.

Mr A.S.M. Sulaiman said that the University Law Amendment Bill, which aimed at giving the Chancellor of various universities the power to delegate his powers to nominated persons was uncalled for. He said that traditionally the head of the state or the Governor of the then East Pakistan used to be the Chancellor of the highest seats of learning. It would not be proper, he pointed out, to delegate the responsibilities of Chancellor to anybody less than the head of the state.

Dr M.O. Ghani, in his turn, said that delegation of powers of the Chancellor to a nominated person, precisely what the bill aimed at, was a proposition "unique" in the world. He also termed the move as derogatory to the dignity and prestige of the highest seat of learning. He pointed out that by choosing somebody as the Chancellor, a university added dignity to its own standing and vice versa. He referred to the system of choosing of Chancellors by various British and Indian universities. Dr M.O. Ghani wondered what emergencies had prompted the ruling party to bring about such a bill on a priority basis.

Defending the bill, Leader of the House Shah Azizur Rahman said that the cases made out against the bill by the two opposition bench members happened to be "very weak and feeble". He argued that nowhere in the world the head of state happened to be the ex-officio Chancellor of universities.

Replying to the contention that delegation of Chancellor's powers to nominated persons would reduce the universities' prestige, Shah Azizur Rahman said, "are we to take it then that an appointed Governor of a province was more dignified than the elected representative of a ruling party?"

He pointed out that under the proposed law there was no attempt to take away the chancellorship from the head of the state, who would continue to be de jure Chancellor. The Prime Minister said that the bill aimed at ensuring more efficient functioning of the universities and making them accountable to the "money-giving agency"—the Government.

He pointed out that nowhere in the world did a government provide the universities with 1 cent per cent of their development funds as was the case with Bangladesh. He emphasised that the new law was necessary to bring about qualitative changes in the system of higher education in the country.