

## PVT UNIVERSITY BILL PASSED No power for UGC to fix tuition fees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Parliament yesterday passed the Private University Bill, snubbing the cabinet's move to empower the University Grant Commission (UGC) to fix tuition fees of private universities.

The cabinet's another proposal for empowering UGC to approve the salaries and service rules for teachers and other staff of private universities was also scrapped from the bill.

Instead, the House passed the bill incorporating recommendations of the parliamentary standing committee on education ministry which stood against boosting the UGC's supervisory power over private universities.

Due to the snubbing of the cabinet's recommendations, private universities will continue to fix their own tuition fees at will, without being accountable to any supervisory authority.

The government had moved to boost UGC's power over private universities in the wake of widespread controversy over exorbitant tuition fees. The move had been aimed at bringing the process of fixing the fees under a disciplined system.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid placed the cabinet approved bill in the

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## No power for UGC

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parliament on March 9 with a provision that every private university would prepare a tuition fee structure in light of the country's socio-economic condition, and take UGC's approval for it.

But the parliamentary committee, while scrutinising the bill, rewrote the provision scrapping the need for UGC's approval, and instead incorporated that just informing the commission will suffice.

The committee also included in the bill that on being informed, UGC might make recommendations if necessary. But the rewritten provision did not say anything about whether the commission's suggestions will be binding on the universities.

The committee placed its scrutiny report in the House on June 20, recommending passage of the bill incorporating its suggestions.

The education minister's proposal in the parliament yesterday echoed the committee, and the House passed the bill.

The cabinet had also proposed that salary structures of teachers and staff of private universities, and their service rules must be approved by the UGC.

But the parliamentary committee oppose the

proposal during scrutiny, and relaxed the provision saying that informing UGC about the salary structures and service rules will suffice. And the House passed the bill as such.

The House also accepted the parliamentary committee's proposal for increasing the 'quota for tuition free education at private universities, for children of freedom fighters and poor but meritorious students of remote areas, to six percent of freshmen enrolment from previous five.

According to the bill, if a private university or a branch of any foreign university, or any study centre or tutorial centre is not approved by UGC, it will not be able to advertise its services in any form.

The Private University Act 1992 was also repealed with the passage of the bill.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Sahara Khatun placed a bill in the parliament yesterday, seeking to amend the Battalion Ansar Act 1995, to reduce Ansar members' required service age for getting on the pay scale to 9 from 12.

The bill was then sent to the parliamentary standing committee on home ministry, for scrutiny and submission of a report to the House in two weeks.