

# Anti-tobacco activists demand 70pc flat tax

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The taxes on tobacco proposed for the next year goes against the government's goal of getting the country rid of tobacco by 2040, anti-tobacco campaigners told a post-budget press conference yesterday.

The significant increase in the prices and taxes on local bidis and non-smoking tobacco is laudable, but little hike in high-priced cigarettes manufactured by multinational companies is very frustrating, they mentioned.

For four types of tobacco products, there are four price slabs-- low, medium, high and premium. And there are different prices and taxes for each of the slabs.

Keeping the price slabs that are complicated and create scopes for tax dodging is also condemnable, the campaigners told the press conference organised by PROGGA and Anti-Tobacco Media Alliance (ATMA) at the capital's Jatiya Press Club.

Some one lakh people die each year due to diseases caused by tobacco consumption -- a concern that can be addressed by levying higher tax, according to World Health Organization.

As per the proposed budget, with the increase in base price and supplementary duty, the prices of 25 sticks of filter-less bidis and 20 sticks of filtered bidis will be Tk 10.61 and Tk 12.03 respectively, which is over a 50 percent rise.

"This is not enough... and its continuation is important to take bidi price beyond the capacity of the poor," said economist Prof Dr Rumana Haque of Dhaka University in her keynote presentation.

As bidis' main consumers are low income people, it is expected that the proposed increase in tax would reduce bidi consumption among them, while a fewer new smokers would start smoking bidis, she said.

On the other hand, the increase in supplementary duty on non-smoking tobacco -- jarda and gul -- from 60 percent to 100 percent and import duty from 100 percent to 150 percent is laudable, mentioned Rumana.

However, for medium and high-slab cigarettes that now cost Tk 45 and above per 10 sticks, the supplementary duty has been increased only by one percent -- from 61 percent to

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# KARNAPHULI IN DIRE STRAITS



PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

The dramatic change siltation can bring, especially when the tide begins to ebb, revealed by the mere ease with which these fishermen, inset, are walking over the bed of the Karnaphuli river, which is yet mighty enough at one point to power the Kaptai electric dam. The photo was taken on June 9.



# Cop, 3 'robbers' shot in Gendaria 'gunfight'

Seven other 'robbers' held in Wari

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A police officer and three robbers sustained bullet injuries in a "gunfight" between the law enforcers and the criminals in Namapara Rail Line slum area of the capital's Gendaria yesterday.

Kazi Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Gendaria Police Station, claimed it while talking to The Daily Star. With leg injuries, OC Mizanur is being treated at Rajarbagh Police Lines Hospital. The OC also claimed to have detained seven robbers after the "gunfight". Three of them -- Milon alias Van Milon alias Sajib, 27, Swapan, 25, and Sajib alias Raju alias Kajol -- are undergoing treatment with leg injuries at the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (NITOR) under police escort. Acting on a tip-off that a group of robbers

took position near a mosque at a slum in Namapara Rail Line area, police conducted a drive around 12:45am. Sensing the presence of police, the gang opened fire on them, prompting the law enforcers to fire back that triggered the "gunfight". "During the gunfight, Milon, Swapan, Sajib and I got shot," OC Mizanur said. Police recovered a pistol, three bullets and three knives and some locally made sharp weapons from the spot. A case was filed in connection with the incident.

In another incident, seven "robbers" were arrested near Wonderland Park Lane in Swami Bagh while they were preparing to commit a "robbery", said Wari police.

The arrested are Md Liton, 20, Md Sukkur Ali, 20, Md Tarek, 24, Md Hridoy Hossain, 18, Md Omar Faruq, 20, Md Alauddin, 18, Md Kamal Hossain, 19.

# Muhith, deputy absent in JS budget discussion

JP MP slams their absence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party MP Kazi Firoz Rashid yesterday expressed deep resentment over the absence of both Finance Minister AMA Muhith and his deputy MA Mannan in parliament when discussion on the proposed budget was going on.

"What is the use of just telling you [the House's speaker], as both the finance minister and the state minister are not present in the House? Who will reply or note down our queries? Should we speak to the sky?" he said.

Deputy Speaker M Fazle Rabbi Miah was presiding over the session at that time. Pointing to the existing anomalies in the financial sector, Firoz said the government would have to stop the ongoing irregularities for letting the people enjoy the fruits of the budget and for reducing budget deficit.

Pointing to BASIC Bank and Bismillah Group scams, Firoz said not a single person faced trial yet for embezzling thousands of crores of taka in the last seven and a half years.

He also questioned the steps taken against those involved in the Bangladesh Bank scam.

# ENDING WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR Urgent initiative must

Rights bodies tell press

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Media should play a pioneering role to build public awareness against child labour by regularly publishing contents on the issue, said rights activists.

It should also play a watchdog role in implementing existing laws and policies to eliminate child labour in Bangladesh, they opined.

They were speaking at a press conference, organised by a consortium of five child rights organisations, at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity marking the World Day Against Child Labour observed yesterday.

The organisations are Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF), Uddipan, Village Education Resource Centre (VERC), Social and Economic Enhancement Programme (SEEP) and Society for Social Service (SSS).

The consortium is implementing a project titled "Ending Child Labour in Bangladesh" launched in January this year and will continue till December 2018.

At the press conference, they demanded special budgetary allocation for children in 23 ministries which have "direct involvement" with child rights issues.

They also demanded the government's effective initiative to eliminate the worst forms of child labour on an urgent basis.

Top level officials of five organisations were present at the function.

In Bangladesh, various child rights organisations held different programmes marking the day.

There are an estimated 3.45 million working children, aged between 5 and 17, in Bangladesh, according to the Child Labour Survey 2013 of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

# SC allows three colleges to hold admission tests

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday upheld a High Court order that had cleared the way for Notre Dame College, Holy Cross College and St Joseph College in Dhaka to admit students of class XI through holding admission tests.

The SC dismissed a petition filed by the government seeking stay on the HC order of May 22 that stayed the portion of government circular asking the institutions to admit students based on SSC results. Tamim Hossain Shawon, a lawyer for the writ petitioners, said the three colleges now can admit class XI students through admission tests.



Apart from the overwhelming stench, this pile of garbage proves to be an eyesore just yards away from Ahsan Manzil, one of Dhaka's oldest historical sites attributed to promoting tourism with the lure of its Kumartuli premises on the banks of the Buriganga river. The photo was taken on June 9.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

# GULISTAN CLASH CASE All held get bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted bail to 190 traders and hawkers, who were arrested on Friday, in connection with a case filed over eviction of hawkers from footpaths.

Metropolitan Magistrate Maruf Hossain passed the order after their lawyers moved separate petitions seeking bail in the case.

Traders of Dhaka Trade Centre and street hawkers clashed in the capital's Gulistan area on Friday, after the two sides fought over eviction of hawkers from footpaths.

Paltan police then arrested them on the spot and forwarded them to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka the same day. The court sent them to jail after rejecting their appeals for bail.

The traders said after getting bail some of their colleagues have come out of jail and it may take upto this morning to get all of them out of the jail.

They said after the clash on Thursday and Friday the traders and hawkers sat on a conciliatory meeting where it was decided that the affected hawkers will be given compensation and they can carry on their trade in front of the market.

On Friday, police detained 250 persons including 60 customers but later police released the customers and sent 190 to jail.

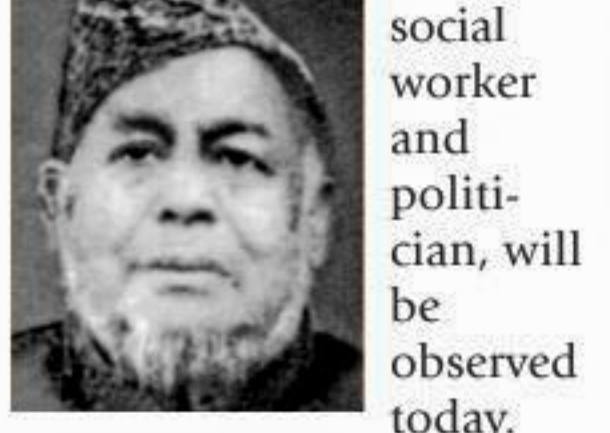
At least 50 people, including a police official, were injured in Friday's clash, said police.

According to witnesses, as hawkers started opening their makeshift shops on footpaths in front of Dhaka Trade Centre around 11:30am on Friday, traders of the market drove them out. In response, the hawkers threw projectiles at the traders.

# Death anniversary

CITY DESK

The 40th death anniversary of LA Chowdhury, a



renowned social worker and politician, will be observed today.

He was a close associate of Shere Bangla AK Fazlul Haq.

He was general secretary of the then Jukta Front-1954 and president of Chittagong branch of Krishak Sramik Party.

Chowdhury was also a member of Chittagong District Board and the editor of weekly Al Helal, published from Chittagong.

A milad mahfil and Qurankhwani will be held after the Magrib prayers at his grave in Chittagong and at Naya Paltan Jame Mosque in the capital after the Isha prayers.

# Artistes call on people to unite

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movement without being dependent on the government," he added.

SSJ President Golam Kuddus demanded exemplary punishment for the killers.

Liberation War Museum Trustee Mofidul Haque urged the law enforcers to carry out fair and proper probe into the incidents and to take stern actions to curb militancy.

On Friday, unidentified assailants hacked to death Nityaranjan Pandey, a volunteer at Sree Sree Thakur Anukulchandra Satsang Ashram in Pabna Sadar upazila.

In Jhenidah, Ananda Gopal Ganguly of Karatipara village in Sadar upazila was killed on Tuesday while he was going to a temple there.

On June 5, Mahmuda Khanam Mitu, a police official's wife, was murdered in the port city, while Christian grocer Sunil Gomez was hacked to death in Natore the same day.

They all are the latest victims of a string of secret killings across the country.

# Activities of 3 pvt medical

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colleges have withdrawn the initial bank deposit of Tk 1 crore without permission from the health ministry, Abdur Rashid said.

"Overall, these medical colleges are not producing quality doctors," he said.

Asked if the students -- some 1,000 to 1,200 -- in the three medical colleges will face any troubles to be transferred, Abdur Rashid said there might be some troubles, but it has to be managed for the greater interests. "If they are transferred for completing their education, it will be better," he added.

# Obituary

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Fazlar Rahman, a freedom fighter of Khansama upazila in Dinajpur, died from old age complications at Rangpur Medical College Hospital early yesterday. He was 68. Fazlar was buried at a local graveyard with state honour.

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