

# MPs want removal of excise duty on bank deposits

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More lawmakers, including those from the ruling party, in parliament are raising their voice against the higher excise duty on bank deposits in the proposed budget.

Yesterday, a number of treasury and opposition bench MPs demanded the withdrawal of the excise duty. Meanwhile, Jatiya Party MP Pir Fazur Rahman yesterday criticised the government for what he said siphoning off a huge amount of public money after looting it from different state-run banks.

"A huge amount of money is being plundered from public banks and... siphoned off the country. But the plunderers and culprits are not being tried," he said.

"Some Tk 73,000 crore has been siphoned off the country in a year. Second homes are being built with the money in Canada and Malaysia," he claimed.

The JP MP claimed that the finance minister encourages the loan defaulter by providing the state-run banks with allocations from the tax money in the budget every year.

Participating in the supplementary budget discussion, JP MP Kazi Feroze Rashed on Tuesday also criticised the government for not taking action against the looters.

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# Why NHRC shouldn't frame rules on rights violation complaints

HC asks for explanation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday asked the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to explain in four weeks why it should not be directed to frame rules under the relevant law for disposing of complaints over human rights violations.

The court issued a rule in this regard and made NHRC chairman and its secretary respondents to it.

The HC came up with the rule after hearing a petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Barrister Abdul Halim seeking its order on the NHRC to frame rules under Section-30 of the National Human Rights Commission Act 2009 and take actions against human rights violation.

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Prof Ajoy Roy speaks at a protest organised under the platform "Nagorik Samaj" in the Hafajat-e-Ordap, protesting threats given to rights activist Sultana Kamal and other prominent citizens by the Hefajat al-Islam. On his right are rights activists Khushi Kabir, Maleka Begum and Hameeda Hossain, and on his left are former deputy governor of Bangladesh Bank Khondkar Ibrahim Khaleel and economist Prof MM Akash.

PHOTO: STAR

# We stand by Sultana Kamal

Eminent citizens tell protest meeting following threats by Hefajat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Instead of taking any initiative to reign in Hefajat-e-Islam's communal and anti-liberation roles, the government rather encouraged the Islamist force, eminent citizens told a protest meeting yesterday.

They also said the government had made no progress in establishing justice in the recent cases of violence and rampage Hefajat unleashed.

The eminent persons, who organised the programme under the banner "Nagorik Samaj" at the capital's Sultana, strongly condemned the recent ultimatum and threats given to dissenting activist Sultana Kamal and other prominent citizens by Hefajat.

The protesters extended their support for her. "We stand by Sultana Kamal," said Prof Ajoy Roy, who chaired the meeting.

The father of Avijit Roy, who was killed by

fundamentalist groups, said the nation should not forget the contribution of Sultana Kamal and her family during different struggles and movements.

Reading out a written statement on behalf of the citizens, economist Prof MM Akash demanded immediate arrest of those who distorted Sultana's speech and threatened her.

"Even after the public threat against Sultana Kamal and the person who threatened her being identified, no arrest attempt or legal action has been taken by the law enforcement agencies."

"This is all too familiar. The trend of impunity not only puts Sultana Kamal's life at risk, but also raises questions about the government's commitment to its constitutional duty to ensure security of the citizens," he said.

The written statement said, "Because of the protection granted by a section of the government they can dared to spread lies, distort and

engage in communal rhetoric that goes against the spirit of the country, in a holy place such as the Baitul Mukarram mosque."

Around 30 eminent persons from different sectors spoke at the event.

Referring to the rise of religion-based groups in different countries, journalist Abed Khan said fundamentalist groups spread their wings and rose to the helm whenever they were given a little chance.

"The so-called compromise will bring disasters," he said, adding Bangladesh was heading towards a dark era, and there was no scope to remain silent now.

Executive Director of Manusher Jonno Foundation Shaheen Anam said the allegations against Sultana Kamal were false and fabricated and that those were created in a planned way only to silence her voice.

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# THREAT AGAINST SULTANA

urges govt to take legal action

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Demanding a thorough, impartial, independent and effective investigation into the threats made against human rights defender Sultana Kamal, Amnesty International (AI) has urged the government to try the culprits.

It also asked the government to ensure that the human rights defenders are able to carry out peaceful activities without fear of surveillance, intimidation, harassment, arrest, prosecution or retaliation.

A lawyer and prominent human rights activist Sultana has given numerous threats of violence from supporters of the Islamist group Hefajat-e-Islam following comments she made on a TV talk show, said AI in its statement.

Several national rights organisations and civil society members have expressed concern over the threat given to the renowned rights defender in the past few days.

South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR), a regional network of Human Rights Defenders, expressed its concern at the demands made by Hefajat for the immediate arrest, exile from the country, and inciting of physical violence against Sultana.

SAHR urged the government to oblige by the constitutional stipulations of the secular nature of the state, as well as the international obligations it has signed.

It urged the government to provide her with adequate

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A mobile court led by Rapid Action Battalion, during a drive in the capital's Mohakhali yesterday, fined two organisations Tk 4.5 lakh for selling unpurified water in jars. Two persons were also arrested in this regard.

PHOTO: STAR



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# GULSHAN HOUSE Moudud's plea challenging eviction kept for hearing till July

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Senior BNP leader Moudud Ahmed's writ petition challenging the legality of his eviction from Gulshan residence has been kept in waiting till July 2.

The High Court yesterday kept the petition stand over (waiting for hearing) until it will reopen after its ongoing annual vacation. The court, which went on vacation today, will reopen on July 2.

The bench of Justice Syed Muhammad Dastagir Husain

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# VC'S RESIDENCE

# Controversy as JU staff protest 'vandalism'

MUNTAKIM SAAD

A recent protest of Jahangirnagar University officers and workers against some "unlucky students who vandalised" the vice chancellor's residence after the death of two students in the May 27 road accident has created controversy.

Several students alleged that the staff's protest was backed by the administration, and its aim was to harass the students.

Protesting the deaths of their fellows, the students took to the street and later besieged the VC's residence and allegedly vandalised it on the night of May 27. Over the incident, the university registrar identified a case against 31 students and 50 unidentified others the next day.

On the May 27 night, the university

syndicate, at an emergency meeting, asked students to vacate the VC's residence. But at another meeting, on June 3, the syndicate decided to reopen the dormitories on June 8, and give Tk 5 lakh in compensation to families of the students killed in the road accident.

The syndicate did not decide about withdrawal of the case, however.

Meanwhile, on Monday, the University Officers' Association, Employees' Association, and the Employees' Union held a human chain on the campus, protesting "vandalism of the vice chancellor's residence and physical assault on teachers, officers and employees" on the night of May 27. They also referred to the rowdy students as criminals.

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# Three killed by lightning

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Two people were killed and another was injured by lightning in Hemaetpur Risshapara area of Savar yesterday.

The deceased are Nahid Hossain, 17, and Shah Paran, 18, while the injured is Amir Hossain of the area.

The trio was struck by lightning while they were working in the rain on the rooftop of a house, said police quoting their family members.

They were taken to Enam Medical College Hospital where doctors declared Nahid and Paran

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