

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 supported the withdrawal of the excise duty.

Meanwhile, Jatra Party MP Pir Fazlur 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 defaulters by providing the state-run banks with allocation from the tax money in the budget every year.

Participating in the supplementary budget discussion, JP MP Kazi Feroz Rashid 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 within 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 court also asked the commission to show causes why its inaction to take any steps against gross violation of human rights of minority Hindu and Santaani people in Brahmanbaria, Comilla and Gaibandha last year should not be declared illegal.

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 programme organised under the platform "Nagorik Samaj" in the capital's Cirdap auditorium yesterday, protesting threats given to rights activist Sultana Kamal and other prominent citizens by Islamist group Hefajat-e-Islam. On his right are rights activists Khusi Kabir, Maleka Begum and Hameeda Hossain, and on his left are former deputy governor of Bangladesh Bank Khondkar Ibrahim 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 case of violence and rampage Hefajat unleashed.

The eminent persons, who organised the programme under the banner "Nagorik Samaj" at the capital's Cirdap, strongly condemned the attack on 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 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 eminent citizens, economist Prof MM Akash demanded immediate arrest of those who discontinued 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 Abdur 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
Amnesty Int'l 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, threats, prosecution or refutation.

A later and prominent human rights activist Sultana is 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 and international 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 political 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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GULSHAN HOUSE
Moudud's plea challenging eviction kept for hearing till July
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Senior BNP leader Barrister 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 "unruly 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 way to harass the students.

Protesting the demands 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 registered 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 houses the next day. 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' Union and

Academic Staff Association

held a human chain on the campus protesting

"vandalism of the vice chancellor's resi-

dence 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, Sivar

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

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

The trio was struck by lightning while they were soaking 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 Shah Parvin dead.

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