

Lift VAT from pvt universities

Eminent citizens urge government from BBC Bangladesh Sanglap; Law Minister Anisul Huq says if the universities increase tuition fees, government will remove the tax

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three of the four panellists and the entire audience of debate programme BBC Bangladesh Sanglap yesterday called for removal of the value added tax (VAT) on the tuition fees of private universities, saying it would put an additional burden on students from middle-income families.

Not only children from rich families, those from middle-income group also enrol at private universities, and it will be difficult for them to pay the 7.5 percent VAT, said panellist Syed Manzoorul Islam, professor of English at Dhaka University.

"Education is not a commodity that should be brought under VAT," said BNP Vice Chairman

Abdullah Al Noman, another panel member.

Against the backdrop, Law Minister Anisul Huq told the dialogue, "We don't want private universities to take the VAT from students. If private universities increase tuition fees after the imposition of VAT and students have to pay it, then we will remove it."

"But our intention is private universities pay the VAT on their profits," he told the 125th episode of the Sanglap, held in the capital's Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) auditorium.

Rounaq Jahan, professor of international affairs at Columbia University, USA, said VAT should not be imposed if private universities

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operated as non-profitable institutions.

The entire audience, comprised of general people, voted against the imposition of VAT.

Akbar Hossain moderated the dialogue, organised jointly by BBC Media Action and BBC Bangla.