

Students set to take to streets from today protesting at 10pc VAT on private universities

Staff Correspondent

A GROUP of private university students chalked out a series of protest programmes including rallies, human chain and besieging of finance ministry to press home the demand for scrapping the proposed 10 per cent VAT on private universities.

Students under the banner 'Private University Education Rights Movement' at a press conference on Wednesday announced that they would stage human chains and protest rallies in front of private universities

across the country today.

'We will hold a protest rally in front of National Press Club on June 20 and besiege finance ministry on June 22, if the proposed 10 per cent VAT is not scrapped,' said Raihan Tahrat Lyon, coordinator of the group, at a press conference.

Finance minister AMA Muhith in his budget speech on June 4 proposed 10 per cent VAT on private universities.

Students, guardians and owners of the private universities opposing the move said that VAT will eventu-

ally have to be borne by students and guardians. The move is also essentially anti-education, they said.

Private University Education Rights Movement leaders said that the government had taken a contradictory stand by declaring private universities as non-profit organisations and at the same time imposing VAT on them.

There are over four lakh students at 84 private universities, according to the University Grants Commission.

A private university student needs to spend Tk 3 to 7 lakh to complete a four-

year graduate course.

At present, a numbers of students from middle class background go to private institutions because there is a shortage of seats in public universities. Besides, session jams and unhealthy political atmosphere on campuses also keep students away from public universities.

The Awami League-led government in 2010 had imposed a 4.5 per cent VAT on private universities but was forced to backtrack from the decision within a month following demonstration by students.