

Bohras must not be forced to pay levies, says Syedna rival

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Mumbai: Days after Bombay high court allowed Taher Fakhruddin to continue the succession battle initiated by his late father Khuzaima Qutbuddin against Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin over the leadership of Dawoodi Bohra community, Fakhruddin said that the community should not be forced to pay "levies".

Addressing media on Friday, rare for a claimant to the Syedna's post, Fakhruddin spoke on a range of issues, including allegedly high taxes levied on the community members, female genital mutilation (FGM) prevalent among the Bohras and the dispute over the title of Dai al-Mutlaq or Syedna.

"Except zakat (2.5% of annual income for charity), there is no other tax accor-

Rizwan Mithawala



Taher Fakhruddin

ding to the Shariah. Even zakat is compulsory only on those who can afford it and so it should not be enforced," said Fakhruddin whose father Khuzaima Qutbuddin challenged the succession of Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin as the community's 53rd spiritual head after the death of 52nd spiritual head Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin on January 17, 2014. Responding to a question about FGM, he said

that it is for the women to choose whether they want to undergo the procedure. "The term is khaps which is different from FGM and it should be done once the women acquire adulthood and it can't be done forcefully," said Fakhruddin.

When asked if he would reconcile and merge his group with the larger faction led by Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin if he loses the case in the court, he said he was confident of winning it. His lawyer Andand Desaid reiterated the submission in the court that there was no witness when Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin anointed Fakhruddin's father as his successor in 1965 through "private communication". About the triple talaq issue, Fakhruddin merely said that "it was a complex issue and rights of women should be protected".