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Independent media source of truth when institutions fail

Says Mahfuz Anam; 10 DU students get Prof Sitara Parvin Award

Independent media is the only reliable source of truthful information for a democratic government when other state pillars fail, said Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, yesterday.

The autonomous and critical functions of both parliament and the judiciary have gradually been curtailed, limiting their ability to keep the government on the right path, he said while speaking as a guest speaker at an award ceremony held in honour of the late Prof Sitara Parvin of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism at Dhaka University.

The event took place at the Professor Muzaffar Ahmed Chowdhury Auditorium at the Faculty of Social Sciences.

Anam said, "The ruling party and bureaucracy rarely provide the government with the truth it needs

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A total of 10 meritorious students of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism of Dhaka University were recognised with the Prof Sitara Parvin Award for their outstanding results. The award ceremony, held in honour of the late Professor Sitara Parvin of the department, was held at the Professor Muzaffar Ahmed Chowdhury Auditorium in the Faculty of Social Sciences yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Move beyond the rhetoric on minority inclusion

Speakers urge parties at CGS seminar

Democracy risks turning into a mere numbers game if minority rights and political representation are not ensured, speakers said at a seminar held at the capital's CIRDAP Auditorium yesterday.

The seminar, titled "Democracy for All: Minority Rights, Representation and National Elections," was organised by the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS), where representatives from minority communities stressed that inclusive democracy is impossible without genuine political will and accountability.

Rights activist Khushi Kabir said democracy should guarantee equal and fair opportunities for everyone, but the current model is confined to power, money and the majority.

She alleged that political parties routinely violate the requirement of a minimum five percent female representation. Referring to Jamaat-e-Islami, she said, "They retain female members to maintain registration but do not truly believe in women's leadership."

Pallab Chakma, a representative from the CHT, said, "Political parties often mention minority and indigenous issues in their election manifestos, but they rarely engage in direct dialogue with these communities."

Referring to the BNP's 31-point reform outline,

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Scrap draft energy master plan

13 organisations urge govt

As the government moves to approve a 25-year draft Energy and Power Sector Master Plan, civil society organisations have demanded that it be scrapped, alleging it was formulated without democratic processes or transparency.

They said the plan's social and environmental impacts were not adequately considered and public participation was largely ignored during its preparation.

A total of 13 organisations yesterday held a press conference under the banner of Bangladesh Working Group on Ecology and Development (BWGED).

The group said the interim government's role was meant to ensure routine governance, yet it is exceeding its mandate by attempting to impose a long-term, high-risk energy plan with far-reaching consequences.

"Despite directives from the High Court, no meaningful

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**Reliance on imported liquefied natural gas, coal and oil would remain at 50 after 25 years, posing severe risks to the country's energy security and economy.**

KEYNOTE PAPER READ

97% battery, 86% pedal rickshaws unregistered

Says study based on data from 384 drivers, 392 passengers, 63 garage owners across Dhaka

With 97.4 percent of battery-powered rickshaws and 85.94 percent of pedal rickshaws operating outside formal registration systems, rickshaw services in Dhaka remain largely unregulated, according to a recent study.

Battery-powered rickshaws are increasingly attracting younger drivers, with the average age at 38, compared to 42 for pedal rickshaw drivers.

About 75 percent of battery rickshaw drivers are new entrants who had never driven pedal rickshaws before.

The findings were shared at a discussion at the BDBL Building in Karwan Bazar, where INNOVISION Consulting released its study titled "Urban Mobility Study: Rickshaws in Transition."

The research examines the rapid shift from pedal-driven to battery-powered rickshaws in Dhaka.

The study comes amid growing debate over battery-powered rickshaws – popularly known as "Bangla Teslas" – regarding traffic congestion, road safety, informal employment, and regulation.

Recently, Dhaka North and South City Corporations launched a pilot project with Buet-approved battery rickshaws, underscoring the need for evidence-based policy decisions.

INNOVISION Managing Director Rubaiyath Sarwar presented the findings, based on primary data from 384 rickshaw drivers, 392 passengers and 63 garage owners across Dhaka.

According to the study, battery

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Enforce registration, traffic rules
- Set appropriate cap on number of rickshaws
- Improve footpaths, access to public transport
- Tackle roadside obstacles, weak traffic management
- Regulate battery handling, including acid disposal and recycling

'Campus not a male-only space'

Female DU students stage BBQ protest over 5:00pm field entry curbs

Female students of Dhaka University organised a BBQ party at the university's central field last evening to protest an order restricting their entry to the field after 5:00pm.

Organisers said the event was a symbolic act to challenge the restriction and draw attention to concerns over equal access to campus spaces.

They presented five demands to the university authorities.

They demanded an end to harassment and discriminatory restrictions imposed on female students under the pretext of "special security".

They also demanded the immediate reconstitution and activation of the university's Sexual Harassment Prevention Cell.

Their other demands include repairing the non-functional women's toilet at the TSC and ensuring safe, adequate and usable toilet facilities across

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