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Topic: New Gatekeepers: How Audiences are Reshaping Journalism in Bangladesh

Guest Speaker: Masudur Rahman Rana, Special Correspondent, Channel 24

Summary of Key Points

In his discussion, Masudur Rahman Rana, Special Correspondent of Channel 24, explained a major change in modern journalism. He showed how the power of “gatekeeping,” or controlling news, has shifted from editors to audiences. Based on his experience in court reporting, he explained that audiences today are more interested in sensational news such as final verdicts, death sentences, or bail decisions. Audience behavior and demand now strongly influence what news is produced. However, beyond this commercial pressure, he also showed how investigative journalism can give a voice to people who are denied justice.

Critical Analysis

Digital platforms and direct audience participation have changed how news is presented. Audiences are no longer just receivers of news; they are decision-makers. According to Rana, media organizations tend to focus on what audiences want to see. In court reporting, this creates a challenge because people prefer quick outcomes rather than understanding the full legal process.

Media now follows digital footprints like views and engagement. As a result, deep investigative work is often ignored. However, Rana demonstrated that skilled journalists can still find meaningful human stories. For example, he mentioned family cases involving land disputes or even Facebook passwords, showing the strange but real nature of society. In Bangladesh, about one in seven people is involved in land-related cases, which often continue for generations. Solving these issues requires strong investigative work, which is sometimes lost in view-driven journalism.

Personal Reflection and Examples

The stories of “Babul” and “Islam and Mala” deeply affected me. Especially the case where Islam spent 17 years in prison without proper justice shows the power of journalism. It was a rape case, and after 17 years, they were finally allowed to marry through a humane court decision. When the speaker shared the father’s regret and the emotional reunion, it highlighted

the human responsibility of journalism.

As a future journalist, this session changed my perspective. One important lesson was his statement: “A journalist must wake up early in the morning,” which reflects professionalism. I also learned that court journalism is not just about reporting hearings; it requires strong relationships with lawyers and understanding legal terms and patterns. His report during the COVID-19 period about the silence of the Supreme Court taught me that creativity is possible even in difficult situations.

Legal Limitations and Reality

Bangladesh currently has about 4.7 million pending cases, which may reach 7 million in the coming years. Due to a lack of judges, delays in investigation, and political pressure, people suffer in the legal system. Rana clearly stated that no government has been able to reduce this backlog effectively. Journalists must work within these limitations. A good court reporter must understand every stage of a case, from investigation and charge sheet to witness examination and trial.

Conclusion

Although audience demand is reshaping journalism, the importance of ethical journalism remains strong. In fact, in the digital age, the need for investigative journalism has increased. Rana’s experience shows that journalism is not just about sharing information but also about exposing problems in society and the state. In the future, maintaining journalistic independence and addressing legal delays will require stronger media involvement. Protecting people’s rights through ethical journalism should be our main goal.