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Gender inequality bar to better world *Shabana Azmi tells 11th convocation of Brac University*



Indian actress and rights activist Shabana Azmi addresses the 11th convocation of Brac University as the convocation speaker at International Convention City Bashundhara in Dhaka yesterday. Photo: Collected

The world cannot be a better place if gender inequality prevails, said noted Indian actress and rights activist Shabana Azmi yesterday “Violence against women under any condition cannot be acceptable,” she told the 11th convocation of Brac University as the convocation speaker at International Convention City Bashundhara (ICCB) in Dhaka.

Through the convocation, the private university presented 1,283 of its brightest and talented graduates before the country. About the participation of women in development activities, Azmi said, “Our world cannot be a better place if 50 percent of our society is kept away from the fruits of progress.” Terming the culture of this continent patriarchal, she said girls still do not have access to education, health and decision making process in some places.

Femininity and masculinity must be redefined by changing the traditional images, she said, adding that masculinity can even be kindness and femininity the protesting voice for justice.

Azmi also urged the parents to ensure equal opportunities for both girls and boys and inspired the youths to treat men and women equally. Congratulating the graduates, she advised them to

follow their own passion and take responsibility for the society. She quoted India's Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi as saying, "Be the change that you wish to see in the world."

Referring to the contribution of Faraaz Ayaaz Hossain during the Gulshan cafe attack, she urged the youth to stand against any injustice and religious fundamentalism. During the ceremony, smiles and excitement were all around as the graduates celebrated the successful completion of their studies.

At the programme, Brac Founder and Chairperson Sir Fazle Hasan Abed told them, "Individual salvation depends on collective salvation." Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid on behalf of the university Chancellor and President Abdul Hamid, and Chairman of University Grants Commission of Bangladesh Prof Abdul Mannan were also present.

The chancellor's gold medals were given to two students while 29 others received the vice chancellor's gold medals.

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