

'A Golden Age' launched

'The novel to make spirit of liberation war stronger in minds of young generation'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at the launching ceremony of a novel titled 'A Golden Age' by Tahmima Anam yesterday said it is the first novel published in English internationally depicting our liberation war, which will reach an audience the world over.

This novel will make a significant contribution in making the spirit of the liberation war stronger in the minds of the young generation, they said.

Highly praising the novel, the speakers said an English novel on the liberation war of Bangladesh like 'A Golden Age' is rare. The author has been able to capture the contribution of the ordinary people to the war in a very realistic manner.

They also compared Tahmima Anam with award winning novelists such as Monica Ali, Jhumpa Lahiri and Kiran Desai, saying that Bangladesh is proud to have a young and promising writer like her.

Etcetera Bangladesh Ltd., one of the largest chain retail shop in the country, organised the book launching ceremony at its Dhanmondi outlet in the city.

The novel, which was published by John Murray, a famous publishing house of London, has already received huge appreciation from the English press, which hailed the author as a 'voice of real eloquence' and 'major new talent.'

Tahmima Anam's work will make our country known to the world, said Tasmima Hossain, editor of Anannya, a fortnightly

magazine for women.

"This book depicts our liberation war from a woman's perspective," she observed.

"Tahmima has shown that ordinary women also possessed power, vigour and confidence during our liberation war," she added.

"This is for the first time that the liberation war of Bangladesh is depicted worldwide through a fiction and Tahmima Anam has done this great job," she noted.

Prof Shawkat Hossain of English department, Dhaka University, in his comment highly praised the novel.

There are many books based on our liberation war, but this one portrays the war from the perspective of ordinary citizens. The novel is centred around a widow with a young son and a daughter, both of whom became freedom fighters. The novel depicts drama at various levels and is a very interesting reading.

"This novel is one of the best novels on the liberation war," said Habibul Alam Bir Pratik.

In her brief speech, Runi Khan, a cultural activist based in London, focused on the style and quality of the novel. She said readers in London have so far received the book very well.

She also highly praised the writing style of the author, saying that "It is really amazing the way the novel has been written."

Tahmima Anam has made Bangladesh Proud, she added.

"John Murray, the publisher of the novel, has published a number of novels after 'A Golden Age', but none got much popularity and publicity like 'A Golden Age'," Runi Khan said.

About Tahmima, her father Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said, "Tahmima more or less stayed in Bangladesh only for four years of her life. But as she matured, she became intellectually inclined to this land, to this culture, to this people and to this heritage. And that to me as a father is my biggest satisfaction -- to see my daughter become a part of this heritage, and be so proud of it."

Shaheen Anam, mother of Tahmima, revealed the background of the novel, saying, "It's totally a fiction but based on some real events and real people."

Tahmima has written the story of our liberation war and the whole world will now come to know about it, she said, adding that her book is being translated in seven or eight languages and that more publishers are showing interest in translating it.

"Tahmima has written the story of our generation, this is not only our pride, it's the pride of all freedom fighters and the people in general," she said.

Musleha Islam, maternal grandmother of Tahmima, unveiled the cover of the book while Literary Editor of The Daily Star Khademul Islam conducted the book launching ceremony.



Musleha Islam, maternal grandmother of Tahmima Anam, launches a novel titled 'A Golden Age' by Tahmima at the Dhanmondi outlet of Etcetera in the city yesterday. Standing from left are Shoma Zahid, Shaheen Anam, Habibul Alam Bir Pratik, Prof Shawkat Hossain, Tasmima Hossain and Runi Khan.

Take steps to preserve wetlands

Speakers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a press briefing yesterday urged the government to take necessary steps to preserve wetlands and coastal areas of the country for the sake of ecology.

They underscored the need to formulate a national policy on use and protection of wetlands.

"We have necessary laws. If we just implement them, we can protect the wetland," said Dhaka University Prof Anwarul Islam, an eminent biodiversity expert of the country.

They were speaking at the launching ceremony of a book titled 'Number and distribution of water-birds and wetlands in the Asia-Pacific region' that contains census results of Asian water birds since 2002 to 2004.

Recently published from Wetland International, Malaysia, the book was edited by Li Zuo Wei and Taej Mundkur. Enam Ul Haq, eminent birder of the country, led the census team of Bangladesh part.

The speakers said pressure on wetland has been increasing day by day due to over population.

They also said people have been extracting resources from wetlands, including canals, lakes, springs, haors and ponds and also from coastal zone in an unplanned way. Therefore, aquatic food chains for aquatic species and water bodies are being destroyed due to over extraction and pollution, they added.

Citing Sonadia, one of the ecologically critical area, as an example, the speakers said Sonadia is in danger as a deep seaport is going to be built there. But Sonadia is the birding place of 'Spoon billed Sandpiper', a very endangered bird of the world.

However, the speakers said the government is already work-

ing to protect the biodiversity of Sonadia with the fund from Global Environment Facilities of UNDP.

At present there are only 19 'Important Bird Area's, which cover less than 10 percent wetland of the country. The speakers demanded that the government should increase the number of Important Bird Area.

Mahbubul Alam, former adviser to the caretaker government and editor of the Independent, Prof

AFM Yusuf Haider, pro-vice chancellor of Dhaka University and eminent bird expert Prof Kazi Zaker Hossain also spoke on the occasion.

Enayetullah Khan, president of Bangladesh Wildlife Trust and chief editor of UNB, presided over the session.

'Increase budget for people with disability'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pratibandhi Kallayan Society (PKS) in a statement yesterday urged the government to increase budget allocation for development of the physically challenged people.

It recommended increasing monthly government allowance from Tk 200 to Tk 500 for the physically challenged people and to double the number of beneficiary.

Saying that there are around 1.40 crore disabled people in the country, the statement signed by PKS Chairman Anwar Hossain Hazari also recommended providing stipend of Tk 500 to the physically challenged students to ensure their education and create scope of their study to the government schools, colleges and universities.

It also recommended allocation of Tk 20,000 annually to Union Parishad to purchase apparatuses essential for movement of the students with disability.

BRRI develops two new hybrid varieties of rice

UNB, Gazipur

Scientists of Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) have developed two more hybrid varieties of rice suitable for Boro season.

Production from such hybrid varieties is one ton higher per hectare than any other popular variety. The growth duration is 35 days while the quality of the varieties is also good.

This was disclosed at a function marking the Field Day at a research plot of BRRI yesterday.

Guests, scientists and delegates went round different research

plots and expressed their satisfaction at the progress of hybrid rice research programme.

Experts hoped that the newly developed varieties of rice, yet to be named, would help meet the food demand of growing population if they are cultivated.

BRRI Director General Dr Mohammad Nur-e-Elahi said research activities should be further updated and strengthened to continue the success of technological invention.

BRRI first developed a hybrid variety of rice in 2001. So far, BRRI developed 47 high yielding varieties of rice.