Monsoonletters: Literature beyond boundaries

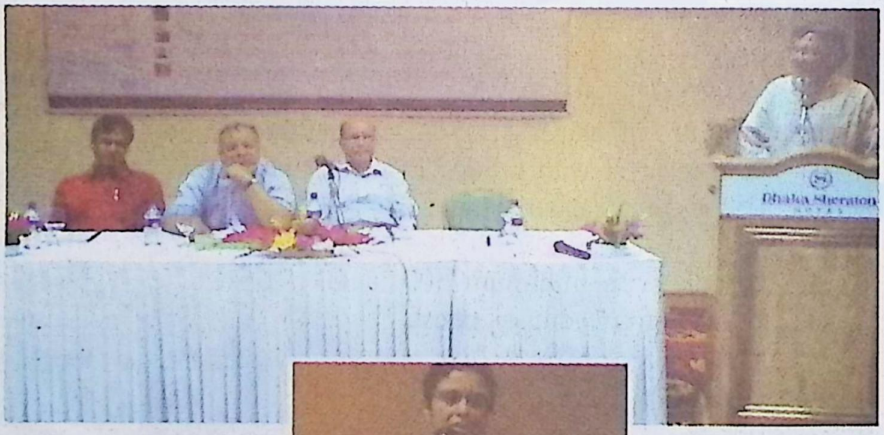
G. Sumdany Don and Saushan Rahman

MONSOONLETTERS.com is the first website of Bangladesh dedicated to Bangladeshi writers who write in English. It was launched at Hotel Sheraton on June 7, 2007.Prominent writers, media personalities and a group of new and talented young writers attended the ceremony.

The evening was inaugurated by the founder of the site, Ms. Rubana Ahmed, who demonstrated the features and functions of the site to the guests. On the guest list, the chief guest was Bishwa Shahitto Kendro's Abdullah Abu Sayeed. Other writers, including, Syed Manzoorul Islam, Professor Niaz Zaman, Poet Kaiser Haq, Dr Fakrul Alam, Dr. Karunamaya Goswami, Star Literature editor Khademul Islam, Tahmima Anam, Abeer Hoque, Nuzhat Mannan and Mahmud Rahman were present. Moreover, all of these writers are included in the writer's section of the website.

Rubana Ahmed explained that the website, Monsoonletters.com, a name given by Poet Kaiser Haq, contains biographies, bibliographies, critical reviews, prizes, events, newsletters and every possible data of the prominent writers of Bangladesh. The authors can be located by name, genre, gender, publisher, book title, date of publication, prize name and date. Moreover, this interactive base offers an opportunity to the writers to register, enter and edit their own data, join a discussion forum, scan, add or upload their book, articles, reviews, etc. In a nutshell one can say that Monsoon Letters is a site both for the reader and the author. It is interactive and it does allow complete space and privacy to the author.

The founder of the site is Rubana Ahmed. She was engaged in the corporate world, heading an export oriented readymade garments unit as the managing director for 20 years. Currently pursuing her PhD in Jadavpur University, she came up with the thought that unlike the Indians, the Bangladeshi writers do not have a platform where their writings will be stored. It is very important for young aspiring writers, students and other interested people to read and follow the writings of these prominent writers in order to learn and grow as writers. But there is no single website that has an archive, and can store, share and disseminate information on English Literature in Bangladesh.





However, one notable aspect about the website is that it has a section titled 'New Monsooners.' Here, a group of new and young writers have been selected out of hundreds and their particulars have been posted on the website. Rubana Ahmed believes that youth is the most important factor of all. It is the youth who should be encouraged to write because they are the future. However, they need a solid platform where they can post their writings, learn from a large collection from the writings of others, face critics and improve everyday. Monsoon Letters has promised to give this opportunity to the youth.

G. Sumdany Don, one of the members of the Monsoonletters family, introduced the site to the social networking website Facebook. There he created a group titled, "Young Bangladeshi Writers' Club." The club instantly gained popularity and within 15 days, 400 Young Bangladeshi writers joined the club. The club members are Bangladeshi both from home and abroad and currently there are 130 posted writings.

Poet Kaiser Haq said the reason why he has given the site the name 'Monsoon Letters' is the significance of monsoon in our Bangladeshi heritage. He also raised the question of the use of the English language. He believes that there is nothing wrong in writing in English. The language is present here in Bangladesh. Though 99% of our expressions are in Bengali, but English is very important in this day and age of globalization. However, he was very satisfied that the young ones are motivated to write and contribute to the site.

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