

Libraries

Libraries, their numbers and types, are usually regarded as standard bearers of a nation's advancement or commitment to learning. Only a slim percentage of the total population in this country is literate at best and even fewer people are educated well enough to read whole books. The need for setting up more libraries therefore becomes limited somewhat automatically by these factors. The passion for reading books is a secondary pursuit, much below other considerations to which greater priorities are attached. These were the conclusions of a reliable survey taken recently on the reading habits of educated people in Bangladesh.

While just quantitative library multiplication to meet public demands may not be very important—at least at this stage—there is of course a big need for qualitative expansion. For career students and other professional people, we ought to have more libraries to sustain their demands for specialized information. There exists a big dearth of library facilities for people who seek specific information about vocations, products, processes and similar other things.

The news that a National Science Library will be set up soon should be especially welcome in the sense that it will fulfil a big requirement of science students and technologists. The library will start functioning at the Science Laboratory premises right away, and during the current interim two year plan period, Taka 40 lakhs have been earmarked for procurement of books and journals. This library will gradually shift to its own premises to be constructed in stages during the Second Five Year Plan. Ultimately, the target has been set for acquisition of one million pieces of reference books. Moreover, the proposed Science Library is expected to perform the dual role of a central depository for lending purposes while simultaneously running documentation and information services for the entire country.

Greater application of science has been advocated as one way of overcoming the extremes of underdevelopment and poverty. The dissemination of scientific ideas in our country was never satisfactory and insufficiency of science-oriented literature is probably the major cause of this. When the national science library becomes fully operational, there are reasons to be hopeful that the centre will contribute towards the development of science education.