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Proper steps needed to upgrade library facilities in country

By DU Correspondent

Speakers at a seminar yesterday underscored the need for proper steps on national priority basis to establish libraries across the country including the educational institutions to ensure quality education, saying "the library system in the country still presents a poor picture and its rather passing through a traditional stage."

While addressing the seminar on "Development of Libraries in Bangladesh: A Study of the Historical Route," held at the Lecture Theatre of Dhaka University, the speakers also pointed out that the libraries in Bangladesh operating more or less under a chain of network, but the essential characteristics of library service have not developed that much from the point of view of the number of libraries, skilled manpower, systematic operation, modern technological facilities, utility orientation of the system and even from the Estimated Potential Users Population (EPUM).

The keynote paper on the topic was presented by Dr S M Mannan and Suraiya Begum, teacher of the Department of Library and Information Science of the university.

The speakers also delivered a brief of the historical scenario of libraries in the country during the pre-liberation and post-liberation periods.

According to the keynote paper, "it is true that library can play an important role to influence the development of the character of the students but unfortunately, in our country schools do not have any worth mentioning libraries. In fact there are no libraries in any primary schools and no attempt has been made to establish libraries in primary schools in any development programme."

"The Commission on national education observed that 'Library is the heart of the school,' but the government paid very little attention to the development of libraries in schools in Bangladesh," the keynote paper added.

Quoting a survey, the keynote speakers said, "the government colleges have some kind of libraries and the non-government colleges, except a few, have no libraries at all. They have libraries only in records, which is required for the purpose of affiliation of the college."

Expressing dissatisfaction they said, 95 per cent of the colleges in the country do not have any separate library building, have no reading room facilities, do not have sufficient furniture or equipments. There is no proper supply of books and most of the books the colleges

have are out dated, or obsolete.

Of 230 government colleges only 17 have qualified professional librarians and the rest college libraries are run by librarians who are not professionals and the condition is same in case of non-government colleges, they said.

"The establishment of the Department of Public Libraries by the government with its all inadequacies is a proper step in the direction and with this effort, at least a sustainable framework of public library service up to district level has been established. Now it depends of the concerned authorities and the professionals to follow up and make a public library service in the truest sense of the term for the country," Suraiya Begum said.

Organised by the Centre for Advanced Research in Humanities (CARH), the programme was presided over by Prof Nasir Uddin Ahmed.

AFM Badiur Rahman discussed on the topic while a number of students, educationists including the Pro Vice Chancellor of the university Prof Sahadat Ali, Dr Fazlul Alam, librarian, planning and development of DU Central Library were also present at the programme.