

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Service oriented information centres

I read with interest the above captioned article of Mr. Alauddin Talukder published in your issue of the 4th January, 1981. Mr. Talukder has perhaps hit to the point with a fair amount of accuracy. His concluding sentence seems to be right which says: "And

if a public library is not useful to the public in general, then there is no point of establishing it and calling it a 'Public Library'. I agree with him about the 'Service Oriented Information Centres' (SOK) as a prelude to the library system, and his remarks on the "Bangladesh Public Library Survey" on 176 libraries which reads: 'It does not give the background history of the establishment of these libraries — why, how, for whom and under what circumstances these libraries were estab-

lished could not be revealed by the survey... If the same environment, socio-economic, political and educational backgrounds do not exist or not likely to return in the near future, then I think, establishing the new libraries and replenishing the old ones may prove wastage of efforts and resources".

The hopeful picture in the draft Five-Year Plan, 1980-85 as indicated by Mr. Talukder in his article may not be that hopeful. It has become a tradition to in-

clude 'something' promising in the Five-Year Plans for the development of libraries in the country, without any assurance of keeping the promise. A 'Library Legislation' may perhaps be useful in this respect. It is also perhaps not fair that the vast majority of the 'non-reading communities' should pay for the 'special groups of reading communities' in cities and towns. But my point is — is it the way how libraries developed in the past, not only in the Western countries but through-

out the world? Again, under the changed socio-economic conditions is it possible to establish a network of library services in the country, beginning not with libraries, but with some thing else, such as Mr. Talukder's concept of Service Oriented Information Centres? Public libraries, though meant for all are not used by all. Even in the highly literate and reading communities of the world like the United Kingdom, only about 30% of the total population use the public libraries.

I think, therefore, it is a very interesting debating issue, and suggest that the topic be brought to the notice of the authorities concerned for national debate being held and televised, to find out what our youngsters think about it.

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