

Move under way to build strong public library system: PM

Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha Dhaka

PRIME minister Sheikh Hasina on Wednesday said initiatives were underway to strengthen the public library system apart from setting up public libraries at upazila level.

'Digitalisation of the national public library's preservation system is going on. It will help the researcher and enhance professional standard of the librarians,' she said.

She was speaking as the chief guest at the inauguration of the two-day National Convention and the International Seminar 2012 of the librarians at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the capital.

Cultural affairs minister Abul Kalam Azad was the special guest of the programme organised by the Library Association of Bangladesh.

With LAB acting presi-

dent Dilara Begum in the chair, the function was addressed by its vice-president Kazi Abdul Mazed, secretary general Mizanur Rahman and research and publication secretary Nafiz Zaman Shubho.

The prime minister called on the well-off and organisations to make contribution to setting up more libraries in different parts of the country.

'Supplement the government initiatives for enriching Bangladesh in knowledge and science by investing a portion of money you have earned,' she said.

Sheikh Hasina described her government's programmes to develop the country's library system and its infrastructure.

'Initiatives have been taken up to digitise the libraries to meet demand of the knowledge-thirsty people. Own buildings have been constructed for the government public libraries in li-

besides such libraries have been built in 45 districts. Modernisation of the Central Library of Dhaka University is also going on,' she said. 'Now the readers will get online service from here.'

To cater the information need of the visually-impaired people, blind centres have also been opened in these libraries, the prime minister added.

Posts of 18,000 librarians have been created at the non-government secondary schools and equivalent institutions, she said, also mentioning that her government had a time-befitting education policy that had incorporated the issue of developing the library system.

'The policy puts emphasis on building a rich library in every educational institution. Sheikh Hasina also stressed the enhancement of professionalism in li-

brary management for better preservation of invaluable literary documents of the country's history and heritage and also that of the communities who came here in different periods of history.

'There are invaluable elements in our folk literature and you will have to come forward to preserve these,' she told the librarian community.

She said books and the librarians have an immense role to play to turn the country's huge population to knowledge-rich human resources.

The librarians are the carriers of these very old organisations which are the repository of knowledge,' she said.

Libraries are the meeting place of books, writers and readers as well as the mirror of civilisation and the centre of practice of cultures. 'Friendship, harmony and leadership quality are built centring the libraries,' she

said, and mentioned that the Awami League-led government during its last tenure of 1996-2001 set up more than a thousand libraries across the country.

'But most of them were closed due to negligence of the subsequent BNP-Jamaat alliance government,' she said.

She also blamed the last BNP-Jamaat rule for not implementing the library policy framed by her government during its last tenure.

'This time initiatives have been taken up to update the library policy. We have also established 2000 mosque-based libraries across the country and distributed new books to 5000 to them,' she said.

'Getting information is the people's fundamental right and one main element of modern life.'

To that end, Sheikh Hasina said, the librarians had a crucial role to play to build Digital Bangladesh.