Nurturing the Torchbearers

'Alor Ishkool' (The School of Light) is Bishwo Shahitto Kendro's latest endeavour to creat the intellectuals of tomorrow

TAMANNA KHAN



PHOTOS: PRABIR DAS

The new cultural building of Bishwo Shahitto Kendro.



A recitation class inside the new building.

Some changes occur through a 'Big Bang', others happen gradually over time and in human societies such changes come through an alternation and widening of perception. Knowledge is the main weapon of a societal movement. For 34 years, Bishwo Shahitto Kendro (BSK), through its reading circles, library and mobile libraries, book and cultural programmes and publications, has been leading this movement with the motto 'Alokito Manush Chai' (We want enlightened individuals).

According to BSK, 'the enlightened individuals' is one with the heart of a renaissance revolutionary, enriched through ages of knowledge and realisations. This person will not be one amongst the crowd, floating in the tide of robotic and materialistic life, rather s/he will show interest, curiosity and inquisitiveness; have a thirst for knowledge and beauty — a big hearted and multi-dimensional personality.

Sitting at his modestly decorated office of BKS's newly constructed nine-storied cultural building, its founder and chairman, Magsaysay Award winner, Professor Abdullah Abu Sayeed presents his vision for developing such spirits. He says that for the last 34 years, through the different programmes, BSK has created the base for enlightened leaders, who will carry this movement forward. "A 2000-mile Himalayan range is needed to support the Mount Everest," he says, "Currently we have a million (participants of BSK programmes across the country) which may soon exceed three million. Now is the time to build the peak. We now need torchbearers who will directly lead this movement."

Prof Sayeed adds that it is time to develop leaders who will be knowledgeable, have high moral and human values and good aesthetic sense. "They will be introduced to the most significant happenings of human civilisation - be it culture, philosophy, science or world history and they will develop through this process of introduction." Prof Sayeed, therefore, plans to develop such leaders in an organised way through 'Alor Ishkool'.

It is a five-year-long programme in which about 100 courses on subjects as varied as world music, dance, paintings, sculpture, architecture, film, world history, religion, science, philosophy, sociology, economics, politics, psychology, education and environment will be offered. People from all walks of life above the age of 18 can participate in this programme.

The courses are broadly divided into study-related, lecture and discussion related and observation and travel related categories. For instance, world history and world literature will require studies, courses on physics and philosophy will be conducted through lectures and discussions while courses on film, drama, music or art exhibition will depend more on group travels and discussions. The duration of a particular course will depend on its nature; starting from two months to a year.

About 13 courses will be offered in a cycle every six months. In the first phase, BKS is offering 15 new courses starting from April 2013. These are