



A SCHOOLGIRL applies an archival technique to preserve her document as other students observe her.—White Star

Children learn ways to preserve historical records

By Peerzada Salman

KARACHI, May 25: Schoolchildren took a keen interest in the second public outreach programme at the Karachi e-Library, the KMC building, organised by Heritage Foundation and the Consulate-General of the Federal Republic of Germany on Wednesday.

Distinguished archivist Lutfullah Khan was the chief guest.

The day began with a photo exhibition, which included images of known Karachi landmarks like the High Court, Edward House and Commissioner's Office. Then the students (representing three different schools of the city from Golimar, Sharea Faisal and North Karachi) were briefed about the various methods of protecting and preserving historical records. They also cleaned the documents they'd brought along and put them through the repair process. After that conservation experts and enthusiasts informed the schoolchildren about the importance of conserving historical material.

Architect and conservationist Yasmeen Lari told the young boys and girls about the historicity and a couple of architectural attributes of the KMC

building where the event had been organised. She said they'd gathered to preserve heritage, an opportunity that not everyone had. She said the stone-made buildings and similar old stuff were like a rainbow, which had different shades and colours. She argued that if Karachi was to become the city of peace, children had to play an important role. She said culture and heritage were our strong points. "We must protect our identity," she added.

Introducing Lutfullah Khan to the schoolchildren, she said he was doing a great job because he's saving intangible heritage which was a far more difficult undertaking than protecting tangible heritage.

Lutfullah Khan in his speech said he was a 95-year-old man and was still working hard to preserve heritage. He said if one was to succeed in such a pursuit, one must work with steadfastness (istaqlal). He said he was born in Madras (present-day Chennai) and came to Pakistan in 1947. He then shared his memories of the KMC building with the children. He said he's fond of remembering things of the past and

collecting vintage stuff. He said every man had the ability to preserve the things that he liked but not many did that. He urged the schoolchildren that they could achieve anything in life if they had conviction, but for that to happen they must know what they're aiming for. He told the students that he had a variety of collections ranging from a host of photographs, rare objects, stamps etc, but what he loved the most was his archival collection of voices.

He said it was in June 1951 that he started to record voices (of renowned people). He said that no one in the world (those parts of the globe where Urdu is spoken and understood) had more material of historic import than he had.

Ali R. Akhtar of the German Consulate and journalist Shahnaz Ramzi also spoke.

Once the speeches were over, schoolchildren put a few questions to Lutfullah Khan to which he responded well.

In the end, the participants of the programme were taken to a tour of the Karachi Municipal Records.