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‘Libraries still relevant despite digital, social media challenges’

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KUALA LUMPUR: The role of the libraries in Malaysia is still relevant and continues to develop rapidly despite the challenges of digital information and social media, said National Library of Malaysia (PNM) director-general, Datuk Nafisah Ahmad.

She said to date, there are 13,719 libraries nationwide comprising PNM’s, 10,180 school resource centres, 1,111 rural libraries, 950 special libraries, 452 academic libraries, 336 public state libraries, 286 Kemas resource centres, 243 Medan Info Desa, 98

International School resource centres, 58 Mara Science College resource centres and four community libraries.

“This progress shows that the function of libraries will still be relevant if it can transform to meet the information needs among society.

“PNM also in the process of expanding the development of the ‘Ubiquitous Library or known as u-Pustaka as a national information hub to create knowledge based through the use of digital library services in the society,” she said in her opening speech at the Presidential Talk ‘Libraries: Motors of Change’ held at Tun Mohamed Suffian Auditorium, Law Faculty University of Malaya here yesterday.

The talk was given by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) President, Gloria Perez-Salmeron in conjunction with the 84th IFLA World Library and Information Congress (WLIC) which will take place from Aug 24-30 this year at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre.

Nafisah said the u-Pustaka project consists of new development of the Malaysia National Union Catalogue with new features, digital content repository system that allows storage and management of digital content.

“Another four libraries (u-Pustaka) will be expanded in Melaka, Terengganu, Perlis and the Kedah State Public Library, making the total participating libraries from eight to 12 libraries. With that expansion, the sharing of digital content will be further enhanced by making it accessible anytime, anywhere by anyone,” she said.

Meanwhile, Gloria said it is a huge challenge being in the library field as the information services continuously change by the advent of modern technologies as well as the digital era.

“We (library services) have to keep updated about everything. We need to analyse whom we are serving and focusing on the way we serve the information and providing them as well as to be the most relevant sources,” she told Bernama after the talk.

Gloria who is on an official visit to Malaysia said the congress will be the most prestigious international conference for librarians, and give Malaysia the opportunity to showcase the services and facilities that its libraries have to offer and share best practices in librarianship, information management and communications technology (ICT).

Malaysia is the third country among the Asean member states to host the IFLA WLIC after Thailand in 1999 and Singapore in 2013.

The congress is expected to attract 4,000 delegates from more than 100 countries and generate RM44.4million as this is a prestigious international professional and trade event for the library and information services sector. — Bernama