

PM opens 150MW power plant in Sirajganj

UNB, Sirajganj

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday inaugurated a 150 megawatt (MW) power plant at Soyadabad in Sirajganj aimed at reducing shortage of power supply in the country's northern region.

Earlier on April 9 last year, she laid the foundation stone of the plant, situated on the western side of Bangabandhu Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge.

The plant, dependent on dual fuel like gas and diesel, started production on trial basis in October last year.

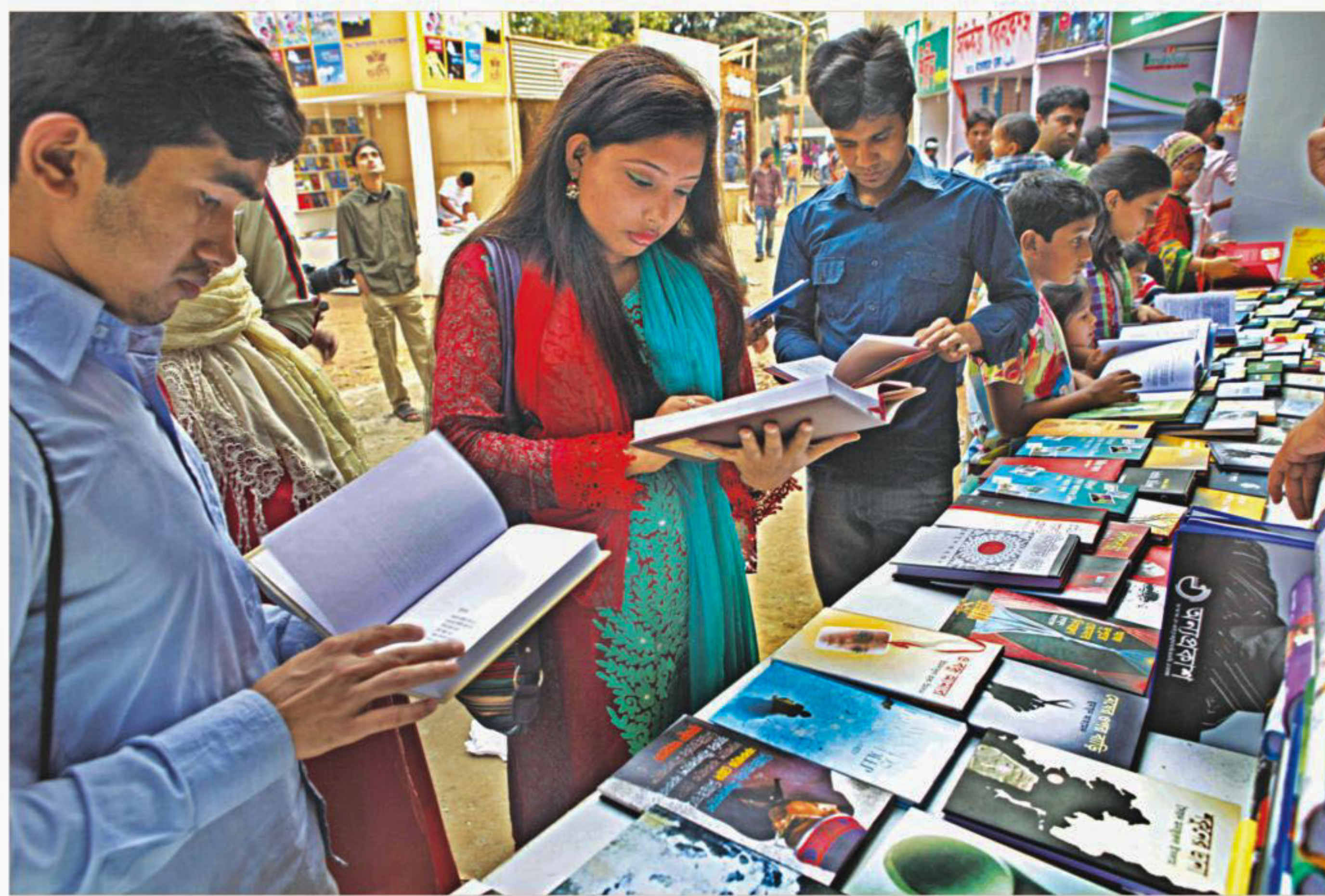
A process is now on to turn the power plant into a combined cycle from simple cycle, officials said.

After completion of the process, about 75 MW more electricity will be produced, using same energy, raising its production capacity to 225MW, they said.

With cost of Tk 800 crore, North-West Power Generation Company (NWPGC) implemented the project on 10 acres of land.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister also laid the foundation stone of upgradation of 150 MW TO2-225 Combined Cycle Power Plant to be set up at Sirajganj Sadar.

Textiles and Jute Minister Abdul Latif Siddique, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdul Latif Biswas, and Health Minister Dr AFM Ruhul Haque, among others, were present on the occasion.



Visitors at a stall on the second day of the month long Amar Ekushey Boi Mela at Bangla Academy in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

JRC MEET ON TIPAI ENDS Dhaka wants more info

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh sought more information on seismic activities, sedimentation records and meteorological data from India at the end of the second meeting of Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) in the capital yesterday.

During the two-day meeting, the Bangladesh-India joint sub group on the proposed Tipaimukh Hydroelectric Project on the Barak river in India discussed the project's aspects and impacts on Bangladesh and made a few technical suggestions.

Two reports on the project were presented by the Center for Environmental and Geographic Information Services, and Institute of Water Modelling, two consultant firms engaged by Bangladesh.

"The delegations discussed technical aspects of the reports. India did not have any objection but suggested some minor corrections," said one Bangladeshi expert present at the meeting, requesting anonymity.

The Indian experts suggested Bangladesh to use the term "hazard management" instead of "dam break analysis" in the reports.

Discussions on the reports' technical aspects, including hydrodynamics, hydrogeology, fisheries, navigation, livelihoods and ecosystems, were held.

The Bangladeshi experts also appreciated the Detailed Project Report and Environmental Impact Assessment Report, two reports on the Tipaimukh location India gave Bangladesh last year.

JRC Member Mir Sazzad Hossain led the Bangladesh side, which includes Mashfee Binte Shams, director general (South Asia), Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Indian delegation was led by NK Mathur, commissioner (Ganga), Ministry of Water Resources.

JRC's next meeting would be held in India at a convenient time, says a press release.

Ban on 'painful' medical tests for rape proof sought

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There is an urgent need to change the existing procedures of collecting medical evidence in rape cases, which further victimise survivors and inhibit justice, speakers said at a conference yesterday.

They demanded changing the definition of rape, amending the Evidence Act, 1872 banning the "two-finger test", and placing more stress on DNA tests.

Around 100 doctors, lawyers, policymakers, police officials, social service providers, and civil society members participated in the daylong conference at the capital's ICDDR,B, organised by Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST).

State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Dr Shirin Sharmin

Chaudhury said, "Rape is not simply a human rights violation, it's a criminal offence and must be treated as such."

She said her ministry would take the conference's recommendations into consideration and work towards bringing the required changes.

The speakers highlighted the problematic use of the two-finger test to determine whether a woman, who is allegedly raped, is habituated to sex and whether her hymen is broken.

A survivor's sexual past can, in no way, be relevant to the justice process, said Barrister Sara Hossain, honorary executive director of BLAST.

The test is painful, traumatic and invasive for rape survivors, said Fatema Suvra, lecturer of Jagannath University, and when done without

informed consent, it could itself constitute sexual assault.

According to Dr Habibuzzaman Choudhury, head of the forensic medicine department at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College, the two-finger test has no evidentiary value and scientific merits. It violates national and international human rights standards, he said.

The speakers said the definition of rape must be changed to include marital rape and other forms of sexual violence alongside penetrative sex.

Ayesha Khanam, president of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, said not only the women and children affairs ministry, but other relevant ministries like health, law, home and education ministries should be sent copies of the recommendations.

BNP's hartal in Rajshahi city tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Declaring to observe a dawn-to-dusk hartal in Rajshahi city tomorrow for the release of its leaders, the city unit BNP yesterday barricaded Talaimari and Keshabpur Bypass points for an hour yesterday.

BNP Joint Secretary General Mizanur Rahman Minu led a procession from Bhadra area and reached Talaimari around 11:00am, demanding release of BNP Acting Secretary General Mirza Fakrul Islam Alamgir and Self-Reliance Affairs Secretary Ruhul Kuddus Talukhdar Dulu.

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Set quota for Dalit students Public universities urged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday urged the government to set a quota for Dalit students in public universities to ensure their higher studies.

Further education can ensure that the Dalit communities are educated about their rights and know how to get them, speakers added.

The seminar titled "Legal Support to Realise the Civil Rights of Dalits as a Marginalised Community" was jointly organised by National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and Law Commission at Nawab Chowdhury Senate Bhaban in Dhaka University (DU).

Jahangirnagar University already has a quota of five seats reserved for Dalit students, said Prof Mezba Kamal of DU, adding that more public universities should set a similar quota.

DU Vice-Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique said DU will also reserve a quota for Dalit students from next year.

The government should ensure proper implementation of laws in schools, colleges, offices and in every social sector to end discrimination against Dalits, said Prof Farzana Islam of Jahangirnagar University.

NHRC Chairman Mizanur Rahman also spoke.

Padma bridge with own fund unrealistic BNP leader tells BBC Sanglap

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan believes that the construction of Padma Bridge is possible with local finance, BNP leader Lt Gen (ret) Mahbubur Rahman terms it unrealistic.

Their views came at BBC Bangladesh Sanglap, a programme where ordinary citizens directly interact with political leaders and policymakers on contemporary issues, in the capital's Biam auditorium yesterday.

Journalist leader Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury told the discussion that the government is bound to construct the bridge anyhow. Dhaka University Professor Tajmeri SA Islam, however, said people do not have confidence in such an idea of the government.

On Thursday, the government withdrew its request to the World Bank loan for the Padma bridge and said it will implement the project by its own fund if other donors do not come up with funds.

When a participant asked, "Is the government decision to self-finance the bridge realistic?" Mahbubur Rahman said, "I don't think that it is a realistic decision. It will put a huge pressure on economy."

Shahjahan Khan said, "If railway facility is dropped off the bridge design, the cost will decrease massively. Why will we not be able to construct the bridge then?"

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