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## Agrani Bank

## Board discusses mass transfer, other issues

By Staff Correspondent

The Agrani Bank board of directors at a meeting, yesterday, discussed the latest situation in the bank over the mass transfer of officials and subsequent submission of resignation by its managing director, according to sources.

Some members of the board criticised the mass transfer order and observed that this may create disorder in the bank.

The issue was also raised at the press conference of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on her arrival from London. Responding to a query the prime minister told the journalists that the MD had done it because he has decided to join a private bank.

The managing director of the bank Nazmul Haq issued a transfer order of 76 officials in the first week of this month. He later stayed the order allegedly following pressure from governments high-ups.

The MD also tendered his resignation, reportedly protesting the government's interference. He, however, denied the report and said that the resignation was on personal grounds.

The sources said, although the issue was not in the agenda of the meeting the members of the board raised the matter while discussing the overall situation of the bank.

The managing director of the bank Nazmul Haq gave a statement at the meeting regarding the transfer of 76 high officials of the bank, according to a meeting source.

The MD in his statement said that the transfer order was necessary in the greater interest of the bank.

Responding to the MD's statement a board member said that the MD had identified the real problem in the bank and he could solve those. But as he tendered his resignation it is now the responsibility of the ministry of finance to take decision about it, a director said.

Now the board can not do anything about the matter, he observed. The bank's chairman Matur Rahman presided over the meeting and five of the seven directors were present.

## Amartya Sen calls for early Indo-Pak talks

SANTINIKETAN, West Bengal, July 15: Nobel laureate Prof Amartya Sen today called for early talks between India and Pakistan to defuse tension along the Kashmir border, reports PTI.

Terming as "unfortunate and sad" the loss of lives in Kargil, Sen told newsmen here that how the intruders got access into Indian territory should be looked into.

Referring to future Indo-Pak relations, the eminent economist said it would all depend on further developments in Kashmir. Even Western countries had the same perception, he noted.

## Hasina: Plots

From Page 1

ments, Hasina said, "It should be done." But she apprehended that most of the documents concerned might have been destroyed by the time.

When asked if the allotment of plots under past governments in violation of rules could be cancelled, she said "That is not possible now. But their names can be revealed."

**MIG Purchase**  
The Prime Minister, responding to questions about the purchase of MIG-29s, firmly defended the purchase and said it was a state-to-state deal and there was no room for commission business.

"No body could purchase such items at such a less price. There is example of purchase of two war planes with the price of three in the past," she said.

Hasina termed the armed forces a symbol of national independence and sovereignty and said all defence hardware needed for them have to be procured.

She said that Bangladesh first approached the United States for procuring F-16 but they "did not want to give those. Besides, it would cost us more to purchase those (F-16). We have purchased from Russia and we will buy from China also as it costs less."

In reply to a question on US State Department reaction on the purchase of MIG-29s, she said: "They (The US) cannot suggest what we should buy. We are a sovereign country."

She said that the Awami League government after independence had purchased MIG-21s and after a long time "we have purchased MIG-29s."

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## Encroachers damaging Mirpur flood protection dam

By Shehab Ahmed

The city flood protection embankment at Mirpur along the river Turag is facing threats due to encroachments and movement of trucks as the river swells with the monsoon rains and rise of the Shitalakhya which is linked with the Meghna and the Brahmaputra.

Encroachers have raised slums, bazars and trading spots for building materials including gravels, chips, bricks and sand on some parts of the embankment. During last year's flood, the embankment kept the Turag waters from submerging Mirpur area but it may give in if there is a similar flood this year.

Starting from Mirpur

bridge, the embankment is occupied by sellers of brick, earth, chips and illegally brought logs and saplings from the Sundarbans.

Trucks move to and from the embankment gnawing at the top oil, which make it vulnerable to rainfall.

A little further, the embankment suddenly ends at a bazar that grew up as an extension of Mirpur Pura Bazar.

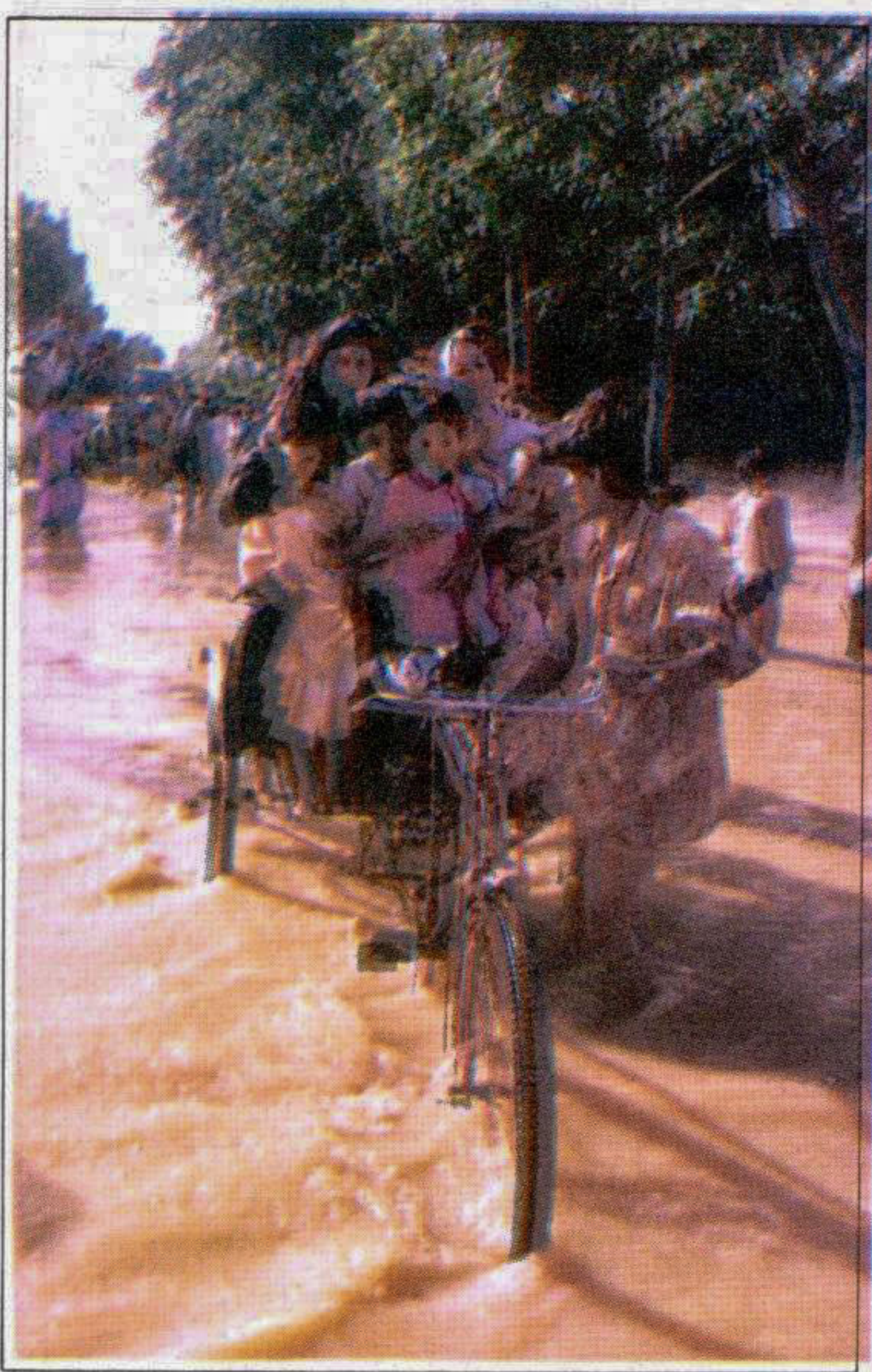
Slum dwellers have virtually taken over both sides of the embankment at Zahanabad further down.

Travelling by a boat in the Turag along the embankment, this correspondent saw slums on it.

At Diabari, a rickshaw garage, a landing yard for cargo vessels carrying sand, earth, chips and logs and a truck stand are causing damage to the embankment.

"This time if there is a flood like that of last year, the Turag would simply tear it apart", said boatman Hannan who took this correspondent and photojournalist Anisur Rahman to the vulnerable spots of the embankment.

Meanwhile, the Turag is still under its danger level. A pump house at Zahanabad was seen pumping out rain water from the southern side of the embankment into the Turag on the northern side.



Wet and painful

People fleeing their homes for dry places. The breach in the Gumti embankment has submerged the adjoining area.

— Star photo

## BNP plans to overcome 'internal weakness' first

By Rezaul Karim

BNP is giving top priority to strengthening the organisation ahead of the upcoming city corporation and upazila polls and preparing for launching its planned one-point movement to topple the Awami League government.

"Though we are on the streets launching an anti-government movement, we have given special emphasis on organisational matters and taken effective steps to overcome all organisational weaknesses", a top BNP leader told The Daily Star yesterday.

The leader said party chief Begum Zia has taken initiative to strengthen party activities from village to district levels to prepare for election and to expedite the anti-government movement.

The BNP Chairperson and other policy makers are holding meetings with district committees and discussing with local leaders the party's organisational matters and activities, participation in upazila polls and the current anti-government movement, he said.

Begum Zia is meeting only those district committees which have full-fledged units and those formed in 1997. The meetings started on July 9 and in the first phase, she will meet 10 committees. The meetings will resume after the party's July 25-27 road march programme, he said.

Out of BNP's 76 organisational district units, only 37 have full-fledged committees, 24 have convening committees and tenure of 15 committees have expired.

A Joint Secretary General of the party said the central committee, on instruction from the party chief, has dissolved a number of district committees whose tenure expired, and formed convening committee. He said the party chief has instructed the Secretary General to take necessary steps for formation of new committees in

those organisational districts by September. The districts include Rajshahi, Narayanganj, Sherpur, Madaripur, Lalmonirhat and Manishganj.

He said Begum Zia's on-going meetings only with the full-fledged district units have yielded a positive result as leaders of more than 30 organisational districts have sought date from the central office for holding councils.

Leaders in 25 organisational districts have now taken preparations for holding district councils in at least 40 organising districts would be completed by September this year.

"We are determined to complete formation of full-fledged executive committees in the remaining districts by September this year because we are planning to start a non-stop anti-government movement from October and a one-point out-governments movement from the first week of November," said another top party leader involved with the process.

During the meetings, most of the district leaders expressed their opinion in favour of BNP's participation in all local body elections. People are very much enthusiastic about election and they want to see BNP's participation in the upcoming upazila polls, they told the party chief, the sources said.

But the local leaders told her that most of the party workers at district and thana levels are being harassed after Awami League came to power. Police frequently raid their houses and they have to remain busy in getting bail from courts. Many of them stay in the capital to escape arrest, they added.

They told her that the ruling Awami League was proceeding with three strategies: filing of "false" cases against BNP men, preparing "fake" voter list and ID cards and politicisation of the administration. They observed that it would be very difficult to "check" the AL (in election) if it continues with these strategies.

Many local leaders alleged that central leaders and MPs do not look into local matters properly and many try to avoid

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## 685 sex workers fill up forms

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, July 15: A total of 685 sex workers have so far filled up questionnaire distributed by the Department of Social Services under the proposed rehabilitation programme of the sex workers.

The survey in the town's Tanbazar and Nimtoli brothels started on July 14.

Some 34 surveyors including 30 women in cooperation with Concern Bangladesh, an Irish NGO, have been conducting the survey programme.

## Procession inside APBN barrack?

By Staff Correspondent

Members of the Armed Police Battalion (APBN) reportedly brought out a procession inside their barrack Wednesday night after a meeting with the home minister at the Darbar Parade, a yearly programme, earlier on the day at Uttara in the city, police sources said.

However, DMP Commissioner AKM Shamsuddin told The Daily Star last night, "I have not heard anything about such incident."

The sources said Home Minister Mohammad Nasim and the inspector general of police attended the programme which was held at APBN on the day. "They said members of APBN were disappointed after their representatives from different ranks had a talk with the minister about their problems and demands during the Darbar."

Following this, a group of APBN members brought out a procession in the evening in support of their demands. However, senior officials rushed to the spot and took the situation under control, sources added.

The officer-in-charge of Uttara thana also denied that such an incident had taken place last night.

## Press reports

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newspapers that had sent me there... I want to go and meet my son.

Asked about Joy's marriage, Hasina said it should not be surprising if her 28-year-old son gets married. "But he has not yet married. Press reports about his wedding taking place in London is a blatant lie."

"My son could not come to see me in London because he would have to skip his classes."

A smiling Hasina then told newsmen that the marriage of her son would take place here in Bangladesh. "I invite you all in advance to attend my son's marriage ceremony when it takes place."

## EPB official

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The probe committee, which submitted its report on November 10 last year, accused Gulnagar of working against the interest of the state and resorting to corruption.

Sources said this is for the first time a class one officer of EPB was dismissed for involvement in a quota-related corruption. Last year, EPB suspended seven low-grade officials for manipulating quota.

To check corruption and mismanagement at the EPB textile cell, the government recently formed a monitoring committee comprising EPB officials and representatives from different textile exporters' associations.

The committee will also monitor services provided by the EPB including quota allotment, issuance of export-related visa and GSP (Generalised System of Preferences) certificates.

The director, quota administration of EPB, will work as convener of the committee while two representatives from BOMEA, one from BKMEA and one from BSTMPIA will work as the members of the committee.

A deputy director of EPB textile cell will work as member secretary of the monitoring committee.

## Find alternative to BTV

Media experts tell roundtable in city

By Staff Correspondent

Media experts yesterday dissected the Bangladesh media and underscored the need for an alternative media to the state-run Bangladesh Television (BTV) for free and fair flow of information and aesthetically rich entertainment.

They were addressing a roundtable entitled "Expectations from our Tele-media" organised by Young Entrepreneurs (YEP) Forum in association with The Daily Star and the British Council at the latter's auditorium.

Veteran media personality Mustafa Monwar stressed the need for introduction of a long term programme for cultural development of the country.

He said Bangladesh's media policy should be meant to elevate culture but it had long been neglected.

Noted journalist Mohammad Jahangir expressing frustration over the prevailing situation in the BTV said, "We do not have any expectation from the present BTV."

He termed the BTV as a cancer affected organisation and further said, "Media ruled by the state is against democracy."

He said if there is a new set up in BTV in future then we can expect some productive and meritorious work from it, otherwise it is a lost case.

Noted actor Aly Zaker said, "Privatisation is the only solution to free media. It is applicable to both print and electronic media."

"Half-hearted autonomy of BTV will never give it real freedom to work, Zaker said.

Eminent playwright Selim

Al Din said the government can have a media following the organogram of British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) as an alternative to the present existing BTV set-up.

He strongly criticised the role of BTV and said, "BTV has become a stereotyped organisation only to transmit government propaganda and cheap entertainment."

"BTV has long been running without any merit," Selim said.

He expressed concern over stopping of transmission of package programmes and said, "Package programmes gave us freedom from restriction."

Noted actor Afzal Hossain said it is unfortunate that we were compelled to raise voice for democracy under a democratically elected government.

He said BTV's programme has lost all appeal, glamour and even credibility. He said it has

even degraded our taste.

Afzal mentioned that package programmes had created new avenues for creative personalities to display their talent.

Meghna Guha Thakurda said proper training of real talent and technical improvement can popularise and make the role of the media more accurate.

Anisul Haq said autonomy of radio and television was mentioned in the joint declaration of the three political alliances during the mass movement against autocratic regime but it was yet to materialise even after the tenure of two democratically elected governments.

"Autonomy of media has long been cherished by the people of the country but it is being ignored, illogically," he said.

Farhad Chowdhury of private TV channel ETV said, "We say many things but do not mean it."

He said we have many young talents and we do not utilise them.

Farah Kabir criticised the BTV for not having a clear-cut policy to implement even after so many years in a democratic environment.

"BTV needs a people-oriented policy to introduce more people-expected programmes," she said.

Speakers said it is only possible for the government to run a programme by giving subsidy and more satellite or private channel is not a solution to the present media scenario of the country.

## Ripon murder: Another held

Dhanmondi police has arrested an accused in the sensational Ripon Murder Case from Agargaon BNP slums on Wednesday night, police said, reports BSS.

A team of Dhanmondi police, arrested Jewel alias Bachhu from the slum on the basis of the confessional statement of Milon, another accused arrested in the same case recently.

## Accountability in NGO sector needed for agri growth

By Staff Correspondent

Accountability in NGO management is necessary for development of public and private sector relationship to foster agricultural growth in Bangladesh.

Consensus on this view was reached by participants at a seminar in the city yesterday. Ministers, policy makers, agro-economists and other participants from a wide range of related fields were discussing the role of private sector and NGOs in development of Bangladesh agriculture.

Agriculture and Food Minister Begum Motia Chowdhury inaugurated the two-day seminar and 11 national convention of the Bangladesh Krishi Arthonibidhi Samiti (BKAS) held at the auditorium of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC).

BKAS is an association of agricultural economists working in related fields under various research organisations, universities, banks and other autonomous bodies.

The inaugural function was also addressed by state minister for planning MK Alamgir, executive chairman of BARC Dr Z Karim, BKAS president Dr SM Ilyas, BKAS secretary Md Rafiqul Islam and the convention chairman Dr Abul Kashem.

Dr M A Sattar Mandal of Bangladesh Agriculture University presented the key-note paper titled: "NGO and Private Sector Participation: How Far Does It Go to Help Transformation of Bangladesh Agriculture?" Later, before the technical sessions started, the deputy director general of International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) Dr Mahabul Hossain chaired a discussion on the key-note paper.

In her inaugural deliberation the agriculture and food minister attached special importance to GO-NGO (government organisation-non-government organisation) cooperation in fostering agricultural growth in the country. But, she was highly critical of the lack of accountability in NGO sector.

"Government is always exposed to the people through placing budget in the Jatiya Sangsad. Why should not the

NGOs also make their financial books public? I welcome criticism of the government but there should be practice of accountability and transparency in NGOs also."

Mentioning the names of two big NGOs of the country, Motia Chowdhury described how the water ministry had to salvage many inoperative tubewells sunk by one of the NGOs in northern Bangladesh. She also described how government had to go for maize procurement last year after another NGO failed to offer the farmers fair price for their produce. Though earlier in the season that particular NGO had sold costly hybrid seed to the farmers.

Agriculture minister praised the peasants for their client rate of loan repayment and admitted that what the poor farmers of the country want is timely loans without any hassle and bribe.

In the key-note address, Dr M A Sattar Mandal noted that there was criticism about private sector's lack of initiative and profiteering motives resulting from political patronage and collusion with bureaucracy for loan sanction, licensing, tax exemption and under or over invoicing.

"NGOs are also held responsible for not being always accountable and transparent in their management. They are

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## Banchhagol sighted after 20 years

By Ali Sanwar

One of the most globally threatened species of wild goat, believed to be locally extinct — Serow or Red serow — has been sighted for the first time in 20 years in Matiranga Forest of Khagrachhari district.

An expedition of scientists from IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) and HRDA (Human Resource Development for Advancement) rediscovered the rare megafauna on June 25, this year.

The serow's common Bengali name is Banchhagol and its scientific name is Capreolus sumatraensis. It belongs to the "Bovidae" (horned ungulates) family's Caprinae subfamily.

The expedition comprised Anisuzzaman Khan, Obaidullah al Ejaza, Dr Woobaidullah, Nahid Mainuddin and Fariduddin Ahmed and took place on 23 June to 27 June.

Caprinae have intrinsic value as part of the ecology in a wide range of distinct habitats. Its scientific interest is also great because of their adaptation to the harsh mountain environment.

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Red Serow, the rare goat seen at Matiranga.

## 100 feared drowned in Bihar boat capsized

PATNA, July 15: Rescuers said more than 100 people were feared drowned today after a passenger boat capsized in the Ganges River in the northern state of Bihar, reports AP.

Two bodies were recovered from the rain-swollen river at Athmagola near this city, 800 kilometers (480 miles) south-east of New Delhi.

Most of the passengers were women and children, rescuers said. At least 125 people were on board the vessel when it rolled over and sank in the river.

Some of the passengers swam ashore. Rivers in eastern India and neighbouring Bangladesh have been overflowing their banks, inundating villages.

## PM: Polls

From Page 1

but did not make any such arrangement while the concept of caretaker government was incorporated (in the Constitution)," she told a press conference at the Gana Bhaban on her return yesterday after a nine day visit to the United Kingdom.

"What is the formula of their caretaker government? National elections and elections to local government bodies can not be held together (under the caretaker administration)," the Prime Minister said.

She however thanked BNP chief Khaleda Zia for speaking for the concept of caretaker government now, which she ridiculed while in power.

Hoping that the Opposition would contest the city corporation and Upazila polls, Hasina advised them to devote to preparations for the two elections which were shifted repeatedly to ensure participation of the Opposition.

"I think they will definitely not repeat the mistake they did by boycotting the municipal polls," she said and advised the agitating Opposition to earn people's confidence by contesting the upcoming polls.

"Agitation for such a demand will only claim lives but won't bring anything good for the people."

The Prime Minister claimed that all local body polls and parliamentary by-polls held under her government were free and fair. She alleged that there were rigging and killings in such elections under the governments of Ershad and Khaleda Zia.

She hoped people will again vote party to power for implementation of all short-term and long-term programmes taken up by her government for socio-economic development of the country.

The Prime Minister also replied to a wide variety of questions on contemporary issues and her visit.

Replying to a question about the death of a police constable in the city during a pre-hartal procession of BNP on July 7, she blamed the opposition party for the "killing and inciting revolt" in some (riot) police barracks. "They are now desperate to find an issue for agitation," she said, charging the party for similar attacks on police earlier also.

She said there is "little chance" for shifting the venue of the NAM summit from the Osmani Udyan. "We're yet to find any alternative location", she said.

Referring to the "citizens' protests against planned felling of tree at the Udyan, she repeated her earlier statement that more trees would be planted elsewhere.

She said efforts are underway to cut as less trees as possible. "Car parking will be arranged in between rows of trees."

She said, "The Osmani Udyan and its surrounding areas will be developed in a planned way while constructing the NAM centre there."

Replying to another question, Hasina ruled out the possibility of shifting the Syedabad bus terminal to Kahchpur, planned earlier.

The Prime Minister described her visit fruitful and said it will further strengthen the bilateral relations and help draw more British investments in the country.

About the Bangladesh Festival which she along with British Prime Minister Tony Blair opened, Hasina said it projected Bangladesh's heritage and investment opportunities to the people of UK.

The Prime Minister told another questioner that Tony Blair accepted her invitation to visit Bangladesh at a time convenient to him.

Hasina also described her meetings with British politicians including the Opposition leader in the House of Commons. Referring to her presence in a session of the British parliament during the PM's Question Time, Hasina said the Opposition leader mainly asked questions there. She regretted that it did not happen in Bangladesh parliament.

The Prime Minister also said she has requested the British authorities to make arrangement for issuing visa in Sylhet at least once a week for convenience of travelers to London.