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New policy to control NGOs

By Masud Hasan Khan

The government has formulated a new policy for controlling and regulating the functioning of the foreign and foreign-aided non-government voluntary organisations (NGOs) in the country, official sources said.

A new set of rules has been framed so that the NGOs could work within the existing state policy and become partners in the national development initiatives, they said.

Besides relaxing some project approval and implementation procedures, the new policy will seek a better grip on the NGO activities in the country, identifying certain areas in which the organisations would be barred from working.

The policy under consideration would make it clear that

the government would encourage development efforts by the NGOs if the programmes figured well for the government's policy and were not against the national security.

The policy said that the government would not approve any project that dealt with the politics and hampered the traditional, cultural and religious beliefs of the land.

The NGO Affairs Bureau under the Prime Minister's office, which has been empowered to coordinate NGO activities and enforce the necessary laws, would cancel registration of the organisations found involved in politics, working against the country's sovereignty or guilty of fund-bunching and gross irregularities.

The NGO Affairs Bureau would approve appointment of foreign nationals to the voluntary organisations. The approval would be made on receipt of opinion from the Home Ministry.

Prior clearance from the Bureau would be necessary to receive foreign contributions. The contributions would be approved for seminar, training, library development, education trip, fund for training materials, environment development and medical equipment.

An Additional Divisional Commissioner would supervise all development initiatives by the NGOs at the divisional level, the new policy said.

Home Ministry would advise the NGO Affairs Bureau on approval of registration to the voluntary development organi-

sations.

The Ministry in 60 days would check if the proposed organisation or the people involved in it were found guilty of anti-state activities.

Home Ministry would keep an eye on the programmes of the NGOs and advise the Bureau whether the organisations fanned out alien culture, worked against the existing social, moral and religious values or indulged in politics.

The NGO Affairs Bureau, which registers the voluntary organisations, would renew the registration for another five years following performance review.

The policy said that priority would be given to the projects matching with the government's development programme.

The policy eased procedures for the NGOs involved in the emergency disaster relief programme so that these organisations could promptly respond in the hour of need.

According to a tally, there are more than 15,000 social voluntary organisations registered with the Social Welfare Directorate of the government.

The number of non-government voluntary organisations directly contributing to the development programmes, and registered with the NGO Affairs Bureau is 682.



Miss Germany Verona Feldbusch (C) is all smiles after winning the Miss Intercontinental beauty contest at Rottweil-Zimmern in Germany on Thursday. Second placed Miss America Celeste Weaver (L) and third Miss Italy Serena Haenen.

Professionals to wait and see till May 7

The action committee of engineers, agriculturists, doctors and BCS officials has postponed its programme for three months following talks with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on Thursday, reports UNB.

This was decided at a meeting of the action committee yesterday with its Chairman Dr MA Majed in the chair.

Leaders of the action committee told the meeting that the Prime Minister had assured them of considering their demands, according to a press release.

The meeting also decided to hold a representatives' conference in the capital on May 7 to decide its future course of action if their demands are not met.

The meeting held at the Institution of Engineers (IEB) was addressed, among others, by Dr Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, Mohammad Abu Hena, MAK Azad, Javed Iqbal, Dr Gazi Abdul Huq, Mohammad Ruhul Amin, Abul Hayat, Akhter Hossain and Sadequzzaman.

Embarrassment for Rao

NEW DELHI, Apr 16: India's highest court on Friday blocked a controversial judicial ruling which embarrassed Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao by striking down the dismissal of a Hindu-revivalist state government, reports AFP.

The Supreme Court's "stay" order, preventing the Madhya Pradesh State High Court's April 2 ruling from taking effect, came on appeal by the federal government. The judgement had made 'invalid' New Delhi's dismissal of the Madhya Pradesh State Government controlled by the Hindu Nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian People's Party following the Babri Mosque's razing on December 6.

Investors still shy, says memo for Aid Club

Star Report

The private sector continues to remain shy and investments stagnated at 5 to 5.5 per cent of the GDP despite desperate government efforts to promote private investment.

A memorandum prepared by the government for the Aid Group Meeting to be held in Paris on April 27-28 said, "In Bangladesh, development of a competitive private sector is proving to be difficult owing to inadequacy and limitation of an entrepreneurial class, uneasy relationship between labour and capital and shortcomings of the legal and institutional framework preventing speedy resolution of industrial and commercial conflicts."

It added that the government had given high priority to providing incentives for activation of the private sector.

The liberalisation package of the government included tariff reduction and rationalisation, reduction of quantitative import restriction, elimination of prior investment sanctioning requirement and use of direct monetary instruments like easing of bank rate and interest rate structure within the framework of a market-oriented financial system, the

document added.

"Clear signals of the government's resolve to resist wage increases without assurance of compensatory increase in productivity have been transmitted", it said and added that the exchange rate also continues to be managed flexibly.

Referring to the lack of confidence in the private sector, the memorandum said the private sector is not aware of the long-term motive of the reforms brought in the tax administration. Investment seems to be very risky to the entrepreneurs because of this ignorance, it added.

"Although fiscal stabilisation measures had eased the critical local currency constraints in public sector investment, actual public investment outlay in fiscal 1992 fell short of planned targets due to institutional weaknesses," the memorandum said, referring to the condition of public sector investment.

The estimated investment-GDP ratio in the public sector for fiscal 1992 is 11.5 per cent against the targeted ratio of 13.5 per cent.

Mujibnagar Day today

Awami League has drawn up elaborate programme to observe the Mujibnagar Day today, reports UNB.

On this day in 1971, the provisional government of Bangladesh was formed with Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as President at Baiddayernathstola in Meherpur.

The programmes include hoisting national and party flags at the Awami League central office, Bangabandhu Bhawan, garlanding the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Bangabandhu Bhawan and discussion meeting.

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina will preside over the discussion meeting to be held at the party's central office at 3 pm.

Party's General Secretary Zillur Rahman will attend the programmes at Mujibnagar.

The AL General Secretary asked all its party units to observe the Mujibnagar Day in a befitting manner.

SKOP to drum up support for 72-hr strike

Sramik Karmachari Otkya Parishad (SKOP) will hold talks with different political parties, trade unions and student organisations to drum up support for its 72-hour strike beginning May 11.

Trade union leaders will also embark on a campaign tour across the country ahead of the strike.

SKOP, a conglomerate of 18 trade unions, including the labour front of BNP, has called for the nationwide strike demanding enhanced wages for workers in the public and private sectors.

A SKOP source told UNB last night that its leaders would meet with the workers representatives of different sector corporations on April 18 at the CBA office of Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC).

The SKOP leaders will also hold meetings with the representatives of transport unions on April 19 at Nawab Yusuf Market, and with the unions of private industrial units and Railway union on April 20.

Before beginning their tour to different industrial belts outside the capital and district headquarters, the SKOP leaders will have meetings with different political and student organisations on the last week of this month.

"This time it will be an all-out strike... all necessary preparations are being taken to avoid any lapses during the countrywide programme," said Abdullah Sarkar, a top leader of the SKOP.

AL backs Apr 25 sit-in

By Nazmul Ashraf

The Awami League-led opposition parties are preparing for a massive anti-government demonstration in the capital April 25 in alliance with the Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Samannaya Committee, well-placed sources said yesterday.

The Samannaya Committee earlier announced plans for a sit-in in front of the Secretariat April 25 as part of its movement against 'war criminal' Golem Azam and his Jamaat-e-Islami Party.

A resolution of the April 8 joint meeting of the AL and its allies in the Five-Party, the Patriotic Democratic Front PDF and the Ganatantri Party extended its fullest support to the April 25 programmes and called for massive popular participation in it.

The Samannaya Committee leaders yesterday started parleys with the political parties backing their movement. Their first round of talks was with

Jamaat blasts govt for jailing Azam

Speakers at a rally here yesterday demanded immediate release of Jamaat leader Prof Golem Azam enabling him to work for the development of the country, reports BSS.

Organised by the city unit of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, the rally was addressed, among others, by Acting Chief of Jamaat Abbas Ali Khan, Secretary General Mattur Rahman Nazami MP, Moulana Abus Sobhan MP, Assistant Secretary General Mohammad Kamruzzaman and Abul Kader Mollah, City President ATM Azharul Islam President.

Abbas Ali Khan criticised the role of the government.

He said when the country was turning into a desert in absence of Farakka water, the government did not raise the issue at the recent concluded SAARC summit.

He accused the government of violating the Constitution and fundamental rights in putting Prof Azam behind the bar. "The only concern of the present government is to remain in power," he added.

Khan said the government had gone to power with

Jamaat's cooperation but had forgotten all about it. He described the government as 'ingratitude'.

The acting chief of Jamaat was equally critical of the government which came to power immediately after the country's independence and said denial of citizenship of Prof Golem Azam by that government was a 'nasty and dirty' politics.

Khan said none of the post independent governments in Bangladesh was stable as those were not nationalist governments.

Nazami described the arrest of Prof Azam as illegal and said his arrest was an international conspiracy.

He said the government was maintaining double standard regarding the arrest of Prof Azam.

Criticising the statement of Attorney General that the BNP, Awami League and Jatiya Party had reached a consensus in the Jatiya Sangsad on the issue of Prof Golem Azam, the Jamaat Secretary General said there had been no such consensus in parliament.

See Page 12 Col 8

Both CPB factions confident

By Nurul Kabir

Each of the two factions of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) debating the party's political line for the last two years, hopes to emerge as the majority force in the upcoming special national council session of the party.

The special council session, over three days, is scheduled to begin on May 14.

Of the two feuding groups one led by the party General Secretary Nurul Islam Nahid and leader of the party's five-member parliamentary group Shamsuddin, MP, believes in the party's transformation into an organisation of the liberal democrats of the country.

Out of a total 68 members of the party's present central committee, 42, including the party president Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, have already expressed their active sympathy for the transformation.

The other group, led by party presidium member Mujahidul Islam Selim and Manzurul Ahasan Khan — a former central committee member who openly expressed his dissent against the central leadership's move to depart from Marxist ideology two years back — believes in maintaining the indepen-

dent existence of the party as a political platform of the country's communists.

This group has secured support of 13 members of the present central committee of the party.

Three central committee members are yet to decide their positions in the ongoing polemics on the party's political line.

The special council session to be held in the third week of next month, however, is scheduled to decide whether the party continues to function as a communist party with Marxist-Leninist philosophy as its ideological guide line or is converted into a liberal democratic organisation with the 'bourgeois' concepts of democracy as its political ideology.

Political analysts, however, believe that if the special council session takes place on the scheduled dates, it would almost certainly result in the official splitting of the party into two factions espousing two opposite political philosophies.

Meanwhile, Manzurul Ahasan Khan, leader of the hardliners in the CPB told The Daily Star last week: "The communists in the party would definitely

come out as the majority group in the special council session".

In support of his optimism, Khan said that all the district level leaders of the party, in a meeting held in the city in August last year, had spoken in favour of upholding the political line adopted by the party's Fifth Congress in 1991.

The Fifth Congress of the party although made some liberal amendments to the party's original constitution and manifesto, but it did not reject Marxism-Leninism as the party's guiding ideology. Socialism was retained as its ultimate goal, Khan added.

When reminded that 'the communists' were in a minority in the party's central body Khan said, "Most of the delegates attending the party's last congress, due to deliberate propaganda of our opponents inside the party, misunderstood us thinking we were bent on dividing the organisation in the name of ideological struggle."

"With our opponents now openly pressing for abandoning socialist ideals altogether and expressing their desire to deviate from the party constitution, the cat is out of the bag,"

Pak ML on verge of another split

ISLAMABAD, Apr 16: The ruling Pakistan Muslim League (PML) plagued by in-fighting moved closer today to a formal split, as Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif tried to shore up his shaky government, reports AFP.

The continuing domestic political crisis, centred round a tussle between President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Sharif led army chief General Abdul Waheed to postpone a crucial trip to the United States, two days after putting off a visit to France, military officials said.

The pro-Sharif group in the PML scheduled a meeting for Saturday in Islamabad apparently to prepare to elect Sharif as party president.

The announcement came from Information Minister Abus Sattar Laieka who claims to be acting PML chief, a claim rejected by Abdul Gafur Hoti from the rival group, who considers himself the legal acting PML president.

Hoti, who had already set a meeting of the council of PML for April 29 to elect a party

chief, reacted angrily to Laieka's statement.

The government has smelt something and they are trying to hurry up and grab the office of PML chief," Hoti said threatening disciplinary action, in remarks quoted by newspapers here.

Reports said the premier was advised by his cabinet col-

leagues not to let the party slip away from his grasp as political uncertainties persisted after a meeting Wednesday between Sharif and Ishaq Khan.

A statement from the president's office said Sharif promised urgent steps on "grave" national and international problems.

It did not identify the

problems nor set a deadline for administrative action, but sources said the President had demanded action against some of Sharif's close associates.

Sharif's opponents claimed the meeting was a failure while the premier's colleagues said the talks had diffused the crisis.

11 killed in Bogota shopping centre blast

BOGOTA, Apr 16: The bombing of a Bogota shopping centre has left 11 people dead and prompted the government to extend the prison terms terrorists face, reports AP.

President Cesar Gaviria blamed fugitive druglord Pablo Escobar and his criminal organization for Thursday's blast, which also injured more than 100 people and heavily damaged 30 buildings in the Centro 93 shopping centre near downtown Bogota.

There was no claim of responsibility.

Some two dozen vehicles were set afire or ripped apart. Large pools of blood were visible inside stores and on sidewalks after the blast.

Marta de Tellez, crying uncontrollably and her face smeared with ashes, dug through the debris on her

US warns Serbs

WASHINGTON, Apr 16: The United States has warned Muslim Serbs it may press for immediate international sanctions against them if they overrun the besieged Muslim town of Srebrenica, the White House said today, reports Reuters.

AP adds: Serb militiamen closed in on Srebrenica Friday, and the largest of the three Muslim enclaves left in eastern Bosnia appeared on the verge of falling.

A spokesman for Bosnia's Muslim-led government said Srebrenica officials were negotiating with their besiegers to surrender in return for the safe evacuation of Muslim civilians and troops.

"The most important thing is to avoid a massacre. The negotiations are taking place," said Kemal Mufic, a top aide of Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic.

Belgrade radio quoted Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic as saying the Serbs would not enter Srebrenica if

Muslim defenders surrendered their weapons to the United Nations.

"They have to give up their weapons, or we would have to defeat them, since they are not stopping their fight," Karadzic was quoted as saying.

The town's fall would be a demoralizing blow to Bosnia's Muslims and another slap by the Serbs at demands from the United Nations and Western nations that they stop the war. The Serbs intensified their assault on Srebrenica on Monday as NATO warplanes began enforcing a UN-imposed no-fly zone over Bosnia.

Earlier, UN officials said they had assembled a 50-truck convoy to evacuate Muslims from Srebrenica. Tens of thousands of people have been trapped in the town by the Serb offensive to win control of all of eastern Bosnia.

The Security Council has given the Bosnian Serbs until April 26 to sign a peace plan already accepted by Muslims.