

NGOs on a cash leash

Pranesh Sarkar
in Kolkata

Dec. 19. — NGOs working with funds from the West Bengal State AIDS Prevention and Control Society be warned! If any of the 55 NGOs working with the funds of the WBSACS are caught on the wrong foot, they would be blacklisted by the body.

The state body of NACO has already cut off funds to three NGOs after "irregularities" were found in their "mode of operations". The WBSACS has decided to tighten its grip over the NGOs and started keeping a sharp eye on these NGOs using its funds after several complaints of misappropriation of funds started pouring in against some of these NGOs. WBSACS officials told The Statesman that NGOs are funded mainly to carry out awareness generating programmes about the deadly HIV/AIDS in the state and measures to

prevent it.

"Though we campaign through the media about the deadly disease regularly, we had to depend on the NGOs especially in the rural areas as they are the only effective medium in those hamlets. But the recent evaluation revealed that the awareness generation programme has failed to disseminate awareness about the disease," a senior official said.

The latest WBSACS figures revealed that still 67 per cent of rural women and 25 per cent of urban women were not familiar even with the term HIV/AIDS. 84 per cent rural and 60 per cent urbanites did not even know the symptoms of HIV/AIDS. Furthermore 66 per cent rural women were ignorant about the ways in which HIV/AIDS spreads.

Another official said that the figure made it clear that the awareness generating programme is not reaching

to people who need them. And that's why the killer disease is rapidly spreading among the general population.

"Though we achieved good results in awareness generating campaign in the high risk groups like sex workers through the NGOs, these have to be kept under strong surveillance as some complaints are coming up especially in terms of generating awareness among the common people," he added.

Mr S Suresh Kumar, the director of WBSACS, said three NGOs have recently been removed from the projects of WBSACS after allegations of irregularities against them were found to be true.

"The Project Support Unit of the body is maintaining surveillance on all the 55 NGOs working with us and their work is being scrutinised regularly," he added.

20 DEC 2005

THE STATESMAN

Bihar has a third of blacklisted NGOs

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 15

BIHAR tops the list of voluntary organisations blacklisted by the Union Rural Development Ministry. Of the 355 NGOs blacklisted by the Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART) under the ministry, 113 are from Bihar.

Most of the NGOs have been blacklisted this year for involvement in corrupt practices or irregularities, according to a statement in the Rajya Sabha. The statement also said that 106 NGOs were blacklisted due to submission of forged documents. No funds were released to these NGOs.

Responding to supplementaries during Question Hour, Rural Development Minister Raghuvansh Prasad Singh said Rs 4.58 crore had been misutilised by the NGOs. The Bihar NGOs alone had misutilised Rs 87 lakh for which they had been blacklisted.

Andhra Pradesh has 35 blacklisted NGOs that have misutilised Rs 83.05 lakh. Next on the list is UP with 57 NGOs (Rs 76 lakh); Haryana has 20 blacklisted NGOs (Rs 47.34 lakh); Karnataka with 21 NGOs (Rs 28.66 lakh); and 26 in Rajasthan (Rs 22.74 lakh).

CAPART has now taken some remedial measures to prevent such misutilisation of funds. The measures include a three-tier monitoring system and clearly spelt out criteria to be met by the NGOs.

16 DEC 2005

INDIAN EXPRESS

NGOs to keep tabs on project funds

57-5
14/11

Sanjay Singh
in New Delhi

Nov. 13. — The government seems to be understaffed. The department of women and child development (WCD), under the HRD ministry, is to enlist the help of NGOs to track how its funds are being utilised in states. This despite the fact that about 2,600 NGOs have been blacklisted for misusing government funds meant for various WCD projects and schemes across the country for years.

The WCD has a budget of over Rs 1,500 crore, a major part of which goes to the Integrated Child Development Scheme. This covers various "lucrative" projects like the nationwide Anganwadi scheme for which there is cut-throat competition among NGOs.

At present there are over 700,000 Anganwadi centres across the country and 200,000 more are planned in the next three years. These centres cater to the needs of children and women. Newborns are taken care of and creches are provided for children of working mothers.

When asked why the government was keen to hire NGOs to keep track of its projects and funds in states, the secretary of the women and child development department, Mrs Reva Nayyar, said the district authorities did not have the time to keep track of the projects.

"Even if we send our representatives, they can hardly visit a few of the centres where our projects are being run. It is not practical," she said, adding that state governments should not be held responsible as



they were already "over-worked".

Fifteen NGOs in Delhi are blacklisted after financial irregularities were detected in the use of funds meant for various WCD projects. About 332 NGOs have been blacklisted in UP for financial irregularities, 304 in Tamil Nadu, 287 in Andhra Pradesh, 223 in Punjab and 115 in Gujarat. NGOs were found indulging in financial fraud even in smaller states like Haryana (150), Manipur (197), Goa (24) and Meghalaya (323).

WCD are already under fire for poor usage of funds. On the breastfeeding front, year after year the government claims to have made an impact, but the Unicef officials claim more needs to be done. The government has been organising World Breastfeeding Week from 1 to 7 August every year since 1991. Huge funds are sanctioned for promoting breastfeeding, but unfortunately Indian children are largely deprived of it, causing malnutrition the cause of more than 50 per cent of child deaths.

Mr Werer Schultinle of the Unesco told The Statesman that the scenario "stagnated" over the years.

NGOs force World Bank retreat

Statesman News Service

GUWAHATI, Nov. 10. — Protesters, organised by several NGOs based in the North-east, today stormed a high-level meeting of World Bank officials, the Department of North-eastern Region (DONER) and representatives of state government organisations in the region, forcing the Bank officials to make a hasty retreat.

Over a hundred well-organised and primed for action protesters, mostly from Meghalaya, entered the meeting venue at a city hotel, much to the astonishment of the World Bank officials and others present. The protesters took over the dais to question the "right of the World Bank" to "intervene" in issues pertaining to the natural resources of the North-east, "without consulting the residents of the region".

The sudden development



Protesters at the venue. — Eastern Projections

shocked the organisers who had not anticipated such an unprecedented protest. Obviously, security arrangements at the venue were inadequate to tackle the situation.

The World Bank team was seen beating a hasty retreat as top government functionaries from

across the North-east watched in bewilderment as their invitees legged it.

The World Bank had, following a Central initiative, agreed in principle to give a thrust to infrastructure development in the North-east and the team was in

town for this purpose.

The five-member World Bank team, led by Ms Karin Kemper, is in Guwahati to interact with stakeholders from various government agencies in the region. "We are meeting stakeholders as well as potential programme partners," said Ms Kemper. On behalf of the Union government, the Department of the North-eastern Region had taken the lead in getting the World Bank team here.

The areas the global financial institution is looking for investment range from hydropower generation to erosion management and inland water transport.

Similarly, World Bank investment in the forest sector will be aimed at improving forest productivity for community-driven subsistence and commercial activities and maintenance of bio-diversity for income generating activities, a spokesperson said. The World Bank has so far invested \$376 million in the region.

Rajasthan NGO to create awareness about U.N. goals

MDGs lay down eight goals with 18 targets, 48 indicators

Special Correspondent

JAIPUR: A Rajasthan-based non-Government organisation has bagged a prestigious United Nations assignment to raise awareness on the significance and ownership of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the State's civil society and coordinate the millennium mobilisation movement.

The Centre for Community Economics and Development Consultants Society (CECOEDECON) was assigned the task through a communique sent by the Director of the U.N. Millennium Campaign, Salil Shetty.

Mr. Shetty stated that the competent organisations across the world had been summoned to carry out related activities for MDGs.

The MDGs, adopted by the U.N. in September 2000, lay down eight goals comprising 18 targets and 48 indicators, which

all member States have pledged to meet by 2015.

The targets cover the most challenging task of fulfilling people's basic needs, while the member States are expected to evolve a political process by which the goals can be incorporated in the Government's priorities.

The CECOEDECON is currently engaged in raising awareness about the national development goals envisioned in the 10th Five Year Plan.

The primary data collected and analysed from the villages by the NGO formed part of the National Social Watch Report-2005 on Governance and Development, which was presented at the U.N. MDG summit held in New York on September 14 to 16.

The CECOEDECON Project Coordinator, Krishna Kumar, said here on Tuesday that the campaign in Rajasthan would

lay emphasis on changing the policies and practices of the Government by apprising the legislature and local self Government institutions of the grass-root situation of livelihood, poverty, education and health care.

Mr. Kumar said the orientation towards the U.N. MDGs was presently not visible in the plans and priorities of the State Government, despite budgetary allocations for six priorities made during 2004-05 and special provisions announced in the 2005-06 Budget to meet the targets relating to mother and child's development.

The millennium campaign will get a pan-Rajasthan shape through the satellite institutions of CECOEDECON especially the Development Coordination Network Committee Trust, which has a membership of nearly 300 partner organisations scattered over 32 districts in the State.

27 SEP 2005

THE HINDU

NGO rescues 47 child workers

HD-8
23/7

A survey of school-going children found them missing from home

Special Correspondent

JAIPUR: A group of 47 child labourers from Kumbhalgarh tehsil in Rajsamand district of Rajasthan was rescued in Surat in Gujarat and rehabilitated recently, thanks to the coordinated efforts of the district administration, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan and a non-Government organisation, "Pratham".

The children were forced into hard work for 14 to 15 hours a day by the contractors in Surat. Their parents, who had willingly sent them to Gujarat to earn some money, apparently did not know that they were made to toil for long and erratic hours.

A team constituted by the district administration rescued the teenagers from the clutches of contractors.

It was during a survey launched by the district administration under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan to identify the children not going to school that the absence of these children was noticed. Further enquiries revealed that they had migrated to Surat and were working as child labourers there.

The District Collector, Vaibhav Galria, made special efforts to bring the children back home. The District Project Coordinator of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan, Asha Verma, and an activist of

"Pratham", Smriti, went to Surat along with a team this past week and saved the children with the help of local authorities. Over a dozen of the children had already returned to their native place.

The children were welcomed at a public function in the Zila Parishad auditorium in Rajsamand earlier this week. The Secretary in-charge of the district, Manohar Kant, and Mr. Galria applied tilaks to the children's foreheads and greeted them on their safe return.

Mr. Kant said the "lost childhood" of the teenagers had returned due to the concerted efforts of administration and the NGO.

"These children fell into the trap of contractors because of poverty, illiteracy and ignorance. Their education will now be the responsibility of the district administration," he said while cautioning the children's parents not to send them to Surat again.

Mr. Galria said all the children would be connected with the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan and provided with special vocational training to enable them to make monetary contribution to their families.

They will be admitted to the six-month camps under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan.

9 JUL 2005

7/11/05

Bring NGOs under CAG audit: Somnath

CAG should be strengthened 4012

Special Correspondent 287

NEW DELHI: Non-governmental organisations should be brought under the purview of the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India (CAG) as they execute public sector programmes, Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee said on Friday.

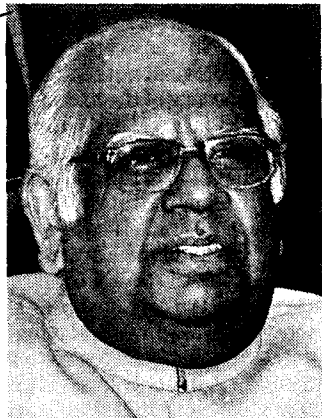
He was inaugurating a seminar on 'Legislature and audit interface for enforcing accountability' at Noida (Uttar Pradesh) near here.

Mr. Chatterjee hailed the CAG's role in auditing public sector enterprises (PSEs) and suggested that it be strengthened in the public interest.

Praising the CAG for pointing out major instances of mismanagement, waste and fraud, he said it would be difficult for a private auditor to report comprehensively on the performance of PSEs in achieving their social objectives.

Accountability of panchayats

The Speaker also highlighted the accountability of panchayati raj institutions and urban local bodies. Noting that only 18 States had taken steps to implement the Eleventh Finance Commission recommendations, he urged the others to follow suit as CAG audit of the local bodies would ensure grass roots accountability. The State Governments could also consider setting up legislative committees, as in Kerala and



Rajasthan, to deal with CAG reports on local bodies.

Expressing concern over large scale pending of 'audit paras' needing legislature scrutiny, the Speaker said a system should be devised for their speedy disposal. For, inordinate delay in examination of issues pointed out in audit reports might render them irrelevant.

PAC Chairman Vijay Kumar Malhotra said that for want of time the committee examined only a few select audit paras. Besides, the Government instructed all departments to furnish duly-vetted remedial 'Action Taken Notes' to the PAC, within a stipulated time frame, on paras not examined by the committee.

Comptroller and Auditor-General V.N. Kaul said that while criticism and debate were essential in a democracy, the official public response should take into account the institutional nature of the CAG reports.

World Tribunal declares Bush, Blair guilty

Statement calls for investigation of those responsible for the war in Iraq



MESSAGE LOUD AND CLEAR: Booker Prize-winning novelist Arundhati Roy announcing the findings of the international anti-Iraq war tribunal's findings in Istanbul on Monday. - PHOTO: REUTERS

ISTANBUL (TURKEY): The World Tribunal on Iraq (WTI), an anti-war grouping of non-governmental organisations, intellectuals and writers, on Monday harshly condemned the United States, Britain and their allies for the occupation of Iraq.

The tribunal recommended "an exhaustive investigation of those responsible for crimes of aggression and crimes against humanity in Iraq."

After three days of deliberations, it singled out U.S. President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair along with Government officials from other coalition partners as being primarily culpable for the war.

The tribunal, the purpose of which was to document the case against the war, did not consider the argument in favour of the U.S.-led intervention in Iraq, and had no judicial status.

Call for troop withdrawal

The statement, read by Indian author Arundhati Roy, chairperson of the tribunal's "Jury of Conscience," called for an "immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the coalition forces in Iraq."

Ms. Roy, who won the Booker Prize in Britain in 1997 for her novel, "The God of Small Things", told a news conference, "our aim is to have the U.S. and British forces out of Iraq," but conceded that this "will not happen tomorrow."

She also called on the U.S. to immediately close down its prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and demanded a review of all treaties signed with post-invasion Iraq, which she said "should be considered null and void."

The WTI criticised the United Nations for having, it said, failed to manage the Iraqi crisis. It also pointed a finger at a number of U.S. firms active in Iraq, such as Halliburton, Carlyle, Boeing and Texaco.

It recommended "that people throughout the world launch actions against U.S.

and U.K. corporations that directly profit from this war." The generally studious crowd of participants broke into a chant of "The people united will never be defeated" — a cry of Left-wing Latin American liberation struggles — as the tribunal's closing statement was being read.

It also erupted in applause after hearing testimony on Saturday from Iraqi women's rights activist Hana Ibrahim.

Ms. Ibrahim spoke of the damage inflicted by the war and the occupation on the women of Iraq, with a proliferation of prostitution rings and the near-total exclusion of women from public life.

During the proceedings, about 50 experts and witnesses, from jurists to former soldiers and victims of the conflict, testified before the jury and the participants to demonstrate what they described as the illegality of the war.

Testimony included technical reports, such as one pointing to an upsurge in cases of leukaemia among the children of Basra after the 1991 Gulf War, and accounts, backed by pictures and documents, of alleged torture and "collective punishment" inflicted on civilians in such trouble spots as Fallujah.

Organisers said the recommendations of the WTI will be handed over to those the jury found at fault, as well as to a number of international organisations.

The WTI, founded in 2003 and modelled on the 1960s' Russell Tribunal — created by British philosopher Bertrand Russell to denounce the war in Vietnam — has held 20 sessions so far in different locations around the world.

It includes about 200 NGOs — including the environmentalist Greenpeace, the anti-globalisation ATTAC and Vietnam Veterans Against the War — as well as a number of prominent intellectuals such as the linguist Noam Chomsky and international law professor Richard Falk of the United States. — AFP

PC for curbing on foreign money in NGOs

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, June 25. — Union finance minister, Mr P Chidambaram today pitched for effective regulation of funds from abroad to NGOs as unreported flow was fraught with serious security and economic risks.

There are 30,000 organisations registered under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), but only 16,000 reported the flow of foreign funds which amounted to Rs 5,000 crore annually, the minister said in his valedictory address to a two-day seminar on FCRA.

If 16,000 organisations accounted for Rs 5,000 crore, an equal amount must be going unreported, he said, adding this had serious security and economic implications.

The seminar came days

after the government decided to constitute a Group of Ministers (GoM) to overhaul FCRA as it had failed to check the overseas funding of anti-national organisations.

“Accounting of such flow of funds should not be construed as intrusive or invasive,” he said, adding this has become necessary as 50 per cent of NGOs do not report the money received by them.

Admitting that some of NGOs are doing yeoman service to the country, Mr Chidambaram said accounting and reporting of the money received was very important, particularly in the era of globalisation.

Speaking on a different context, Mr Chidambaram said that the government is likely to infuse capital into Punjab and Sind Bank to

turn it around, provided the bank met the targets for the current mobilisation of deposits, recovery of non-performing assets (NPA) and expansion of credit portfolio.

“I am confident that in three years, the bank will be turned around as we have turned around five banks beginning 1997,” Mr Chidambaram told reporters on the sidelines of a seminar on the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) organised by the Institute of Chartered Accounts of India.

Mr Chidambaram had earlier met the top officials and employees of the Punjab and Sind Bank, which would be completing 100 years on 24 June 2008. “I am confident they will work together to come to an agreement,” he said.

User-friendly machinery for NGOs seeking aid

The proposed law will ensure that foreign contributions are not diverted

Vinay Kumar

NEW DELHI: Under the proposed Bill to replace the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 1976 a decentralised structure will be put in place a user-friendly, transparent and approachable administrative machinery. Organisations seeking contri-

butions will not be required to visit Delhi to get registered, Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil said inaugurating a two-day seminar on the FCRA here on Friday. The law would facilitate the working of NGOs and ensure that foreign contributions were not diverted for purposes other than what was

intended. The Government favoured wide-ranging consultations so that the Bill would be made effective.

On Thursday the Cabinet decided to constitute a Group of Ministers to draft an Act to replace the FCRA.

Security and intelligence agencies have voiced concern at diversion of foreign funds by NGOs as the FCRA failed to ensure the prosecution of the accused.

- Government for consultations on Bill
- NGOs need not visit Delhi for registration
- Home Ministry web site uploaded with new rules

Union Home Secretary V.K. Duggal said that often NGOs committed procedural lapses for lack of a proper understanding of the Act and rules. The seminar, organised by the Home Ministry and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, provides an opportunity for stakeholders to share their experience in executing the FCRA.

Over 30,000 registered associations under the FCRA and more than 500 other associations obtain permission every year to receive foreign contributions. The annual receipt in the voluntary sector has swelled to over Rs. 5,000 crores. The Home Ministry official web site — www.mha.nic.in — has been uploaded with the FCRA, rules, forms prescribed thereunder, the citizen's charter, the charter for the NGOs, bankers and CAs.

JUN 2004 THE HINDU

11 NGOs in Home Ministry's "prior reference list"

They can receive foreign donations only with Government approval; amendments to FCRA proposed

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Government has put 11 non-government organisations on the "prior reference category" for alleged violation of the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA). Therefore, they will be able to receive foreign donations only after prior Government approval, according to senior Home Ministry officials here on Wednesday.

In a major initiative to usher in greater awareness and transparency in the administration of FCRA, the Home Ministry is organising a two-day seminar at Vigyan Bhavan here on June 24 and 25, Additional Secretary (Home) K.P. Singh told reporters.

The seminar is expected to

• **Problems relating to receipt and use of foreign contributions to be discussed**

• **More than 30,000 associations are registered under the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act**

• **More than Rs. 5,000 crores of foreign contribution received annually**

• **U.S., U.K., Germany top contributors of assistance**

• **Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka receive most contributions**

bring together various stakeholders such as NGOs, bankers, chartered accountants and donors on the same platform to discuss problems relating to the receipt and use of foreign contributions.

The feedback would help carry out the amendments to the FCRA, he said but refused to divulge the area of concern or the nature of amendments.

Over 30,000 associations are registered under the FCRA and more than Rs. 5,000 crores of foreign contribution is received annually by the voluntary sector.

While the United States tops the list of donors in the voluntary sector, the United Kingdom follows and Germany takes the third.

Delhi is on the top of the list of recipients of foreign contributions to NGOs and the three southern States — Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka follow closely.

Mr. Singh said that for receiving foreign donations for tsunami rehabilitation, the Government had waived the condition of registration and the NGOs could receive grants till

March 31 this year. But they should file their annual returns by July 31, 2005.

To a question, Mr. Singh denied that there were any reports with the Ministry suggesting that foreign contributions to several 'madrassas' were being diverted for activities "inimical to the interest of the country." Intelligence agencies kept an eye on NGOs with a dubious record.

"Some unscrupulous elements"

"Some associations are doing a commendable job in their respective fields but still there are certain unscrupulous elements who are involved in nefarious activities in the garb of overt welfare schemes and projects.

The Home Ministry's focus is to ensure that such associations which are engaged in anti-national, illegal activities are not allowed to function or flourish and, at the same time, to see that no hindrance is caused to genuine NGOs carrying out welfare and development work," Mr. Singh said.

Several associations were violating the FCRA due to lack of awareness and a clear understanding of the law.

The seminar, being held in association with the Institute of Chartered Accounts of India, would help them.

Two booklets on the FCRA with court rulings and case studies would be released during the seminar.

23 JUN 2005

THE HINDU

40-15

Carbide clean-up may not be safe: NGOs

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bhopal: A clean-up inside Union Carbide's pesticide factory has landed Babulal Gaur government in trouble. Following a high court order, Madhya Pradesh Pollution Control Board (MPPCB) and Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation department started a repacking and sealing operation of toxic chemicals left behind by the Union Carbide Corporation. The state government, however, denied it had deployed labourers at the site to handle the lethal chemicals after some local gas NGOs created an uproar alleging that migrant labourers were handling toxic stockpiles without adequate safeguards.

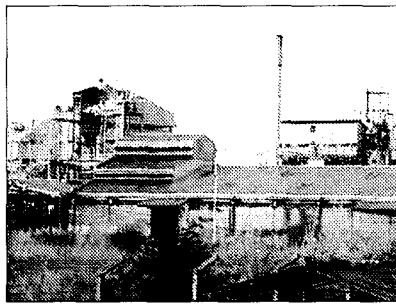
"MPPCB and Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation should be criminally charged under the 283 (danger or obstruction in public way) and 284 (negligent with poisonous substances which can cause danger to human life) Section of Indian Penal Code," said Syed M Irfan, president of Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha.

On May 10, Jabalpur High Court had asked the state government to take steps and contain any further contamination of soil and environment by the lethal chemicals still lying inside the factory premises more than 20 years after the Bhopal gas tragedy. The state government was ordered to submit a report before the high

court by June 20 about the works undertaken to curb contamination specially during the monsoon season. Following this, the state government had called for quotations from contractors who would undertake the clean-up job in the factory.

Speaking to TOI, Abdul Jabbar, convener of the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udhog Sangathan, a gas NGO, explained: "The quotations were to be submitted to the state government before June 4. The department's concerned were to take a decision on the quotations after

that. Meanwhile, the day of submission of report before the High Court was drawing near. Hence, this small venture was undertaken by the Capital Project Authority, an agency attached to the Gas Welfare department, so that the state government could show some work in its report before the High



The Union Carbide plant in Bhopal

Court."

Though the state government is tightlipped, sources in the gas welfare and rehabilitation department said orders for a "simple sweeping and swabbing" plus renovation of the company's godowns so that all entry points could be sealed without any leaks or broken doors and windows were given. The chemicals were to be repacked in safe containers, then stockpiled inside the godowns and sealed. NGOs argue there are 2,000 metric tonnes of toxic chemicals inside the warehouses.

JUN 2005

JUN 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

200 NGOs under ministry's scanner

RAJNISH Sharma
New Delhi, May 31

Following complaints from Maharashtra Government that some Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) receiving foreign contributions were funding Naxal outfits in the State, the Union Home Ministry is scanning the records of 200-odd NGOs that received more than Rs 5,000 crore as foreign donations last year.

This is the first time that any State Government has raised the issue of NGOs, getting foreign funds, providing monetary support to the Naxal groups. Documents available with the Hindustan Times reveal that Maharashtra Government has also informed the Home Ministry in writing about the vexed issue.

NGOs receiving foreign donations have to take prior clearance from the Ministry of Home Affairs under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act

(FCRA). Highly placed Ministry sources said records, particularly of NGOs active in Maharashtra and other Naxal infested States, were being closely scrutinised.

Maharashtra raised the issue of NGOs giving financial assistance to Naxal outfits during the meeting of the Western Zonal Council held in Mumbai last Tuesday. The meeting chaired by Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil was also attended by Gujarat, Goa and Daman and Diu.

Naxalism violence has shown a sharp increase in Maharashtra in the last few months. The Home Ministry has now asked the Maharashtra Government to furnish some intelligence inputs on the NGOs suspected of funding the Naxal groups. "We have asked the Maharashtra Government to provide specific names so that action can be taken against these NGOs," top Ministry official said.

01 JUN 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

NGO to bring drinking water to desert villages

HO-5
7/5

Seeks community participation at the time of acute scarcity

Special Correspondent

JAIPUR: In a unique initiative of its kind, the Jal Bhagirathi Foundation, working on the water conservation front in the Marwar region of western Rajasthan, has taken up the task of distribution of drinking water to a few problem villages in the desert terrain. As in the case of its water conservation efforts in the past, the Foundation has sought community participation in water distribution at the time of acute scarcity.

The programme, christened Shiv Ganga Peyjal Pariyojna, initiated with the support of institutions and local donors the Foundation, seeks to supply water to the development blocks of

Agolai, Balotra, Luni and Rohet.

"The Pariyojna is designed to support the government's water distribution programme while keeping with the highest traditions of Marwar to provide water in distress," Gaj Singh, former ruler of Jodhpur and chairman of JBF said launching the programme at Bijolai near Jodhpur.

As the Shiv Ganga scheme was launched in the backdrop of traditional festivities like gher dance and desert music on Thursday, a prayer went up from everybody's heart for Shivrāj Singh, the son of Gaj Singh and Hemlata Raje, who is recovering from an accident during a polo match in Jaipur two months ago.

The occasion marked the presence of the Magsaysay Award winner, Rajendra Singh, the former queen of Jodhpur, Hemlata Raje and former Speaker of the Rajasthan Assembly, Gopal Singh. The programme will be implemented over the next seven weeks with the support of village committees, an array of trucks and tankers. It is targeted at a population of 70,000 villagers.

"Shiv Ganga is a direct extension of Jal Bhagirathi's own vision to mitigate the effects of devastating droughts in the region through revival of traditional resource management systems," noted Prithviraj Singh, the managing trustee of the JBF on the occasion.

07 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

NGOs win tug of war with govt

OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 26: Non-government organisation activists today won a battle against a government bid to control the voluntary sector.

The director-general of the Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology, Capart, L.V. Saptharishi, agreed at a special meeting to submit policy guidelines for institutional reform to its highest decision-making body for approval.

The autonomous council assists more than 12,000 organisations working in the rural development sector with funds and other resources.

Activists, including Anna Hazare, Baba Amte, Bunker Roy, Mihir Shah, Hem Bhai and Nafisa Barot, had protested against the director-general's move to foist a super-NGO body, Confederation of NGOs of Rural India (CNRI), on the voluntary sector.

The CNRI would enable NGOs to bypass strict guidelines relating to release of funds even though it has no legitimate or organic link with Capart.

The activists also protested against the manner in which new policy guidelines had been formulated and circulated without formal approval of Capart's national standing committees, general body or its highest decision-making body, the executive committee. More than half of the 100 members of the general body, which provides overall policy guidance, are representatives of the voluntary sector.

To resolve these issues, Union rural development minister Raghuvansh Prasad Singh called a special daylong meeting of the Capart executive committee today during a three-day national summit of rural NGOs of India in New Delhi. The committee includes NGO representatives.

After the four-hour meeting, Shah said the ministry had decided to withdraw a circular making it mandatory for NGOs seeking funds from Capart to be a member of CNRI. While Capart requires an NGO to be at least three years old, before it can receive funds, the CNRI does not. "This would make it possible for any kind of NGO, even if it is a day or a month old to receive funds from Capart without any check on its activities or legitimacy," said Barot.

"We have resolved our issues and they have said the policy guidelines will now be discussed in executive council meetings and approved in the proper manner," added Shah.

27 APR 2005

27 APR 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

100/110-11

NGOs for reconstituting environmental panels

By Our Staff Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 9. The setting up of seven environmental assessment expert committees by the Union Environment and Forests Ministry has been criticised by environmental groups. The committees advise the Ministry on issues of granting clearance to major projects.

In an open letter to the Ministry, the non-governmental organisations said the committees were dominated by serving and retired bureaucrats, politicians and engineers. There was little environmental expertise in the committees despite the Environment Impact Assessment Notification 1994, under which they have been constituted, clearly stating that they must be composed of experts.

Analysing six committees, the NGOs pointed out that of the 64 members, only two were wildlife experts and about half of them were from the Government or government-affiliated agencies. Two-thirds of the members were based in Delhi, Noida and Tamil Nadu (mostly Chennai). There were no representatives from indigenous and local communities. There were only three or four women members and one of them a MoEF official.

A violation

The composition of the committees was a clear violation of the notification in letter and in spirit, and, therefore, a violation of the Environment Protection Act, 1986 under which the notification had been issued.

The letter demanded the immediate dissolution of the com-

mittees and their reconstitution through a proper and transparent process with mandatory inclusion of experts and experienced people from various stakeholder groups. The process of selection of the committees should also be open and transparent.

The NGOs, including Kalpavriksha, Toxics Link, National Campaign for People's Right to Information, want the Government to ensure that the information about site visits of the committee members was put up for public information as soon as the programme was final and at least two weeks in advance of such visits. It should also be made public through notices in local newspapers so that all concerned could meet and inform the committees about their concerns. The reports of the site visits should be made available to public.

The committees have recommended for environmental clearance the Lower Subansiri Hydroelectric Project, the Siang Middle Siang (Siyom) Hydroelectric project in Arunachal Pradesh, the Chamera III in Himachal Pradesh, the Lohari Nag Pala, the Tapovan Vishnugad Hydroelectric projects in Uttaranchal and the Athirappilly Hydroelectric Project, Kerala.

A decision on projects such as the Expansion of the Jindal Sponge Iron Plant in Raigarh, Chhatisgarh, is awaited. The projects will have severe social and environmental impact. Also, the local communities oppose them, as their livelihood and natural resources will be affected, the letter said.

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THE HINDU

Zaheera wants SC to probe Setalvad assets

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 29 MARCH

BEST Bakery witness Zaheera Sheikh, under scrutiny for turning turtle on her statement in the Gujarat riot case, has now demanded a probe into the wealth of social activist Teesta Setalvad in an affidavit filed before the Supreme Court.

In the affidavit submitted before the two-member Committee constituted by the Supreme Court to ascertain the truth behind the conflicting statements of the prime witness and the activist, Ms Sheikh has also cast aspersions on the role of National Human Rights Commission in persuading the Court to monitor the riot cases.

Accusing Ms Setalvad of "tutoring her" prior to her deposition before the NHRC, Ms Sheikh said: "I was taken to the office of NHRC and was made to say orally what Teesta had told me to say."

The riot witness has distanced from her purported statement NHRC submitted before the apex court during the hearing on cases. Claiming that the statement was not what she had orally told the Commission, she requested the Committee, headed by Supreme Court registrar and senior Delhi



police officer Kawaljit Deol, to summon the records of the human right body.

According to Ms Sheikh, the chairman and two members of the commission were present when her statement was recorded. "I would like my lawyer to examine the chairman of the NHRC in respect of her statement, which formed part of the affidavit filed on behalf of the human rights body," she said in her affidavit.

Her affidavit also contains instances alleging the ways through which Ms Setalvad marketed Gujarat riots for personal advantage. "Neither Teesta nor her husband is running any NGO called Communal Combat, which is a business venture of a company or firm known as Sabrang Publication," the affidavit claimed.

295 NGOs blacklisted as funds stopment to many

By Arun Kumar Das/TNN

New Delhi: If you promise something, learn to deliver. NGOs working in the rural sector found this out the hard way when 295 of them got blacklisted. This was after they took funds from the government and failed to deliver on projects proposed by them. Funds were also stopped to 263 NGOs.

A majority of these NGOs were

from UP, Haryana, West Bengal, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh.

This action was meted out by the Council for Advancement of People Action and Rural Technology (Capart), the nodal agency coordinating partnerships between NGOs and the government for sustainable development in rural areas.

Capart gets Rs 65 crore annually from the Rural Development Ministry

for facilitating these projects. These include some 1,000 integrated and innovative schemes ranging from water conservation, bio-mass utilisation, small-scale industries, health and sanitation, education, rural energy, housing and environment protection and economic activities for disabled people. An NGO gets a maximum grant of Rs 1.5 crore for a scheme to be implemented within a specified pe-

riod. Three projects at a time can be funded. "Many NGOs failed to submit details of fund utilisation. Many also exist only on paper. We found this happening in Karnal, Panipat and Kurukheta. Action was initiated against them for misappropriation of funds," says R P Meena, chief vigilance officer, Capart.

He adds, "We're formulating new guidelines for effective implementa-

tion of the projects. Besides proper verification, we are trying to get photographs of the projects undertaken. We're also making it mandatory for all members of NGOs to submit their photographs."

But these NGOs do perform an important function. The government banks on them to carry forward its development agenda by disbursing funds in the right direction.

Focus on rehabilitation: NGOs

By R.K. Radhakrishnan

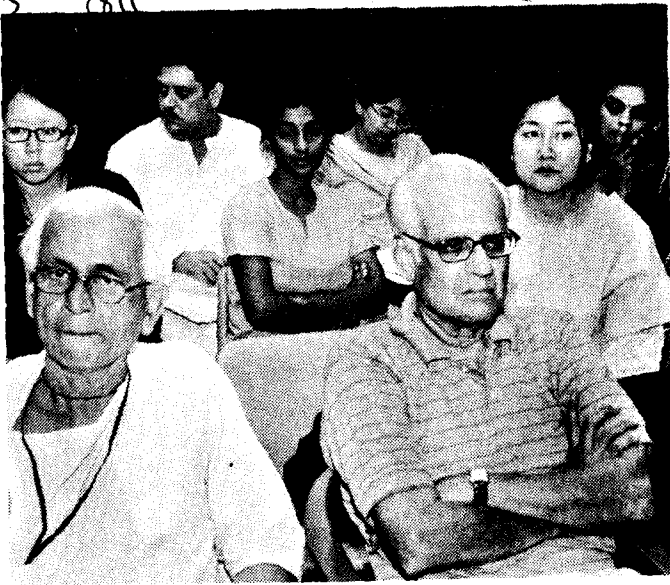
CHENNAI, JAN. 2. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that have significant experience in extending relief and rehabilitation to victims of natural disasters today requested at a meeting here that the State Government announce a date for stopping relief work and start focussing on rehabilitation.

"People do not want to live on charity. Because of their helplessness they accept food and other things given to them initially. But slowly they get used to it. Hence the Government should decide when it should stop relief operations," said Sushma Iyengar of Abhiyan from Bhuj, who had engaged in relief work after the Latur and Bhuj earthquakes.

"The more free food you pump in, the more dependence you create. You need to announce a date for closure of relief," said Gagan Sethi of Jan Vikas, Ahmedabad. There should be a grievance redressal machinery right from the village level where people could approach when the damage assessment process begins. "After Latur there were four levels of assessment of damage. In Bhuj this was reduced to three. The fewer the levels, the better it is," said Mr. Sethi.

He suggested appointment of an Ombudsman in each of the affected areas so that the affected could get in touch with him/her to seek redressal of their complaints on assessment of losses.

"From the Gujarat experience what we have learnt is that the mistakes made in the initial 25 days tend to get repeated. The need to help overwhelms the need for help," said Ms. Iyengar. She said that very few organisations and volunteers were actually concentrating on talking to people. Right now, hundreds of people were walking in and



A meeting of non-governmental organisations in progress in Chennai on Sunday. — Photo: K. V. Srinivasan

out of the affected villages each day. This could create shock and anger, she said. "We need people to be in villages for some length of time and merely talk to them and listen to them. They don't need to be counselors," she said. Women volunteers were required in equal number for this task.

After the Latur and Bhuj disasters there was a surfeit of organisations and business houses that wanted to adopt villages and areas. This, according to the Gujarat NGOs, was a bad way to go about the task of rebuilding and reconstruction. "Adoption should not be rushed. Partnership is a better way...language at these times sets the mood for the things that follow," she said.

The organisations that participated in the meeting organised by the Bhoomika Trust include Christian Counselling Centre, Vellore; Abhiyan/KVMS from Gujarat; NIMHANS from Bangalore; IIT-Madras; Indians for Collective Action, U.S.A.; Association for India's Development, U.S.A.; The Banyan, SMILE and Samanvaya, all based in Chennai, ActionAid,

People's Watch and SIFFS Tamil Nadu Fishermen's Society.

The Puthiya Tamizhagam president, K. Krishnasamy, who had set up medical camps in some of the affected areas said that as much as 90 per cent of the people had one health problem or the other. In a single camp, he had come across 200 cases of indigestion, possibly because of the supply of stale food. Better coordination was needed between the NGOs working in the affected areas and the Government, he added.

C.V. Shankar, Officer on Special Duty to coordinate with NGOs and donors, said that if NGOs had a problem in storage or transport, they could hand over the materials to the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation. (Ph: 2481 2404 - Virugambakkam). A senior officer from Gujarat, V. Thiruppugazh, has arrived to coordinate efforts at the Government level. Efforts were on to set up digital radio receiving stations in many of the affected areas. If the NGOs wanted to communicate to all the affected, this could be done from his office in the next few days, he added.