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'Enact code of conduct for NGOs for transparency'

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday called for enacting a code of conduct for good governance of non-government organisations (NGOs) to ensure transparency and accountability of NGO activities in the country.

They also said all NGOs, functioning in the country, have to abide by the proposed code of conduct willingly so that transparency and accountability in their work can be ensured.

The speakers were addressing at the roundtable on "NGO Governance Principles (NGP)" organised by Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) at its office at Gulshan in the city.

Safi Rahman Khan, NGO Governance Consultant of BEI, presented a draft on NGP and Lopa Rahman, project coordinator of Corporate Governance Project of BEI, made a brief presentation on how the principles came about.

Addressing at the function, CQK Mushtaq Ahmed, director general of NGO Affairs Bureau, said there are 2,000 enlisted NGOs in the county and besides there are also some unlisted NGOs, which are working in the remote parts of the country.

"It is difficult for us to monitor transparency and accountability of all these NGOs," he said, adding that the donor agencies should also monitor the works of NGOs and their donations are being used.

There is lack of professionalism in many NGOs, so this code of conduct will be helpful for smooth running and will ensure transparency, he added.

Dr Mohammad Ibrahim, chairperson of Federation of NGOs in Bangladesh, said, "Today's roundtable is a good initiative to ensure accountability and transparency of NGOs".

He however observed that there are many NGOs in the country, which are working only for helping poor people and they do not have enough financial and other technical capacity to follow all principles of the proposed code of conduct.

Therefore, he suggested that the proposed NGP should not be applicable to all NGOs rather it should be voluntarily.

Barrister Manzoor Hasan, deputy executive director of Brac, said all capable NGOs should provide audit report and other data in their websites to ensure transparency and accountability.

To address poverty reduction, good health, education, nutrition and other issues, building good relationship and strong cooperation among all large and small NGOs is a must, he added.

Barrister Hasan said, "We have to make the NGP in such a way so that all NGOs can easily adopt those principles."

BEI President Farooq Sobhan presided over the discussion, while Dr MA Hakim, general manager of Palli-Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) and representatives of different NGOs, international development agencies and relevant government officials were also present.