



Donors want 'innocent until proven guilty' policy on NGOs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In dealing with the NGOs, donors at the upcoming Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) meeting are going to ask the government to follow the principle of 'innocent until proven guilty'.

The other issues the donors are going to press for include a level playing field in selecting and contracting NGOs (non-government organisation) and timely processing fund release.

The donors in discussion notes prepared by them will ask the government to implement measures to check abuse of the NGO regulatory power to improve the enabling environment for achievement of

Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper goals.

The donors will also suggest the government to recognise the diverse roles of the NGOs and ensure that the NGOs have legal and functional space to fulfil those.

Referring to the last year's BDF, the donors say they recognise the government's right to ensure that the NGOs are working within overall national goals and strategies. At the same time it is crucial that the NGOs continue to be given reasonable freedom to operate without political influence and undue bureaucratic control.

"The NGOs are expected to abide by governance standards and exist in a regulated environment-- regulated by criminal and civil laws. The counterpoint is the expectation that those who regulate them shall also act according to the regulations in place," the discussion note says.