

**18-Point Programme
for
National Liberation**

National Liberation Council (NLC)

Preface

The present social order of Bangladesh is disintegrating very fast. The anarchy that is natural in such a situation is being noticed widely now in Bangladesh. It has not only created havoc within the administrative system of the ruling class, but at the same time life of the people in general is being shattered thousand times more in the process. Life of the people of all walks of life from rural to urban areas is facing an extreme uncertainty. People want an end to this uncertainty. They want a fundamental change of the entire society and the ruling system, the change that cannot be attained by any election within the prevailing system.

In reality the predator (plunderer-terrorist) ruling class that is organically related to imperialism and the working people of the entire country: workers, peasants, middle-class are in a face to face position. There is no doubt that this position will cast both the sides into an extreme conflict.

This possibility is being noticed in the practical condition of the economy, social relations, cultural and political situations of the entire country. There is no reason to consider it to be a wishful thinking. Such thinking will be synonymous to closing one's eyes by not noticing the development of the concrete situation. Therefore the methods and programmes of the people's struggle of this country will have to be determined considering this possibility.

The people of this country have been waging struggles against the exploiter ruling class in various forms. By means of successive elections, they have sent government after government to power. All the governments thus elected have shattered the life of the people even more by breaking the commitments completely, by indulging in unfair means, plunder and terrorism. For this reason, it has become obvious that even minor achievements, what to say about people's emancipation, cannot be attained in changing the government by means of election.

In such a situation, some issue-based movements are being waged. Short term movements based on issues are being organized one after another in scattered form, and at times powerfully expressed in some sectors, but are not aimed at a fundamental change of the society. Those who want to confine themselves within the arena of issue-based movements do want to handle the crisis, protecting the basic foundation and structure of the existing society. For this reason, although it is an indispensable task to wage issue-based movements, these movements are basically bourgeois petty-bourgeois in character.

Exploitation of and oppression upon working class, especially the proletariat are intense and widespread, and therefore the urge for a total change is felt most intensely by them. For this they are the decisive factor in the process of overthrowing the exploitative system. They are capable of drawing a complete end to this exploitative system with the cooperation of all the forces of struggle. It is their historical role as a class.

The programme that we are presenting is a fundamental strategic programme. Implementation of this programme means effecting a fundamental change of the society. Therefore such items have been included in this programme which if implemented would lead to the materialization of thousands of democratic and pro-people programmes as a natural course.

18-Point Immediate Programme

1. In order to establish people's ownership over domestic capital:
 - (a) All capitals and properties of the plunderers will be confiscated,
 - (b) All imperialist capitals will be confiscated,
 - (c) All unequal loan agreements with various imperialist organizations will be terminated.
2. a) All land and water resources will be nationalized exempting the lands of small and middle-sized functional peasants. But the land owned by the rich peasants will be left to their ownership under a certain ceiling, provided they do not oppose the movement and social change. They will be given the opportunity to cultivate these lands by investing their own capital. All workers working in these lands will have to be paid a wage determined by the cooperative and cannot be forced to work for more than 48 hours a week. These land owners will have to sell their harvest at a price determined by agricultural co-operative.

All systems of leasing: markets, bazaars, ports, forests, hills and roads and highways will be abolished.

The prescriptive right to land of all the nations and nationalities including that of the hill people of Chittagong Hill Tracts and land management will be left to the self-governed organization elected by the local people.

- (b) Agricultural co-operatives elected by the rural people will be established for distribution of land for cultivation, meeting the demand of loan for production, for determining the appropriate wage or share of the produce of the producer, determining the share of the produce for general expenditure of the co-operatives and the state and for preserving and marketing the produces.
- (c) State-owned farms will be established taking into account specific conditions of various regions. Co-ordination committees will be elected by means of direct voting of the workers in order to run each state-owned farm.

3. All big industries will be nationalized exempting the small and middle-sized ones. Management committee will be established in each industrial unit by means of general voting of the workers for the management of all nationalized industries.

Humanitarian wages for workers of nationalized sectors and also of workers of small and middle-sized private industries will be determined. 48-hour working week for all workers will be enforced. All rights of the workers as workers will be protected.

4. All international and all important domestic trade will be nationalized. Small and middle-sized domestic trade and commerce will be controlled in such a manner, that there will be no scope of smuggling, black-marketing and arbitrary price hiking. Necessary steps will

be taken in order to control price of commodities. Rationing system will be introduced in order to keep prices of food items in control.

5. All local and foreign financial organizations including banks and insurance companies will be nationalized.
6. a) All sorts of open and secret unequal military and civil pacts with various imperialist, hegemonic and expansionist countries will be terminated. All secret pacts will be published for the knowledge of the people.
- (b) Conspiracy and sabotage activities by various imperialist donor agencies (NGOs) in economic, cultural and political sectors will be prohibited. All their capitals and properties will be confiscated.
7. Employment opportunity will be made for all able-bodied people. All necessary expenditure for the orphans, aged and disabled people will be borne by the state.
8. Equal democratic rights will be guaranteed to all irrespective of caste, religion and language. The rights of each nation and nationality on the basis of their specific characteristics, the right of all religious people to practice their religions according to their specific religious rites, the right of all linguistic groups to receive education in their own language and to practice such languages will be established. All forms of political use of religion will be prohibited.

Inequality towards women regarding social relationship, politics, wages etc will be abolished, and severe punishment will be imposed against repression of women and children.

All sorts of inequality, exploitation and oppression against low cast people termed as 'dalits' will be abolished.

9. Education system will be nationalized and made free of cost. A general education system will be introduced instead of many in order to ensure mental development, attainment of scientific attitude, and create social awareness and responsibility among the students. Necessary steps will be taken in order to make primary education compulsory. Secondary and technical education will be encouraged. Appropriate and necessary steps will be taken for the expansion of higher education and research work.
10. With a view to develop a democratic culture, all sorts of feudal thoughts and trends and lumpen cultural influences will be eradicated, and all sorts of imperialist cultural aggressions will be resisted. Whatever humane and progressive elements are present in local heritage will be preserved, and each branch of culture will be developed by maintaining the continuity of such heritage.
11. Free treatment facilities will be established and rapid expansion of health system will be carried out. Number of medical colleges, nurses' training centres, hospitals, health care centres will be increased rapidly and made widespread in order to expand health facilities. In order to make medicines available, pharmaceutical industry will be extensively extended.

12. Hygienic dwelling places for all the people will be ensured, and housing development programme will be implemented gradually.
13. Transport system will be gradually nationalized, expanded and made easily available.
14. Environment pollution activities will be totally stopped by taking necessary steps in all spheres against the way the environment is being polluted in capitalist-imperialist interest.
15. All sorts of national resources including water, oil, gas etc will be utilized in the interest of the people.
16. Necessary steps will be taken in order to build up national defence system on a democratic basis.
17. Representative council election will be held for administrative units like union, thana, district and national councils on the basis of direct adult franchise. Recall system will be introduced and made operative in special situations for elected persons at all levels. Various levels of administrative, judicial and other governmental authorities will be elected by the representative bodies at each level.
18. Relationship with the democratic and revolutionary struggle of the people of different countries will be established and mutual cooperation will be maintained with them.

Government and Constitution

There cannot be any question of implementing any programme without political power. The question of power is inextricably related to programmes. Moreover, the programme itself determines the character of power, and again character of power determines the character of programme. Programmes formulated in people's interest cannot be executed by anybody else other than people's tested organizations and their representatives.

In order to formulate and execute different programmes at state level, necessary use and exercise of power has to be done by the state. And again the state has to do it under the framework of a constitution. Therefore a suitable constitutional framework is necessary in order to execute any democratic programme. But in special cases, in special historical situations, if some programmes are needed to be executed on emergency basis, in that case the forces holding political power can do the same, and in reality they do so.

This situation arises at an interim period when one constitution becomes unworkable and it has not been replaced by another suitable constitution.

In the interim period after the establishment of Bangladesh as an independent state in 1971, and the formation of a new constitution in 1973, the then ruling government had to execute some necessary functions in this manner. It has to be done this way because there remains no other way open for any government irrespective of its class character. The programme that has been proposed here cannot be implemented within the existing constitutional framework. This constitution needs to be changed completely. In its place, a democratic constitution is needed which will enable the struggle to continue and hold the power created through the exercise of democratic forces and under whose framework all democratic programmes can be implemented.

Primarily this power can be exercised by those, by those organizations of people, who will organize democratic struggles effectively throughout the country and at the climax of these struggles will seize power by means of people's uprising.

After the seizure of power in this manner, formation of a provisional government will be needed. The primary function of this provisional government will be to organize an election for a constituent assembly on the basis of adult franchise. Constituent assembly formed in this manner will frame a new constitution, and function as a parliament until a general election is held. This parliament will form a government which will replace the provisional government.

[Adopted in the National Convention held in Dhaka on 24 October, 2003.]

National Liberation Council (NLC)
(Bangladesh National Liberation Struggle Organizing Council)

Published and distributed by the Central Executive Committee.