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Right rehabilitation to up agriculture

Exports to lose anyhow, say economists

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

If the government fails to properly implement post-flood agriculture rehabilitation programme, it can push the economy off the track and greatly affect GDP (gross domestic product) growth, economists say.

But successful implementation of rehabilitation programme using the experience of 1998 post-flood situation could lead to bumper agricultural production. Some losses are however inevitable in the export sector, they add.

The on-going flood, if it continues further, will specially hurt agriculture and industry -- mainly export-oriented industry, economists think.

It is possible to turn the tables for the agriculture sector while it is also possible to minimise losses in the

industrial sector through timely action of the government, economists Dr Zaid Bakht, Dr Mustafizur Rahman and Dr Atiur Rahman noted.

Back in 1998-99, GDP growth slid down to 4.87 percent from the previous two years' steady rate of over 5 percent. But agricultural growth in 1998 that saw the massive floods was 3.24 percent -- a jump from the previous year's 1.63 percent. And 1999 saw even a better agricultural growth -- 6.92 percent.

The GDP target of the current fiscal year is 6 percent while according to the provisional estimates, the previous fiscal year's GDP was 5.23 percent.

In the last fiscal year, agriculture contributed to the GDP Tk 42,630 crore, of which crops and vegetables contributed Tk 31,189 crore.

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Agriculture Extension Department fears agriculture sector will be the worst-hit in this year's floods. The latest estimates put crop damage at Tk 2291 crore and the figure is rapidly increasing day by day.

"The flood will severely damage seeds and seedbeds. This loss can be recovered through timely and appropriate rehabilitation programme," observes Dr Zaid Bakht, senior research director of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

On agriculture ministry's plan to help 12 lakh small farmers, he said, "It will not work if the ministry does not get into action immediately after announcing the project. In addition, the Prime Minister's Office itself should monitor it regularly to

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Garment workers yesterday walk to work through black filthy floodwaters that inundated much of the capital, overwhelming the sewerage system. Raging monsoon floods in two-thirds of Bangladesh left about 30 million people homeless or cut off.

Biman takes passengers for a ride, or two!

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Officials of Biman Bangladesh Airlines yesterday made passengers of its Dhaka-Syedpur flight, which ran more than three hours behind schedule, twice to board the wrong aircraft.

Infuriated passengers said the trouble started when the authorities announced that the flight scheduled for 8:30 in the morning had been delayed and would instead take off at 10:15am.

As they were taken to the terminal to board the plane, the officials told them it was not the Syedpur-bound plane. They immediately took the passengers to another plane. As the passengers were about to board the plane, they were again told that it too was not the right one and took the passengers back to the terminal.

Authorities then told the passengers that the plane would fly at 11:30am, putting the delay down to technical faults.

"After all the hassles, we were left

with no option but to wait until 11:30am," said Monzoor Hossain, one of the annoyed passengers. "I am shocked to see that Biman runs under such a poor management despite its severe image crisis."

The incensed passengers scuffled with the Biman officials at the airport, sources said. The flight finally took off at 11:45am.

"It was a lapse on our part," said a top official of the Airport Service Wing on condition of anonymity. "It's our failure but it cannot be accepted in the aviation industry."

The official said the incident occurred as the official concerned mistook a clearance message over his walkie-talkie. "He should have cross-checked it," he said, adding, "We have instantly showcased him..."

Fazle Sobhani, general manager of Central Control, however, claimed the flight was scheduled at 10:15am and delayed due to technical fault with the aircraft that flew from Sylhet and was scheduled to fly

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HC ADDL JUDGES
Law ministry to announce decision today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs may today announce the government's decision about the fate of 11 High Court (HC) additional judges who await confirmation as full judges.

Studying the recommendation of the prime minister, the president's office has already sent its decision to law ministry.

Abdul Awal, Tariq Ul Hakim, Mizanur Rahman, Mir Hasmat Ali, Masuk Hossain Ahmed, Sarfuddin Chaklader, Syed AB Mahmudul Huq, Salma Masud Chowdhury, Abdus Salam Mamun, ATM Fazlur Rahman and Sidiqur Rahman Miah were appointed additional judges on July 29, 2002 for two years.

Prayer Timing

July 28

	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-20	4-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Magrib	6-50	6-55
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Mortar kills Iraqi, hurt 14 soldiers

AP Baghdad

A Baghdad mortar barrage killed an Iraqi and injured 14 coalition soldiers yesterday, while a senior Egyptian diplomat returned to work a day after being released by militants. Gunmen also killed a hospital official south of the capital.

The release of Mohammed

Mamoud Helmi Qutb, the third ranking diplomat at the Egyptian mission here, came as two different militant groups threatened to kill four new foreign hostages in an increasingly audacious wave of kidnappings in Iraq. A third group threatened attacks to cut off the highway between Jordan and

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Checking epidemics daunting task now

MORSHED ALI KHAN
from Dhunat, Bogra

As floodwater recedes, a daunting task of containing epidemics and rehabilitating 43,807 flood victims awaits the authorities here.

On July 17 the armed forces took over the overall responsibility of monitoring relief, healthcare and reconstruction work.

An army team led by the Area Commander Major General Fazle Elahi Akbar had visited Goshaihari under Dhunat upazila and later discussed with the local government authorities the best possible ways to conduct relief operations.

The Chairman of Bhandarbari union parishad Belal Hossain Babu and his men allegedly cut open the embankment in the early hours of July 14. The onrush of 12 feet high water washed away four villages and the Goshaihari Bazar. Locals reported 60 people to be missing in that act of sabotage. Thousands of families lost most of their belongings. They now live in subhuman conditions on high-land areas with scarce relief, mainly coarse rice, supplied by government agencies.

Relief distribution among the victims who took shelter on different embankments took a twist as the

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Palestine PM ends standoff with Arafat

REUTERS, Ramallah

Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei withdrew his resignation yesterday after Yasser Arafat granted him some powers to carry out reforms, easing a paralyzing leadership crisis, officials said.

Qurei's chief of staff said he had won effective control over police and internal security agencies, part of a security apparatus whose chaos and corruption is seen by international mediators as an obstacle to peacemaking with Israel.

Arafat's move, initially disclosed by a pro-reform committee of legislators after a meeting with the president, came after an unprecedented

explosion of unrest over high-level inaction on demands for anti-corruption reforms.

But Arafat, a former guerrilla leader, has not honored similar promises in the past. Tuesday's deal leaves him in charge of national security and intelligence which encompass the bulk of Palestinian security personnel.

The president rejected my resignation and I will (now) comply," Qurei told reporters after 10 days of turmoil that raised fears of a descent into anarchy in the West Bank and Gaza.

"I hope I will be up to this confidence and cooperate with (Arafat) in

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