

1998 Flood ended but left behind a pale blue Bangladesh. About 85,000 sq.km land area of Bangladesh has been inundated by the worst flood of this century. The most remarkable characteristics of this current devastating flood were—its duration (longest) and tremendous damaging effect. Due to this worst flood socio-economic and political condition, biodiversity, natural environment, social security etc. have been badly impacted and these impacts would be short to long term basis. This flood has caused unfathomable miseries to the harmless villagers.

Md. Safiqul Islam an inhabitant of the village Nadirabad under Nowabganj district is a marginal farmer and he informed that he has lost his entire aman paddy (main crop of the year) inter alia while talking. Aynal Hoque, a co-villager of Safiqul Islam has lost his entire aman crop too. They are in a fix, they don't know how their coming days will go by. More than 80% households of this village have been destroyed due to this flood. It is quite impossible to find out a single country man that has not been affected by this flood at all.

As mentioned above the impacts of flood on society are multifarious and the degree and magnitude of impacts on rural and urban Bangladesh are not similar there to. Maximum damage has occurred in agricultural sector undoubtedly.

Standing crops (specially transplanted aman paddy), poultry, domestic animals, trees, different kinds of herbs and shrubs including various medicinal plants have been destroyed due to this long lasting flood. Among these, partial or complete destruction of standing field crops of the farmers (including marginal farmers and share croppers) has terrified the most rural people as because their food

security is already affected. Moreover, the farm labourers who were dreaming to collect their foodgrain for the time being by engaging themselves in harvesting and transportation of farmers crops, now are to be dazed. So, the issue of food security (including domestic animals) worried the rural people by a long chalk. This insecure condition would create many unsocial activities like stealing of standing field crops (ripen or half ripen), even from household storage, domestic animals, bullocks etc. dacoity and so on. For stealing of ripen or half ripen standing crops primarily affects the crop cultivators and secondly the nation as a whole due to increasing wastage. Such being the case many fatal incidences even murder may take place during crop protection. Although these occurrences are not new in the society but the present post flood situation is different to a great extent in terms of destruction from any previous year and thus needs special attention to take quick and appropriate measures in order to check or reduce the frequency

of the above mentioned antisocial incidences.

To free rural people from food insecurity, programmes like Food for Work, VGF, VGD etc. should be intensified from both sides Govt. and non-govt. Thana administration should keep alert and police patrol during night time may increase in rural areas. Of course, Ansar, VDP may also be deployed to this effect. Union Parishad can play a vital role by forming voluntary team in cooperation with the local people. Finally people must be made aware duly about the steps taken by the Govt. as to they can participate properly.

Post flood impact on urban society though different from that of rural Bangladesh but there is a linkage between this two. To what extent urban security will be effected mostly depends on strengthening rural food security, employment generation and sustainability of the marginal farmers. Failing this, a large number of unemployed and starved people will be created and compelled to migrate towards the cities in quest of livelihood. As a result,

the number and size of the slums will increase, increase traffic jam, footpaths will be occupied by the illegal occupier and so on. Simultaneously various types of subversive and anti-social activities will be intensified that would ultimately result in social insecurity.

So, prior to further degradation of social security appropriate preventive and corrective measures should be undertaken without wasting time. It should bear in mind that probes must be solved at the point of origin otherwise newer probes would crop up in the society. Therefore, relief operation, rehabilitation and development must be much more village oriented and no alternative thereof.

In Bangladesh, like many other third world countries there is a close connection between food supply, its market price situation (specially in the cities) and politics. For any due or undue rise in price of food, city dwellers become anti govt. severely and thus govt. try to placate them by keeping the price low. The large urban populations which included an

educated urban elite that, together with the concentrated populations of the cities, constitute the most organized power base and possible threat to the govt. There urban population are thus invariably indulged by govt. to ensure their support. To do so rural Bangladesh left uncared/unheeded always and its resultant effect is neither rural nor urban development could attend in real sense. So rural development must not throw off behind the effort of gaining urban satisfaction after this devastating flood if so, then social security will breakdown fully.

To overcome the situation in the high time to concentrate our thinking over the country's development strategies and perhaps the only solution is IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Programme) which coincides with Agenda-21 adopted in Earth Summit 1992 held in Rio de Janeiro.

Very recently the premier of Bangladesh has declared to undertake IRDP to mitigate the loss of this flood (The Bangladesh Observer, Dated: 17-11-98). In true sense, such a programme is inevitable for the welfare of the country and also to produce a developed and prosperous Bangladesh before the world. The most important thing in this critical moment is to ensure maximum utilization of country's limited resources in an environment friendly way and efforts should be made to increase biological potentiality of the land.

In fine it can be said that such a horrified situation may not be the expectation of a civil society and thus it is needful to face the post flood condition with courage, honesty and integrated effort to depauperize the people by mitigating the negative impacts and enhancing the positive impacts of flood '98.

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Post Flood Impact on Social Security

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