



# The Financial Express

## Seasonal poverty drives rural migration

FE REPORT | Tuesday, 29 March 2022



### Research Findings

Umpteen people suffer from poverty, deprivation often in pre-harvest lean season

Fall prey to rural moneylenders to manage migration cost

In 2014, some 36 per cent of households in northern Bangladesh sent circular migrants while 96 per cent was internal migration

Seasonal poverty in several parts of Bangladesh remains a concern for rural economy and affects socioeconomic lives of marginal people, leading to their crowding in urban areas.

An economics professor made such revealing observation in a public lecture arranged Monday by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

To address this problem of lean-time poverty and resultant internal migration, Dr Ahmed Mushfiq Mobarak suggested

introducing specialised microcredit facility for the seasonal poor, who are forced to move out to other parts of the country in search of a living.

"Providing the seasonal poor with financial support can help them tackle the situation in a great deal, which has been proved in research," the economist, who is a professor at Yale University in the United States, told his audience about the remedy for this ill, seen as a challenge while Bangladesh striving for a higher development status.

He was delivering the lecture on 'Innovations to address seasonal poverty', organised by the BIDS in its conference room in Dhaka's Agargaon area. BIDS Director-General Dr Binayak Sen presided.

Prof Mushfiq said hundreds of millions of people suffer from seasonal poverty, acute deprivation often associated with pre-harvest lean season in different countries like Bangladesh.

"Several researches associated with the seasonal poverty revealed that such deprivation is harmful for a number of reasons," he says, on an apparent note of caution for policymakers.

Failure of consumption smoothing imposes welfare losses, as well as desperate measures to address hunger have long-run adverse effects on lower agricultural productivity, he adds.

"Many fall prey to traditional rural lenders as the seasonal poor borrow at high interest rates from them to bear the migration expenses for several weeks," the economics professor says about a flipside of rural economy.

According to a research conducted in northern districts of Bangladesh in 2014, some 36 per cent of households sent circular migrants while 96 per cent was internal migration.

Remitting money was difficult and migrants carry money back in-person which was partly the reason for multiple migration episodes during the same lean season, he mentions, referring to the findings of the research.

"We conducted several studies in the last one decade to comprehend the state of the seasonal poverty that revealed prevalence of the crisis even in 2020," he told the lecture session.

The seasonal poverty is not only found in Bangladesh but also in many other countries like Nepal, Indonesia and many African countries, he said, adding that similar studies were also conducted in Nepal to know whether the fiscal support yield same results.

Actually seasonal deprivation differs from one setting to another, for example Nepalese migrate to different parts of India during lean season, he mentions.

They (Nepalese) can make most use of the funds if they get access to the remittance earlier.

Prof Mahbub Ullah, Dr Mohiuddin, BIDS officials and development professionals attended the programme while a number of participants joined virtually.

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Published by Syed Manzur Elahi for International Publications Limited from Tropicana Tower (4th floor), 45, Topkhana Road, GPO Box : 2526 Dhaka- 1000 and printed by him from City Publishing House Ltd., 1 RK Mission Road, Dhaka-1000.

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