



'Determined efforts, not populist approach, can help address Monga problem'

FE Report

Renowned economist Wahiduddin Mahmud underlined Wednesday the need for a well-determined and coordinated policy to cope with the extreme form of seasonal poverty called 'Monga', in the county's northern areas.

"Monga is a multidimensional seasonal phenomenon of extreme poverty... A policy-mix strategy should be adopted for addressing the situation," he said while speaking at the inaugural session of a "National Seminar on Monga" in the city.

He, however, observed that not only Monga but also poverty could not be addressed only through the bureaucratic efforts.

The Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) and the Institute of Microfinance (InM) have jointly arranged the two-day seminar at the PKSF.

Finance Adviser AB Mirza Azizul Islam addressed the function as the chief guest while the agriculture adviser C S Karim also spoke on the occasion as the special guest.

Wahiduddin, who is also the chairman of PKSF and InM, said the problem like 'Monga can be addressed with the locally' available resources.

Terming the effect of river erosion one of the major reason for the Monga, the economist said, "We need to formulate a permanent policy for the rehabilitation of such affected people."

He also added: "If a populist policy is adopted it would yield little result."

Wahiduddin also observed that it would not be rational if the concerned NGOs and financial organisations were made responsible for any national problems, which could ultimately affect their activities.

"The relief activities should not be mixed with the micro-credit operations," he added.

Referring to a recent survey conducted on 425,000 families, the PKSF and InM chairman said some 20 per cent of the Monga-affected people had to sell their assets and property for the livelihood while 40 per cent had to migrate to other places for jobs.

In his address, the finance adviser emphasised on three strategies - acceleration of the country's economic growth, integration of the growth policy with the income distributions and widening social safety-net -- need to be taken for mitigating the problems like Monga.

Islam said enhancement of investment holds the key to scaling up the country's economic growth.

He also observed that the reduction of existing 'regional disparity' was also necessary for addressing the Monga.

The government is seriously concerned about the Monga and trying to find out its permanent solution, he noted.

He further said, "It is not possible for the government alone to tackle the problem. The private sector along with the NGOs should also come forward in this regard,"

The finance adviser also pinpointed three Cs - cause identification, coping mechanism and cure formula - that need to be dealt with properly to ensure a permanent solution to the problem of Monga.

The agriculture adviser CS Karim, however, identified the global climate change as one of the major causes for the natural disasters like floods, cyclone and Monga.

"We need to adapt to the climate change side by side with the efforts of mitigating the problems like Monga," he said.

He also laid emphasis on introduction of 'stressed tolerant varieties of crops' for the flood-prone regions and development of marketing infrastructure for ensuring fair prices of agri-produce to the farmers.