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### 'Disparity in education causes poverty'

A noted economist Saturday told a seminar that an extreme disparity in access to education, not unequal land ownership, is expanding the ambit of poverty, reports UNB.  
The general perception that  
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## Disparity in education

uneven land ownership is at the root of poverty here is a half truth, its rather disparity in access to education which is widening the gap in income levels, said Dr Mahboob Hossain discussing on a paper on rural poverty.

Dr Binayak Sen, research fellow of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), presented the paper at the seminar, arranged by the Bangladesh Economic Society at the Jatiya Press Club Saturday.

Sen's paper gave an optimistic view of the poverty situation in the country, saying overall poverty has virtually declined over the last decade. He cited statistics showing poverty declined by six per cent between 1983-84 and 1988-89 fiscals.

He, however, said extreme poverty level was not improving. Binayak remarked macro-economic policies of the successive governments had never been much complementary to rural people's efforts to improve their lot.

Dr Mahboob Hossain, Director General of BIDS, said low price of foodgrains compared to other essentials was a major cause of the existing rural poverty.

The price of coarse rice is increasing at a rate of five per cent while the inflation rate is more than 10 per cent, he said. "It's a bad trend for rural economy."

Endorsing his junior colleague's research findings on an improving trend in poverty situation, Dr Mahboob said

although growth scenario was dismal throughout eighties, poverty alleviation programmes had achieved significant success.

About 3 million rural families are now under different income-generating credit programmes extended mostly by NGOs, he said.

Economist Khandker Ibrahim Khaled presented another paper on the poverty alleviation programmes undertake over the years in Bangladesh.

Khaled was strongly of the view that Bangladesh need to depend on its own experience and expertise, not on foreign experts, to find ways out of prevailing poverty.

Criticising dependence on foreign aid by successive governments, he said about Tk 53,000 crore had so far been injected into the country's economy but that hardly could contribute to growth.

Prof Raihan Sharif and Prof Anisur Rahman also took part in the discussion. Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, Joint Secretary of the Economic Society, conducted the seminar attended by noted elite.