

# The Daily Star

12:00 AM, January 10, 2016 / LAST MODIFIED: 03:42 AM, January 10, 2016

## Poverty overarching reason behind land grabbing

*Observes an ongoing study by a unit of Brac University*

Like Hindus many poor Muslims get robbed of their property by influential people across the country, finds an ongoing study.

Sharing the initial findings at a discussion yesterday, study supervisor Prof Afsan Chowdhury said poverty of people, regardless of their religion, maybe was the most important factor making them vulnerable to land grabbing.

Researchers of the study, which is being conducted by the Diversity and Inclusion Studies Unit (DISU) of Brac University, interviewed 300 people from as many families at Derai upazila in Sunamganj and Baniachong of Habiganj in the north-east Bangladesh.

Of the 300 families, 176 lost part or all of their properties to land grabbers. All of the affected families, who were poor, owned 0-10 decimals of land, he added.

While the area is very remote, the poor people's general lack of access to justice could be one reason for their vulnerability, he observed.

Prof Afsan said there were 124 Muslim households that lost lands and in 105 of those cases influential Muslims grabbed them.

In 19 cases, impoverished Muslims' properties were grabbed by influential Hindus, he added.

Mentioning that there were 52 Hindus whose properties were grabbed, he said in eight cases poor Hindus lost their land to powerful Hindus and in 44 cases their properties were grabbed by Muslims.

The discussion was organised by the Committee for the Protection of Fundamental Rights in RC Majumdar Arts Auditorium of Dhaka University.

Speaking on the occasion, writer Prof Abul Quasem Fazlul Haq said terrorism and militancy in the name of Islam would linger in the world as long as western superpowers kept military forces in the Middle East and controlled its natural resources.