

✓ HILLS IN PORT CITY

## Vanishing into urban sprawl

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The port city's unique combination of sea, river and hills is going to lose one of the features due to the greed of an influential quarter.

Hill grabbing has recently surpassed all previous records thanks to a lax attitude of the authorities concerned as multistorey buildings, shanties and tin-shed makeshift houses are replacing the hills.

During a visit to Bayezid area on Thursday, it was seen hills as far as eyes can see were being levelled just behind the Gulshan Mosque at Sher Shah Bangla Bazar to create space for highrises and colonies for low income groups.

The grabbing of hills has reached such a level that one might mistake the area as a Rohingya refugee camp.

Residential blocks and colonies had earlier been established cutting down the hills in the areas including Debar Par and Bank Pahar of Bayezid area where people who prefer cheap accommodation mostly take shelter.

Standing at the Bank Pahar Colony, Rejaul Karim, a vendor by profession, told The Daily Star he came to the area from Feni a few days ago.

"I learned about the cheap accommodation here from a relative, who managed a two-room shanty for me at Tk 2,000 a month," he said.

He would have to spend another Tk 100 for electricity, for which nobody has legal connection.

Displaced people usually take refuge in this area, another tenant Mofij observed.

Cable for electricity and pipe for water supply were seen horizontally and haphazardly drawn up in the area. None of the tenants dared to name those who take the rent and bill but hinted at ruling party men.

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