

Thousands at risk of landslide

They live dangerously on slopes of hills in CHT, Ctg and Cox's Bazar

PRANABESH CHAKRABORTY in Ctg and
PORIMOL PALMA in Dhaka

Thousands of people living on the slopes of hills in Chittagong, Chittagong Hill Tracts and Cox's Bazar are exposed to landslides in the rainy season due to cutting of hills and unauthorised use of public land.

Many cut hills and trees to build their houses while others rent shanties built on hilly land grabbed by influential people. The trend could not be stopped despite repeated landslides that claimed scores of lives in the districts over the years.

Yesterday's landslides in Chittagong, Rangamati and Bandarban after Monday night's downpour were history repeating itself.

Environmentalists had feared of such landslides, like that of 2007 when 117 were killed in Chittagong city.

In Chittagong city, over 50,000 people of low-income group live on the slopes of 30 hills.

Abdul Jalil, additional deputy commissioner (Revenue) of Chittagong, said they conduct eviction drives, and that the city authorities too should do the same to recover illegally occupied

land.

The Hill Management Committee, after the landslides of 2007, proposed permanent rehabilitation of the hill dwellers, afforestation and building retaining walls on hills vulnerable to landslides.

Locals, however, said for many years all that the Chittagong district administration did was ask people to leave the hills via megaphones and evict them during the monsoon.

Amena Begum, a resident of Batali Hill area, said before cyclone Mora she left her house along with her five-year-old son after the city corporation authorities disconnected her utility services.

She returned the next day.

"My husband is an addict. He does not take care of us. I have no choice but to return to my home as it is not possible for me to rent a house somewhere else," said Amena, a house help.

Md Al Amin, a resident of Motijhorna area, said he has nowhere else to go.

"Our income is not enough to rent a house outside this area ... If they

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