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Illegal hill cutting puts hundreds of lives at risk

Too many loopholes in the law, experts lament

CHITTAGONG, July 14: Hill cutting triggered by rapid development activities at the expense of the environment has made some 100 hills in the port city vulnerable to mudslides, putting

the lives of hundreds of people at risk, reports UNB.

According to police records, over 70 people have lost their lives in different areas of the city in landslides in the last 14 years.

"Hill cutting is going on in the port city at such a rate and there is none to regulate to them", lamented a businessman living at Henshem Lane near the city's DC Hill.

A section of influential people, including contractors, cut away earth from hills or hillocks of the city everyday. A total of 62 cases have been filed with different police stations of the city against the hill cutters during the last 14 years, court sources said.

They said 16 of the accused have been punished in separate cases on various occasions during the period, but they have always come out of jail, taking advantage of loopholes of the law.

According to them, accused in 14 cases were acquitted by court while 39 cases still await disposal.

Experts say that the law enacted in 1986 has certain loopholes that encourage a section of influential people, supported by a section of the administration, to continue their illegal trade.

The government amid pressure from different quarters enacted a tough law in 1986 to combat the situation. This law worked well for a couple of years and illegal hill cutting came down for a while.

But the authorities again brought forced the amendments to this stringent law. The law was amended in 1990 on the plea of urbanisation and protecting biodiversity of the city. And these amendments have ultimately triggered hill cutting again.

The city has at least 12 points where hill cutting goes on unabated. The areas are at Oxygen, Nasirabad, Polytechnic Institute, Sher Shah Colony, Ershadnagar, Shahi Nagar, Hamjarbagh, Roufabad, Fateabad, Zakir Hossain Road, Khulsi and Fayed Lake.

Sixty per cent of the city's hilly areas, including Khulsi and Nasirabad, have already turned into posh residential areas.

Police sources said at least 40 syndicates in collaboration with police and local administrations are patronising the illegal hill cutting.

Hundreds of trucks carry the soil from different hills of the city and police reportedly extract a fee of Tk 200 per truckload of earth from the hill cutters who then sell it at Tk 800-1200 per truck.

Official sources have said the 'Building Construction Act' 1952 too strongly prohibits cutting of

Seminar on web technology held in Ctg

From Our Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, July 14: A seminar on 'Web Technology' was jointly held by the Chittagong University (CU) unit of BNCC, Army Branch, and Chittagong Infodata Ltd at the university library auditorium here yesterday.

The speakers at the seminar emphasised the need for improvement of socio-economic condition of the country and creation of infrastructural facilities for the flourishing of Information Technology (IT).

While inaugurating the seminar as the chief guest Pro-VC of the university Prof Dr Abu Yusuf Alam said that anyone without his own Web-site or e-mail address has to remain sort of detached from the electronic communication world.

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