



DEATH TRAP IN HILLS

It has always been a nightmare for the people living on slopes and the foot of Chittagong hills. The phenomenal fear of landslide keeps returning among them every year, with approaching of rainy season. Back in 2007, a series of landslides following a heavy rain claimed some 132 lives. All got buried under mud when they were asleep in homes around the hills in Kaichchaghona, Lehubagan, Matijhorna and Kusumbagh areas.

While the memory of the devastation was still fresh in the mind of the port city residents, some 17 ill-fated, including women and children, were killed following landslide and protection wall collapse in Batali hill on July 1. The victims used to live in a slum of nearly five hundred families.

Experts say indiscriminate hill cutting during the last three decades has led to environmental hazards and landslides.

Some influential locals occupying the hills build slums and rent out the shanties to lower-income groups.

The committees formed to probe the 2007 disaster have recommended shifting of the people from the terrace of the hills, to avoid further loss of lives. Five years on, the recommendation has yet to be implemented.

Photo: ANURUP KANTI DAS

