



**JUNGLE SALIMPUR**

**Of lawlessness and VANISHING HILLS**



**Located in Sitakunda, Jungle Salimpur lies just north of the Bayezid Bostami link road, opposite the Asian Women's University, spanning around 3,100 acres. Once covered with dense vegetation and elevated terrain, the area has largely been replaced by roads, settlements, markets, and commercial establishments.**

**FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN**

Chattogram, long known for its undulating hills and hillocks stretching towards the Bay of Bengal, is gradually losing one of its defining features.

Over the years, indiscriminate hill cutting for construction across the city and surrounding areas has erased large portions of this natural terrain, raising serious environmental concerns.

Among the worst-affected zones is Jungle Salimpur — an area where hill destruction has unfolded quietly for decades, largely beyond effective oversight.

Located in Sitakunda upazila, Jungle Salimpur lies just north of the Bayezid Bostami link road, opposite the Asian University for Women, spanning around 3,100 acres. Though administratively outside the city, it is, in practice, very much within Chattogram's urban sprawl.

Once covered with dense vegetation and elevated terrain, the area — bordering Hathazari to the east and Bayezid Police Station to the south — has largely been replaced by roads, settlements, markets, and commercial establishments.

**A LANDSCAPE RESHAPED OVER TWO DECADES**

According to local sources, law enforcement, and visible ground evidence, hill cutting in Jungle

criminals, with repeated failures by law enforcement to conduct operations.

However, the situation changed after the killing of Rab-7 Assistant Sub-inspector Motaleb Hossain Bhuiyan.

On March 9, around 3,500 security personnel carried out a major operation in Jungle Salimpur. The scale of environmental damage began to emerge afterwards.

The administration has since taken control, though the full extent of hill



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

destruction remains unknown to the Department of Environment (DoE) and local authorities.

Jungle Salimpur is mainly divided into two parts: Chhinnamul and Alinagar. Previously, entry through Chhinnamul required a "special identity card", as armed groups controlled access. Even law enforcement faced attacks during earlier attempts to enter.

This control allowed hill cutting to continue uninterrupted for years.

Locals said around 15 cooperative societies were formed to facilitate settlements through hill cutting. These include Chattogram Mohanagar Chhinnomul Songrami Bostibasi Somonnoy Parishad, Chhinnomul Bohumukhi Samabay Samity, Ali Nagar Bhumihin Samabay Samity, Ekata Bhumihin Samabay Samity, Nur Nabi Shah Housing Estate, Jungle Salimpur Janakallan Kormajibi Samabay Samity, Gol Pahar Bhumihin Samabay Samity, Al Madina, Mayer Achal, Mukti Joddha Housing Samabay Samity, Nabi Nagar Bohumukhi Samabay, and Ali Nagar Bohumukhi Samabay Samity.

Using forged documents, plots were created and sold to landless people, low-income groups, and even wealthy buyers. Possession was often transferred using non-judicial stamps worth Tk 300.

**ARMED GROUPS AND LAND CONTROL**

Police and locals said hill cutting in Jungle Salimpur began in the 1990s under a criminal named Ali Akkas, who formed an armed group to control the area. The rugged terrain limited law enforcement access, enabling illegal land trading to expand.

After Akkas was killed in a reported gunfight with Rab, his associates — including Kazi Mashhur Rahman, Yasin Mia, Gafur Member, and Gazi Sadek — formed rival groups.

During the Awami League government, Yasin reportedly had political backing from former Sitakunda MP SM Al Mamun.

He now leads the Alinagar cooperative, while Kazi Mashhur and Gazi Sadek lead another group. Around 30,000 people are reportedly affiliated with these organisations.

After the Rab officer's killing, Yasin held a press conference warning against further operations, but has since gone into hiding. A rival group led by expelled Jubo Dal leader Rokon Uddin has also clashed with his faction.

**ON THE GROUND**

A recent visit shows extensive hill cutting and unplanned development.

At the Chhinnamul entrance, a large

hill has been cut to build an access road. Nearby are the shrine of Nurunnabi Shah (R), SM Pilot High School, markets, and numerous houses on slopes and foothills. Most shops remain open despite the recent operation.

Further inside, roads branch toward Alinagar, Kathaltola, Lokenath Temple, and Lohar Bridge. Hills have been levelled with excavators, leaving little vegetation. Plots are marked with brick walls, with some already developed.

"Offices" of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami were also seen. The Rab officer was killed near the "BNP office" during an earlier operation.

In Alinagar, entry was previously controlled by Yasin's group, with visitors requiring permission and local escorts. At the autorickshaw stand, there are three markets, with semi-pucca houses and enclosed vacant plots behind them.

At the entrance, iron gates had been brought in for installation but were left behind when the criminals fled ahead of the operation.

Further north are residential areas with brick-paved roads, houses, and enclosed plots. Electricity poles and meter connections are in place.

Large hills remain close to settlements, many already partially cut. The area includes markets, residential zones, and institutions such as Alinagar High School. Several signboards, including those bearing Yasin's name, mark land ownership.

In North Alinagar, extensive hill cutting is evident. Excavator marks remain, and plots and houses have been built at the foothills. In some places, hills were cut within tin enclosures.

The full scale of destruction remains difficult to determine. Even in undeveloped areas, electricity connections have been installed. A meter room marked "Meter No 7" was also seen.

Locals said excavators and bulldozers were used extensively and removed ahead of the recent operation.

Satellite imagery also indicates large-scale hill destruction between 2016 and 2025.

Md Tanvir, a CNG parts shop owner, said CNG-run vehicles are the main mode of transport, and outside vehicles were previously restricted. He said the area includes both government and privately owned land.

Md Lokman, a resident of North Alinagar, said, "This is the main meter. We pay through sub-meters. There is also a water supply line, and we pay for that."

Several residents declined to speak after learning they were talking to a reporter.

**GOVERNMENT PLANS AND ACTIONS**  
The DoE has no comprehensive data

on the extent of hill destruction. Even after the March operation, no formal assessment has begun, and no recent cases have been filed.

DoE Deputy Director (Chattogram district) Mozahidur Rahman said earlier cases saw little progress due to a lack of access. "Now investigations will begin," he said, adding that assessment plans are underway.

A special inter-departmental coordination meeting on May 9, 2022, addressed hill cutting and illegal occupation.

Chaired by then Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Masud Kamal, it adopted 11 recommendations, including a joint comprehensive operation.

On July 31, 2022, a meeting at the Chattogram Circuit House, attended by then principal secretary to the prime minister Ahmad Kaikaus, reviewed development proposals to recover occupied land.

A high-level meeting at the Prime Minister's Office on September 12 decided on five key points, including eviction through rehabilitation of genuine victims.

A total of 11 development projects have been proposed, including a sports village, Chattogram Central Jail, heart foundation facility, a safari or eco-park, rehabilitation schemes, a radio transmission centre, a customs dumping station, a green industrial zone, an army cantonment and military academy, and an Ansar and VDP training centre.

District administration sources said 48 government agencies have sought land allocation.

Chattogram Range's former DIG Ahsan Habib Palash, now transferred to Rab, said, "The entire area is now under law enforcement control. The situation in Jungle Salimpur, Chhinnamul, and Alinagar is normal. Two camps are operating."

He said surveillance systems used by criminal groups have been dismantled and urged swift implementation of development projects, along with possible rehabilitation.

Divisional Commissioner Md Ziauddin said administrative control has been established, and development plans will now be implemented in consultation with stakeholders.

Chattogram Deputy Commissioner Jahidul Islam said poor connecting roads in Alinagar are being upgraded through LGED to improve administrative mobility.

He said facilities, including toilets, are being set up for personnel stationed at police camps.

"Without proper assessment, we cannot comment on environmental damage," he said.



Salimpur has continued for more than two decades.

From 2000 to 2026, thousands of cubic feet of hills have been cut down. Natural vegetation has largely disappeared, replaced by roads, houses, shops, and commercial establishments. Hills ranging from 7 to 70 metres in height have reportedly been flattened.

Illegal hill cutting and land trading also led to the rise of multiple armed groups, fuelling crime. The area long remained a safe haven for