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#CubbonParkUlisi: Bengalureans worry city will go the Delhi way

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Last weekend, many Bengalureans protested online and offline to save one of Bengalurus two green covers, Cubbon Park. Following permission from the Karnataka High Court to construct a seven-storey building between KGID building and Press Club of Bengaluru, on the condition that no trees should be cut, Bengalureans are up in arms. They feel that there is no way that a building can be constructed without altering the green cover. One of the prominent voices against this decision is actor-politician Prakash Raj, who recently contested in parliamentary elections from the same constituency. "The authorities are saying that they will construct a seven-storey building in the area without even cutting one tree. Where do they plan to store all the cement and other materials to build the same? Imagine the number of people who will be visiting the place everyday.

Where will they park their vehicles? Imagine the level of pollution and traffic at the park. Look at what has happened to Delhi. What do they plan to turn the cities into? I'd say they shouldn't just stop the construction of this one, but of every single new building in the city. There is no space, we can't take it. Do they understand the humus of the earth? Are they going to leave any space for the rainwater to get into the earth? Bengaluru is surviving with only two lung spaces, Cubbon Park and Lalbagh, and they want to encroach these too," he says.

'Green cover already compromised'

There have been studies conducted on Bengaluru's green cover, but the warning signs have still not been considered. One of the most quoted studies is by Professor TV Ramachandra, of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc). He has stated that Bengaluru could well be a dead city by 2020, if it isn't decongested on priority. In his study, he also pointed out how the city has degenerated in a big way over five decades. "We have mapped the satellite images since 1973 to see the extent of urbanisation that the city has seen, and how the green cover and vegetation have been lost. The findings are alarming, as we have urbanised senselessly. The city is currently on the throes of deterioration, with only tragedy staring it in the face," says Ramachandra, adding that Bengaluru could soon have over 90% of its area filled with concrete and very little green cover.

'Air quality is deteriorating'

SK Satheesh, Professor at the Centre for Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences of IISc, says that Bengaluru's air quality is already quite hazardous. According to the World Health Organisation, the permissible air pollution density levels is around 60 micrograms per metre for particulate matter less than 2.5 micrometres in size (PM 2.5). In an earlier conversation, Satheesh told BT, "The city's air quality averages at around 100 micrograms per metre. This is already above the permissible levels. Studies conducted by us show that if this hike in pollution levels continues, we will reach over double the permissible limits of 150 micrograms by 2030. Meanwhile, the all India pollution levels are increasing at a rate of around 5%." He further states that Bengaluru is already the most polluted city in South India, and it could soon cross Delhi's pollution levels, if the green cover is not maintained.