

# Two years, two floods, Karnataka got no solutions yet

*Large number of unscientific development works in Talacauvery led to landslides; neighbours have to sort out water-sharing issue to prevent future calamities*



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The site in the Talacauvery region where the construction work was alleged to have been carried out | EPS



By Prajna GR

Express News Service

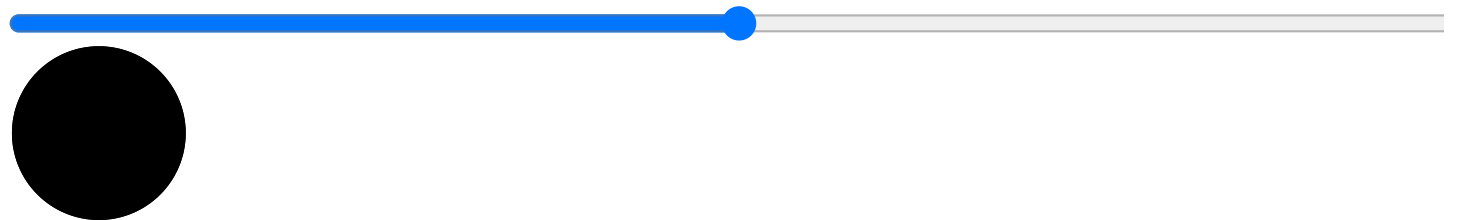
MADIKERI: Major landslide at Talacauvery in Kodagu district on Wednesday night that cost the lives of at least five people, including Talacauvery temple's main priest Narayan Achar, was because of increased human interference in this ecologically sensitive area, said environmentalists.

They pointed out that in August 2019, Brahmagiri Hills at Talacauvery first reported a big crack in the earth that extended from the sacred Cauvery 'Kundike', which is the birth point of the river, to the top of the hills. The district administration sought a report from the Geological Survey of India (GSI), which stated, "A surface crack has developed near the mid-slope of Brahmagiri Hill near Talacauvery Temple and one active earth slide is present at the upslope of the crown part of the active slide.

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Multiple contour trenches are made by the Department of Forest at the mid-slope for conservation of water. These trenches are aligned parallel to the crack, which have allowed infiltration into the overburdened material. Slope cut for road expansion are left unsupported.” It suggested filling up the crack with impervious materials to reduce chances of water infiltration. But no such measures were taken, instead the cracks were filled with sand in September 2019.

The short history of the disaster goes back to 2014-15 when Cauvery water at the ‘Kundike’ depleted. Some social activists suggested that a rainwater harvesting unit be set up on Brahmagiri Hills to increase the outflows. “An expert was called in from Puttur, and after many letters to Chief Minister B S Yeddiyurappa and central government, funds were released for the unit. Earthmovers were deployed and the forest department oversaw the project that was completed in 2016.

Water flow at the Kundike increased, even during summer, and Archaka Narayan Achar too was happy,” said Sampath Kumar, a retired executive officer of the Coorg Temple Funds Committee. In another ecological disaster, hundreds of trees were chopped and the land was levelled using earthmovers near the Talacauvery Viewpoint to make way for a resort. By then, many minor landslides had been noticed across Talacauvery, Sampath said.

Also, a number of unscientific road and cable works were taken up, said Thammu Poovaiah of Kodagu Ekikarana Samithi. “In one of the videos from the landslide site, you can spot unscientifically laid cables, installed by a private mobile network. Government officials have allowed unscientific works, deployed heavy earthmovers, sanctioned



funds for new projects and looted tax-payers' money. But no one takes the blame for the disaster,” he said. The Kasthurirangan report had mentioned several areas as being eco-sensitive in the district, and these very same spots are bearing the brunt of natural disasters, environmentalists pointed out, saying the report needs a second look.

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