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Mountain of faith: Mysuru's famous Chamundi Hill is crumbling

Four major landslides have been reported on Mysuru's Chamundi Hill since 2019, alarming greens and government alike

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📷 The motorable road on Mysuru's Chamundi Hill has given way in places due to landslides.

All is not well with the Chamundi Hill, a popular tourist attraction near Mysuru. There have been four major landslides since 2019 and environmentalists blame indiscriminate construction atop the hill for them.

The hill, 13 kilometres away from the city, has a temple on top — at 1,060 metres — of Chamundeshwari, the presiding deity of the city.

Seasonal water at the top has been diverted for constructing large buildings. The deep excavations done to achieve this have loosened subterranean soil, creating deep chasms underground.

Rainwater entered these chasms during the monsoon and percolated through the openings, resulting in landslides. The four major landslides since 2019 have mostly happened on the road leading to the Nandi statue from View Point Junction.

Mysuru residents have rallied to save the hill from indiscriminate development and the resultant environmental degradation.

A successful online petition to stall the cutting of hundreds of trees at the foot of Chamundi Hill as part of Karnataka's helicopter tourism project, with over 80,000 signatures, forced the Karnataka government to do a rethink.

Mysoreans have now embarked on a second major online petition to save the Chamundi Hill from indiscriminate development and ecological destruction.

The [petition](#) has been put up on the website *Change.org* by the group 'Mysoreans for Saving Mysore'. It has already received 67,750 signatures.

"We hope to get 300,000 signatures, which should influence our elected leaders to agree to some of the recommendations that the non-profit Mysore Grahakara Parishat has been making for four years," Bhamy V Shenoy from Mysoreans for Saving Mysore, said.

"The spiritual-religious-heritage sanctity of Chamundi Hill stands threatened. We should stop all construction, start removing all illegal buildings, stop the movement of vehicles and allow only electric buses," he added.

The group has also demanded the constitution of a Chamundi Hill Development Authority on the lines of the Male Mahadeshwara Hills Development Authority.

The aim is to enable all stakeholders to have a say in the hill's future instead of only a section of powerful people taking unilateral decisions.

There are suggestions for more drastic steps such as superseding the authority of the local Gram Panchayat and giving full powers to the district administration considering the nature of the problem.



A panoramic view of Chamundi Hill

Scientific study

A team from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) at Bengaluru had visited the Chamundi Hill after the last landslide.

They studied the landslide pattern and took samples from faults, joints and bedding surfaces, which are contact points between rock and soil and contribute to landslides.

The experts indicated that erosion had already set in and could be arrested only by not taking up any more construction activities as well as movement of heavy transport vehicles.

Deputy Commissioner of Mysuru, Bagadi Gautham has said any restoration work on the damaged portions of the hill must wait till the area stabilises. The IISc's technical report with suggestions would also be ready by then.

A panel from the Institution of Engineers, the national organisation of engineers, headed by SG Sudhir Vombatkere has submitted a technical report to Gautham.

The report has many suggestions, including delinking the motorable road after a certain elevation and designating the destroyed part of the road as a trekking path.

The report also points out that the road had suffered damage due to heavy rains. The report attributed it to the inability of the longitudinal-cross drainage system to handle the volume of water.

The report cautioned that hill slopes devoid of trees and undergrowth cover are more prone to saturation-erosion-slope failure than forested slopes.

The panel has also warned that climate change-induced heavy rainfall with increasing frequency and high intensity is expected to increase. This may create a situation of saturation-erosion-slope failure and avalanches in hilly terrains

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