



## Stones popping out of Gilbert Hill leave residents in constant fear

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Local residents woke up on Tuesday to witness a horrific sight of stones popping out and falling from the heritage monument of the city – Gilbert Hill – a single rock structure. Residents claim that construction allowed by BMC, which is only five metres away from the hill, is causing the tremors.

The residents feel the tremors as stones fall randomly throughout the day, once the hill experiences the tremor due to the drilling work. Petrified residents are spending sleepless nights, even as they have complained to BMC that what if the hill collapses on their buildings.

Jameela Tharola, chairman of Gilbert Hill Residents Welfare Association, said it is shocking that the BMC can give permission for residential project so close to the heritage structure. "Ever since the drilling work has started, stones are popping out of the hill and falling in our compounds. The force of the big stones falling from a height is such that it tears apart the tin shed in our compound. There are kids playing in the compounds," said Tharola while adding that since the work is underway on the other side of the hill, so it's not visible to them.

Another resident, while requesting that his identity not be revealed, said the person looking after the temple on the hilltop says that the tremors are no less intense than those felt after an earthquake. There are more than 1,000 families staying around the hill. When the BMC gives permission for such projects, it should also think about the safety of the people around.

Civic officials from the K-West ward, which includes the Gilbert Hill area, said that as per the norms of the Heritage – II structure, the category under which the Gilbert Hill falls, the construction work is allowed after a distance of five meters

from the rock. "The drilling work for the piling is done in the construction site away from the hill but the hill feels tremors. However, there are also complaints that the developer has gone almost up to foothills. But then there is a catch here. There is ambiguity over from where BMC should count six metres and from the spot where the developer is measuring. We are working on the same before taking action," said a senior civic official.

The residents on Tuesday morning contacted area MLA Ameet Satam and corporator Mohsin Haider. "The residents did contact me. They have made several complaints with the BMC over the issue of construction," said the MLA.

Satam said Ashish Singh, an IIT professor, and PK Das, architect, town planner and heritage expert, are checking on the structural stability report of the hill. Once that is done, we have proposed 'jacketing' of the hill so that stones do not fall. Public works department of the state government is also working on the construction of the compound wall around the hill.

Haider said that the five-metre buffer zone though less is approved by the BMC after the high court's permission in 2010. "There was a high court case where two to three developments were stopped. But then as per the high court's instruction, experts from Sardar Patel Engineering College had conducted a survey. After the survey, it was ruled that permission for development should be given," said Haider.

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