

April 2026

Uttarakhand Disaster and Accident Analysis Initiative - UDAAI

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SDC Foundation is a Dehradun based environmental action and advocacy group committed to make a positive impact and secure a sustainable future for our home state Uttarakhand, the Himalayas and beyond.

Material from this publication can be used with due acknowledgement.

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About UDAAI Monthly Reports

Uttarakhand Disaster and Accident Analysis Initiative (UDAAI) is a monthly initiative by Dehradun-based environmental action and advocacy group, Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation. The goal of the UDAAI reports is to document disasters and accidents in Uttarakhand, leading to human and ecological casualties. UDAAI is based on media reports in respectable publications in English and Hindi newspapers, as well as news portals. UDAAI neither attempts nor claims to document all disasters and all accidents in Uttarakhand; its focus instead is to document major casualties and non-casualty events on a regular basis.

We strongly believe that with the perils of inclement climate and unabated disasters, the ecologically fragile and earthquake-prone state of Uttarakhand needs to take many more steps to increase its disaster preparedness. We therefore see UDAAI as a document that highlights attention towards the urgent need for a holistic disaster management and accident minimisation policy framework in Uttarakhand.

It is our earnest hope that UDAAI will spur political leadership, policy makers, bureaucracy, research and academic institutions, businesses, civil society organisations, media and the citizenry at large to initiate inclusive, regular and action-oriented conversations on the subjects of resilience, mitigation and adaptation in Uttarakhand. With mainstreaming and a greater focus on the issue, there is likely to be an improvement in the planning of climate actions and disaster management in Uttarakhand.



Summary of UDAAI Report - April 2026

The April 2026 UDAAI Report by SDC Foundation highlights the growing environmental and developmental challenges facing Uttarakhand and the Himalayan region. The report combines several important news stories and scientific findings that show how climate change, rapid infrastructure development, deforestation, tourism pressure, and weak environmental regulation are increasing ecological risks across the state.

One major issue reported is the instability of Himalayan terrain caused by large infrastructure projects. A cavity developed in the T-13 railway tunnel under construction, raising concerns about the fragile geology of the Himalayas. Experts warned that large-scale tunneling, blasting, and road construction in such sensitive mountain regions can increase the risks of landslides and land subsidence.

Climate change is another major concern highlighted in the report. Scientific studies revealed that more than 1,000 new glacial lakes have formed in the Himalayas since 1990 due to rapid glacier melting. The increase in glacial lakes raises the danger of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs), which can cause severe damage to settlements, infrastructure, and river systems downstream. The report also mentions the identification of 219 hanging glaciers in Uttarakhand's Alaknanda basin, which are considered highly unstable and vulnerable to collapse because of rising temperatures.

The report strongly emphasizes the environmental damage caused by unregulated construction and mining activities. The Uttarakhand High Court expressed concern over illegal construction in the foothills between Dehradun and Mussoorie, warning that continuous urban expansion in ecologically sensitive areas threatens biodiversity and slope stability. Mining activities without proper environmental clearances were also reported to be damaging forests, landscapes, and water sources.

Deforestation is another key issue discussed throughout the report. Around 19,000 trees are proposed to be felled due to beetle infestation and development activities. Additionally, the expansion proposal for Jolly Grant Airport received approval for forest land diversion, which may involve cutting nearly 10,000 trees in the Shivalik Elephant Reserve area. Environmentalists warned that such projects could disrupt wildlife corridors and reduce biodiversity.

The report also highlights the increasing incidents of forest fires in the Kumaon region. Rising temperatures and dry weather conditions have led to severe fires that damaged forests and reduced tourist arrivals in destinations such as Kausani. Forest fires are harming biodiversity, polluting the air, and affecting local livelihoods dependent on tourism.

Another important concern is the continuing land subsidence in Jyotirmath (Joshimath). Scientists warned that the ground beneath the town is still slowly moving and that the monsoon season could worsen the situation. The crisis reflects the dangers of unplanned urbanization and excessive construction in fragile Himalayan regions.

Overall, the report presents a worrying picture of environmental stress in Uttarakhand. It stresses the urgent need for sustainable development, scientific planning, strict environmental regulation, and community-based conservation efforts to protect the fragile Himalayan ecosystem from future disasters and ecological instability.

1. April 7, 2026: 19k trees to be felled over beetle infestation

19k trees to be felled over beetle infestation

Scale Of Felling
A Concern, Say
Ecologists, Press
For Alternatives

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Dehradun: Nearly 19,000 trees in Dehradun have been identified for felling after they were infested with *Hoplocerambyx spinicornis* larvae, commonly known as sal borer beetle, as per the Uttarakhand forest department.

DEHRADUN DFO SAYS

Trees are infested with sal heartwood borer, which has co-evolved with the trees

NEERAJ SHARMA

The secondary assessment, conducted by the Forest Research Institute (FRI) at the request of the forest dept, classified infestation levels on a scale of one to eight. Scientists said trees falling in categories one and two are effectively dead and need to be removed. A majority of the



Majority of affected trees are in Jhajhra, Thano and Asharori — areas where extensive road widening is also proposed

affected trees are in Jhajhra, Thano and Asharori—areas that are also slated for extensive road widening.

Dehradun DFO Neeraj Sharma said the sal heartwood borer is not a new threat. "The sal trees (*Shorea robusta*) of Dehradun have seen such infestation by sal borers in the past too. The beetle has co-evolved with the sal trees." He added that further action will be taken after obtaining clearance from the ministry.

However, forest ecologists have raised concerns over the scale of the proposed felling, calling for a broader and more sustainable approach. "Urban landscapes cannot be carbon emitters, and it is time that a nationwide urban forestry plan be implemented with legal binding," said SP

Singh, Fellow of the Indian National Science Academy (INSA) and noted Himalayan ecologist. He suggested exploring alternatives such as insecticide treatment and medicinal injections — methods used in other countries — before ordering large-scale tree removal.

To control the outbreak, a trap tree operation will be planned in May and June, just ahead of the monsoon, subject to necessary approvals, according to Sharma. The dark brown insect typically undergoes hibernation during Nov and Dec.

Entomologists attributed the infestation to multiple factors, including the prolonged monsoon last year and increasing disturbance in forest landscapes due to logging, timber collection and other human activities. "Extended monsoon, followed by a changing landscape of forests that is disturbed in multiple ways, be it logging, timber collection, or other associated reasons," they said.

Road widening and other developmental activities are currently taking place in the affected areas, which experts believe may have further contributed to ecological imbalance.

TIMES OF INDIA

APRIL 7, 2026

2. April 8, 2026: Cavity develops in T-13 tunnel of rail project, no casualties

Cavity develops in T-13 tunnel of rail project, no casualties

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Dehradun: A cavity developed inside Tunnel-13 of the Rishikesh-Karnaprayag railway project in Rudrapur district on the night of April 6-7, officials said, adding no casualties or damage were reported.

The cavity, approximately 2.5 m wide and 3-4 m long on the roof of the tunnel, formed on a geologically vulnerable stretch, a senior Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL) official told TOI. As a precaution, workers had already been evacuated.

The incident occurred around 11 pm near chainage 96 -- about 96 m from the Narkota portal -- inside the escape tunnel of the 9.25-km-long structure connecting Narkota and Sumerpur.

Officials said water seepage during recent rains might have contributed to the incident. Lining work was on at the escape tunnel, which has a diameter of 4.6 m, when the incident happened.

Authorities said such incidents are not uncommon during tunnelling in fragile Himalayan terrain.

Excavation of the main tunnel excavation has been completed and finishing

Authorities said such incidents are not uncommon during tunnelling in fragile Himalayan terrain. Project is 125 km long and will improve access to Char Dham pilgrimage route



work is underway. Of the total 16 tunnels planned under the project, 13 have already been completed.

Officials said corrective measures are being taken in accordance with prescribed safety protocols.

The Rishikesh-Karnaprayag railway project is 125 km long in Uttarakhand, and will improve access to the Char Dham pilgrimage route. The project includes 16 major tunnels spanning over 100 km and more than 19 large bridges. Once completed, it is expected to reduce travel time between the two locations significantly.

TIMES OF INDIA
APRIL 8, 2026

3. April 13, 2026: '1K+ new glacial lakes formed in Himalayas since 1990'

1k+ new glacial lakes formed in Himalayas since 1990'

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Dehradun: The number of glacial lakes across the Himalayas, and their size, has grown sharply in recent decades, substantially raising the risk of devastating glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), according to a new peer-reviewed research study published in the journal 'Geomatics, Natural Hazards and Risks'.

Conducted by researchers from National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research in Goa and Institute of Science and Technology in Austria, the study pre-

led Himalayan-wide assessments of glacial lakes in recent times, highlighting alarming trends linked to climate change.

File photo



A high-altitude glacial lake in Himachal Pradesh's Sissu

Surge in lakes due to glacial retreat: Study

► Continued from P 1

The study notes that the number of glacial lakes in the Himalayas has risen steeply over the last 50 years — from a few hundred identified in the 1960s and 1970s to over 8,000 in recent inventories. At least 1,000 new lakes have formed since 1990 alone, largely driven by accelerated glacier retreat, the study says.

Researchers found that glacial lakes have expanded in size as well, indicating an increase of up to 26-30% over the past three decades. This is closely linked to rising temperatures and changing precipitation patterns, which are accelerating the melting of Himalayan glaciers.

"The retreat of glaciers is

RESEARCHERS SAY

Better mapping of 'critical lakes' and early warning systems could help mitigate future disasters

directly contributing to the growth and formation of glacial lakes, thereby increasing the risk of GLOF events in downstream regions," the study observed.

The analysis identifies several river basins, including the Kosi, Yarlung Zangbo, Manas and Upper Indus, as the most vulnerable to GLOF hazards due to the high number of lakes and rapid expansion rates. Among these, the Kosi

basin recorded the fastest growth in lake size, followed by other major basins.

The study also maps hazard zones across the Himalayas by factoring in not just lake dynamics, but also population, infrastructure and potential flood volume. High-risk areas include the Chenab, Jhelum, Teesta and Beas basins, where large populations and infrastructure lie downstream of vulnerable lakes.

Importantly, the research underlines that exposure such as population density and infrastructure like hydropower projects, roads and settlements plays a major role in determining hazard levels. In fact, population density emerged as the most significant factor influencing overall

risk in the analysis.

Given these findings, researchers stressed the urgent need for detailed field investigations, improved monitoring and hydrodynamic modelling before undertaking infrastructure development in high-risk zones. They also emphasised that better mapping of "critical lakes" and early warning systems could help mitigate future disasters.

In conclusion, the study said that as climate change continues to reshape the Himalayan cryosphere, the region faces a growing and complex hazard landscape — where expanding glacial lakes, increasing human exposure and fragile mountain terrain together heighten the risk of catastrophic floods.

TIMES OF INDIA
APRIL 13, 2026

4. April 18, 2026: 219 hanging glaciers identified in Uttarakhand's Alaknanda basin

219 hanging glaciers identified in U'khand's Alaknanda basin

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Dehradun: A new research study has identified 219 hanging glaciers in Uttarakhand's Alaknanda basin, with unstable ice volumes and avalanche potential that could impact thousands of people and key pilgrimage routes downstream. A significant concentration of these glaciers — about 30% — are in the upper Alaknanda basin, which is where the shrine town of Badrinath, and Mana, the last village along the India-China border, are located.

These glaciers with unstable ice volumes and avalanche potential could impact thousands of people and key pilgrimage routes downstream

The research, published in Nature's 'Natural Hazards' journal, provides one of the first basin-scale assessments of hanging glaciers in the region.

► Continued on P 4

18/4/2026

'Region warming faster than average'

► Continued from P 1

The study, authored by Nandu Krishnan and Anil V Kulkarni from the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru; Ashim Sattar from IIT Bhubaneswar; and Harendra Singh Negi from the Defence Geoinformatics Research Establishment (DGRE), Chandigarh, mapped glaciers covering about 71.7 sq km, with a total estimated ice volume of 2.4 cubic km. Of this, nearly 0.7 cubic km was considered unstable "hanging mass" prone to collapse.

These glaciers were typically located at high altitudes between 4,000 and 6,700 metres, resting on steep slopes averaging around 33 degrees. The Vishnuganga sub-basin alone had the highest number and volume of hanging glaciers, making it a critical hot-spot for potential hazards, sci-

entists claimed in the study. Using advanced avalanche simulation models, researchers assessed what could happen if these glaciers collapse. The results were alarming. Simulated avalanche flow could directly impact key settlements such as Badrinath, Mana and Hanuman Chatti, as well as roads and trekking routes, said the study.

In the Badrinath-Mana sector, avalanche flow heights could exceed 50 metres, with some upstream areas recording higher intensities. Such events could not only damage infrastructure but also block rivers, potentially triggering secondary disasters like flash floods.

In the past two decades, the region has warmed faster than the global average, accelerating glacier retreat and destabilising ice formations, the study said, adding that as glaciers shrink, many detach from

their parent ice bodies and settle precariously on steep slopes. These formations, known as "hanging glaciers", are inherently unstable and prone to sudden ice break-offs. Unlike stable glaciers, they continuously shed ice to maintain their balance. Climate variability, erratic snowfall and seismic activity increase the likelihood of collapse.

Such events are not theoretical. Past disasters like the Chamoli avalanche in 2021 and the 2015 Langtang tragedy in Nepal have shown how glacier collapses can trigger catastrophic downstream destruction.

The study found that built-up areas in vulnerable zones were projected to grow dramatically — from around 8,000 sqm in 2000 to over 1.5 lakh sqm by 2030. At the same time, the exposed population could rise from about 380 people to about 8,500.

This growth, researchers said, is driven by expanding tourism, pilgrimage activity and infrastructure development in high-altitude regions. Towns like Badrinath, along with highways and hydropower projects, were increasingly encroaching into hazard-prone zones.

Unlike the Alps — where hanging glaciers are closely monitored using advanced technologies — the Himalayas lack large-scale early warning systems. The study suggests adopting a combination of satellite monitoring, ground-based sensors and avalanche modelling to identify high-risk glaciers. Equally important was better land-use planning, as per the researchers. Restricting construction in vulnerable zones, strengthening disaster preparedness, and raising awareness among communities could reduce risk, they added.

TIMES OF INDIA
APRIL 18, 2026

5. April 18, 2026: After SC lifts ban, locals raise fresh concerns

After SC lifts ban, locals raise fresh concerns

'Operations Being Carried Out Sans Mandatory Nods'

Yogesh Nagarkoti | TNN

Bageshwar: Fresh concerns have surfaced over alleged violations of environmental norms and mining rules in Bageshwar, months after the Supreme Court allowed 29 soapstone mines to resume operations subject to compliance.

Mining department officials said only three mines have so far been granted Consent

BAGESHWAR MINING

To Operate (CTO) for a limited period of four months. However, residents and activists alleged that mining is being carried out at some sites without mandatory clearances.

Locals also questioned the earlier prolonged ban. "If mechanised mining was to be allowed eventually, what was the point of a year-long restriction?" a resident said.

Environmental activist Ramesh Krishak alleged that unregulated mining has already



Apex court had recently granted relief to 29 soapstone mines

caused significant ecological damage and questioned the transparency in granting permissions. Concerns have also been raised over enforcement. Sources said the "anti-task force set up to check illegal mining is not visible on ground". Despite earlier crackdowns in which 124 Poclain machines were seized, fresh equipment is allegedly being brought in, and some mines are operating without approvals.

Sources in the mining surveillance system claimed that operators are pushing for the resumption of work, and in some cases, officials have faced legal action after initiating enforcement.

"We are doing our jobs honestly, but end up spending our salaries on legal expenses. There is constant mental stress," an employee said on condition of anonymity.

District mining officer Nazia Hasan said inspections are being carried out regularly but acknowledged attempts by some operators to mine without permission.

District magistrate (DM) Akanksha Konde, when queried, said there would be strict action against violators. "Any mining activity without permission, or any attempt to obstruct officials from performing their duties, will lead to immediate cancellation of licences," she said.

Meanwhile, residents affected by past mining operations said they are still awaiting compensation.

Hem Chandra Kandpal, a local, said losses incurred due to past operations were yet to be addressed. The developments have raised questions over enforcement and environmental safeguards in the hill district, amid concerns about the long-term impact of unauthorised mining on the fragile Himalayan ecosystem.

TIMES OF INDIA

APRIL 18, 2026

6. April 21, 2026: Jolly Grant expansion proposal gets nod for forest diversion

Jolly Grant expansion proposal gets nod for forest diversion

9.3k Trees To Face Axe For Project

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Dehradun: The proposed expansion of Jolly Grant airport has cleared a key procedural stage, with a Project Screening Committee (PSC) granting conditional approval for the proposal of diversion of 49.6 hectares of forest land. The project is accepted by the PSC subject to the condition of garnering wildlife clearance, translocation of native tree species and a certificate of compensatory afforestation land, underlining the ecological sensitivity of the project.

The PSC includes senior officials from the district administration, forest department and the user agency, Uttarakhand Civil Aviation Development Authority (UCADA). Once the PSC accepts the propo-

RUNWAY VS ROOTS

- Project to divert 49.6 ha of forest land; split includes runway strip, expansion area & new approach road
- Clearance subject to wildlife nod as site falls within Shivalik Elephant Reserve and eco-sensitive zone
- Land acquisition process under way; compensation to be finalised before handover to AAI



sal, it is forwarded for the next stage clearances.

The meeting was held last month, and its minutes were released recently. The expansion will require the felling of around 9,300 trees. According to forest officials, the main species include khair, sheesham, teak, amaltas, kanju, bhimal, kachnar and kukat.

At the meeting, Dehradun forest division officials informed that of the total 9,307 affected trees, 2,490 fall in the 0-10cm diameter class and 3,782 in the 10-20cm class, ta-

king the total in these categories to 6,272 trees. The PSC chairman directed forest officials to prepare a plan for translocation of trees, and the user agency agreed to bear the cost.

As the forest land falls within the Shivalik Elephant Reserve, wildlife clearance is also required. Officials were informed in the first PSC meeting last year that the proposed alignment falls in an eco-sensitive zone and would require approval. Forest division officials said the process for online clearance has been initia-

ted and a proposal will be sent to the State Board for Wildlife.

Of the total proposed alignment, 7.20 hectares will be used for a new approach road, 33.90 hectares for airport expansion and 8.59 hectares for the runway strip. A senior UCADA official said in-principle approval has been granted for land acquisition for the project. The next stage involves finalising compensation for affected landowners. The process is expected to be completed in the next couple of months, after which the land will be handed over to the Airports Authority of India.

Airport authorities, however, said they have not received any official communication regarding the approval. Jolly Grant airport director BCH Negi told TOI that there has been no formal confirmation so far. The expansion is expected to allow operations of larger aircraft and improve air connectivity to Dehradun.

(Inputs from Gaurav Talwar)

TIMES OF INDIA

APRIL 21, 2026

7. April 23, 2026: 'Mussoorie foothills under serious threat'

HC SEEKS STATE'S RESPONSE } TAKES NOTE OF ILLEGAL CONSTRUCTIONS

'Mussoorie foothills under serious threat'

Neeraj Santoshi

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DEHRADUN: The Uttarakhand High Court on Wednesday directed the state government to file its response to an urgency application alleging that the fragile ecology of the foothills between Dehradun and Mussoorie is under serious threat due to unchecked illegal constructions.

The matter was heard by a division bench comprising Chief Justice Manoj Kumar Gupta and justice Subhash Upadhyay.

The urgency application was filed in a 2021 public interest litigation (WPPIL 57 of 2021) by Reenu Paul, a Dehradun resident and former faculty member at the National Law School of India University.

Advocate Abhijay Negi, appearing for the petitioner, told the court that the stretch where the Dehradun plains meet the rising Mussoorie hills is a critical ecological and conservation zone. According to the plea, the state government had notified nine specific areas within these foothills as ecologi-

ACCORDING TO THE PETITION, THE STATE GOVERNMENT HAD NOTIFIED NINE SPECIFIC AREAS WITHIN THESE FOOTHILLS AS ECOLOGICALLY SENSITIVE

cally sensitive through a government order dated February 5, 2019.

Negi submitted that despite existing regulations, rampant construction activity continues in the area. He said that although the state amended building bylaws in 2015 by introducing Clause 4.4 to regulate construction in fragile hill belts, implementation remains "virtually non-existent".

The petition contends that the foothill region acts as a crucial ecological buffer and carbon sink for the Doon Valley. However, due to weak enforcement, the area has increasingly become a hotspot for unautho-

rised constructions.

The petitioner has also placed recent evidence before the court to show that construction activity has intensified while the case remained pending.

Negi further told the court that although replies and a rejoinder have already been filed, the matter had not been listed for nearly two years. "The urgency application details how the situation has gone from bad to worse in the foothill area during this period," he said.

Taking note of the submissions, the High Court directed the state government to file its reply to the urgency application within three weeks.

The original PIL alleges that under Part 4.4 of the amendments to the Uttarakhand Building Construction and Development Bylaws, 2011, no construction should be permitted in areas with high landslide risk or where the natural slope exceeds 30 degrees. However, the petition claims that despite these restrictions, unchecked construction continues in the ecologically sensitive stretch.

HINDUSTAN TIMES

APRIL 23, 2026

8. April 24, 2026: 11 killed in 2 road accidents in Uttarakhand within 24 hours

11 killed in 2 road accidents in U'khand within 24 hours

8 Were Returning After Attending Last Rites In R'kesh

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Dehradun: At least 11 people were killed and two others seriously injured in two separate road accidents in Tehri Garhwal and Rudrapur districts within 24 hours, officials said on Thursday.

Eight people died and two were critically injured after a utility vehicle carrying around 10 passengers plunged nearly 300m into a gorge on the Chamba-Koti Nala road in Tehri Garhwal. The victims were returning to Ghansali after attending last rites in Rishikesh.

The accident occurred under Chamba police station limits. "Police, State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and fire service teams launched a rescue operation," said Bri-jesh Bhatt, district disaster

5 killed, 20 injured as tractor-trolley overturns

Bareilly: Two women and three girls – aged 12, 15 and 16 – were killed and over 20 people injured, including nine critically, after a tractor-trolley carrying around 50 villagers to a religious event overturned in Padhwa area of Lakhimpur Kheri on Thursday.

The accident took place when the driver of the tractor – with two trolleys attached – lost control of the vehicle and it overturned, trapping people under it.

management officer. Officials said four bodies were brought to the roadside, while efforts continued to retrieve the remaining from the gorge.

Seven of the victims have been identified as residents of the Ghansali. They include Asha Lal (40), Vijay Lal (36),

Police said the was travelling from Sohariya village to Karikot temple in Bahraich's Sujauli area to attend a 'mundan' (head shaving) ritual when the tragedy struck.

DM Anjani Kumar said, "It seemed the incident happened after two trolleys were added to the tractor." Those dead were identified as Aarushi (12), Nancy (15), Panchhi (16), Raj Kumari (40), and Makhana (45). **Krishna Chaudhary**

Prem Lal (60), Mahavir (60), Shiv Singh (35), Sehat Lal (65) and Laxman (33), most of whom hailed from Chakreda and nearby villages under Ghansali police station limits. One victim remains unidentified, a district official said.

The injured — Uttam (30),

a resident of Lostu village in Badiyargarh, and Ankit (22) from Nelchami village in Ghansali — have been admitted to the district hospital in Baurari. The district magistrate and senior superintendent of police, Tehri Garhwal, also reached the site to oversee rescue operations. A medical team from CHC Chamba was deployed at the spot to provide immediate care.

In a separate incident in Rudrapur on the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday, three people were killed after a car fell into a nearly 250m-deep gorge on the Bhiri-Kakola motor road. The vehicle, travelling from Bhiri towards Auring, lost control before plunging off the road.

An SDRF team from Agastyamuni, led by sub-inspector Dharmendra Pawar, carried out rescue operations. The victims included Naveen Singh (30) from Auring and Amit Singh (35) and Anshul (28), both residents of Sursal. Their bodies were later retrieved from the gorge.

TIMES OF INDIA
APRIL 24, 2026

9. April 26, 2026 : Ground beneath town still moving: Experts

{ JYOTIRMATH } 'MONSOON MAY AGGRAVATE SITUATION'

Ground beneath town still moving: Experts

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DEHRADUN: Three years after Jyotirmath (previously Joshimath) in Chamoli district hit national headlines due to large cracks appearing in homes and on roads, experts have said the ground beneath the Himalayan town is still moving, albeit slowly, and warned the upcoming monsoon could aggravate risks if precautionary measures are not strengthened.

Dr Vineet Kumar Gahalaut, director of the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, said there was a misconception among some people that sliding has stopped in Jyotirmath. "The movement is continuing, though at a very slow pace. Our concern is that with the monsoon, the pace may accelerate and some part may slip. There is a need to discuss, plan and implement measures for such a possible eventuality," he said.

Gahalaut said the sliding process could not be entirely stopped and stressed the need for continuous monitoring of the town's geology. "There should have been continuous monitoring. We need to work on what should be done in an unfavourable scenario rather than waiting for cracks to widen," he said.

In January 2023, large cracks



In 2023, large cracks appeared in houses in Jyotirmath. AP

and fissures appeared in houses and on the ground in Joshimath, prompting authorities to evacuate many residents to relief camps and temporary shelters. Residents blamed NTPC's Tapovan-Vishnugad hydropower project for contributing to geological instability, alleging tunnelling and blasting in the fragile terrain worsened the problem.

A study conducted by a group of scientific and technical institutions in the Himalayan town attributed the crisis to Joshimath's location on a slope over morainic deposits or loose sediments, population pressure, construction of multi-storey buildings and the absence of a system for proper disposal of water coming from the upper reaches.

State disaster management secretary Vinod Kumar Suman said stabilisation efforts in the town are underway.

"Treatment of the town has started. Protective work is going on along the riverbank where

subsidence has taken place. Around ₹100 crore has been sanctioned for that. PWD is also carrying out slope stabilisation work and funds have been provided. The work is progressing at pace," he said.

Meanwhile, the Joshimath Bachao Sangharsh Samiti has raised questions over ongoing stabilisation works, alleging lack of transparency and delays in rehabilitation despite Centre's financial package for the town.

Atul Sati, convenor of the group, said implementation remained slow and opaque despite government assurances. He alleged much time had been lost in preparation of detailed project reports (DPRs), while DPRs related to drainage and sewage systems remain unclear and stabilisation plans have not been made public.

It also questioned the scientific basis of ongoing works and selection of sites for treatment, alleging highly sensitive areas such as Singhdwar, Manoharbagh and Ravigram have been left out. It demanded fresh scientific assessments and satellite studies conducted after January 2023 be incorporated into the stabilisation strategy.

The committee also sought public disclosure of DPRs and periodic consultations with residents on the progress of works.

HINDUSTAN TIMES

APRIL 26, 2026

10 . April 28, 2026: 'Kumaon forest fires cutting tourist arrivals by up to 20%'

'Kumaon forest fires cutting tourist arrivals by up to 20%'

State Recorded
Over 1k Forest Fire
Alerts In April: FSI

Yogesh Nagarkoti &
Shivani Azad | TNN

Bageshwar/Dehradun:

Ongoing forest fires in Uttarakhand's Bageshwar and Almora districts have begun to impact tourism in Kumaon region, with arrivals dropping up to 20% in places such as Kausani this season, according to hoteliers. Other tourist destinations in the region witnessing a reduced activity are Kasar Devi, Chaukori, Mukteshwar and Ranikhet. Notably, tourists from Delhi-NCR visit in large numbers during this time to beat summer heat, which hoteliers say, are mostly absent.

RED LINE



Significantly, continuing last year's trend, Uttarakhand has received 1,137 forest fire alerts from Forest Survey of India (FSI) till April 27. In the past one week, the state is seeing a trend of continuous rise in fire alerts with Monday recording at least 170. Fires blazed in districts like Almora, Pithoragarh, Garhwal and Rudrapur, according to forest officials. Last year till



RAGING FLAMES

April 30, FSI's alerts were about 1,764. "In the past few days, smoke has reduced visibility of Himalayan peaks, a key attraction for visitors. Even nearby hills are not visible. It has affected tourism with 15-20% arrivals till now here, and in other parts of Kumaon. Around this time last year, there were nearly 60% tourist arrivals in our area," said Bablu Negi, president of the hotel association in Kausani.

Another hotel owner, Purnan Dasgupta, added the fires reached close to his property and were brought under control after considerable effort. The situation remained similar in pockets of Nainital, Pithoragarh, Almora, Bageshwar and Champawat, which were "battling multiple forest fire incidents". Tourists who'd already arrived were a disappointed lot. Amit Arora,

who travelled from Mumbai, said, "We came here to see the sunrise and the Himalayas, but there is smoke everywhere. It's disappointing." Nivika Rathore, a tourist from Delhi, added, "We come to the hills to escape pollution, but smoke from forest fires and traffic are present here as well."

State nodal officer of forest fires and disaster management, Sushant Patnaik, said, "Rise in temperature has added to the fire ignition. We're protecting our staff from the heatwave as well as the fire-fighting risks." Bageshwar DM, Akanksha Konde, added most of the fire incidents appeared to be human-induced. "An FIR was registered in one such case, and a 10-day special drive was launched," Konde added. Digvijay Singh Adhikari, president of the hotel association, Nainital, said that tourism in Nainital had not yet been significantly affected by the ongoing forest fires.

"However, a slight reduction in visibility due to smoke from nearby forest fires has started to become noticeable."

Officials said religious pilgrimage in this region remained largely unaffected. Pilgrim sites such as Kainchi Dham and Jageshwar continued to see steady footfall.

(Inputs from Smali Mishra in Nainital & Ashish Mishra in Uttarkashi)

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About Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation

SDC Foundation is a Dehradun-based environmental action and advocacy group engaged in communication, citizen engagement and capacity building in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand. The foundation works in partnership with institutions of Government of India, Government of Uttarakhand and other stakeholders such as research & academic institutions, community groups, civil society, media partners, NGOs, businesses & trade bodies, schools & colleges in the state.

Climate and environment conservation, waste management, sustainable urbanisation and a basket of sustainable development issues are key focus areas of the foundation.

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PS: Errors or omissions in UDAAI documentation, if any, are purely unintentional. In case any errors or key omissions are detected or any fresh updates are available for events that are already documented, SDC Foundation may kindly be notified at the email address contactsdcuk@gmail.com. We shall make the necessary corrections in subsequent versions of the monthly reports of UDAAI.

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