

Metro 3 may be open for you by 2019, says MMRC chief

EARLIER THAN EXPECTED If all nods come in on time, Colaba-Seepz corridor may be ready before deadline

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MUMBAI: The city's first underground metro – the Colaba-Seepz corridor – may be open for you by 2019, one year before the deadline, said the managing director of the Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation (MMRC) Ashwini Bhide.

In an interview to Hindustan Times, Bhide said the MMRC will use state-of-the-art technology for smooth and fast construction, if all permissions come in on time.

"There are several global examples of big infrastructure projects constructed in record time. It was possible because of the latest technology and advanced equipment. We, too, can make the Metro project operational one year before the deadline, if we receive all the approvals in time," Bhide said.

The MMRC may open the service for the public in phases.

'METRO WON'T HARM ENVIRONMENT'

The MMRC will take all necessary measures to ensure the environment is not at receiving end while developing the Metro 3, said Bhide.

"There is a false idea amongst people that the depot in Aarey Colony will lead to the destruction of the area's ecology. We are using a very small portion of land that is on the periphery of the colony, and surrounded by roads on three sides. So the depot will not have any negative impact on the ecology

of the colony," Bhide said.

The MMRC will plant more trees than required under the law in the Aarey Colony, Bhide said.

About 3,071 trees will be cut to develop the project, of which 2,298 are in the Aarey Colony

"Every year, the civic body gives permission to cut about 5,000 trees in the city, especially during the monsoon. The number of trees we want to cut is relatively less, for the 33.5-km



■ There have been several protests at Aarey Colony against the Metro 3 project.

project. We will try to avoid cutting trees as much as possible. We are not going to cut a single tree in Colaba Woods," Bhide said.

The chief minister-appointed panel, to check if the metro depot can be shifted from Aarey, is likely to submit its report soon.

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"The tunnels and underground stations will be constructed in seven parts. We will open whatever sections of the project are ready for the public," said Bhide.

The Metro 3 starts at Colaba and passes through the airport and through areas not well-connected by public transport. The 33.5-km project has been mired

in controversy over issues of land acquisition and the proposed cutting of trees at Aarey Colony, which has led to widespread protests.

Bhide said the state issued a government resolution for transfer of land for the project to the MMRC months ago, and slowly, the people to be displaced by the project are also coming around.

"Locals have protested against the project because of some misconceptions. They feared they would be evicted and rehabilitated far from their present location. However, we have assured them they will get proper compensation and will be rehabilitated in the same area," said Bhide. "Now, people are convinced the metro will bring development to their neighbourhood. In fact, we have even received queries from people asking if the metro will pass through their areas, too."

Bhide said the MMRC gets several messages from people, thanking it for developing a transport project that makes their travel smooth, faster and pollution-free.