

Aarey is a wonderful opportunity. But for whom?

SUNJOY MONGA/YUHINA ECOMEDIA

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Thanks to myriad blinkers, our once-great city continues to pay a heavy environmental cost while suffering from bad health and disorganised transport.

The latest chapter in the Aarey issue is how a 'private' landowner has made a generous 'offering' of a portion of its property for the Metro 3 Project depot. Could there be a greater travesty in the name of environment? It is a cruel joke. And it threatens to invite a much bigger hazard into Aarey.

The issue of the original plot — ideal in every way — adjacent to the busy JVLR concerns a couple of hundred indigenous trees. No such ruckus was raised when hundreds of far more spec-

tacular and older indigenous trees were lost — over the past decade and a half — to private development along the LBS Marg.

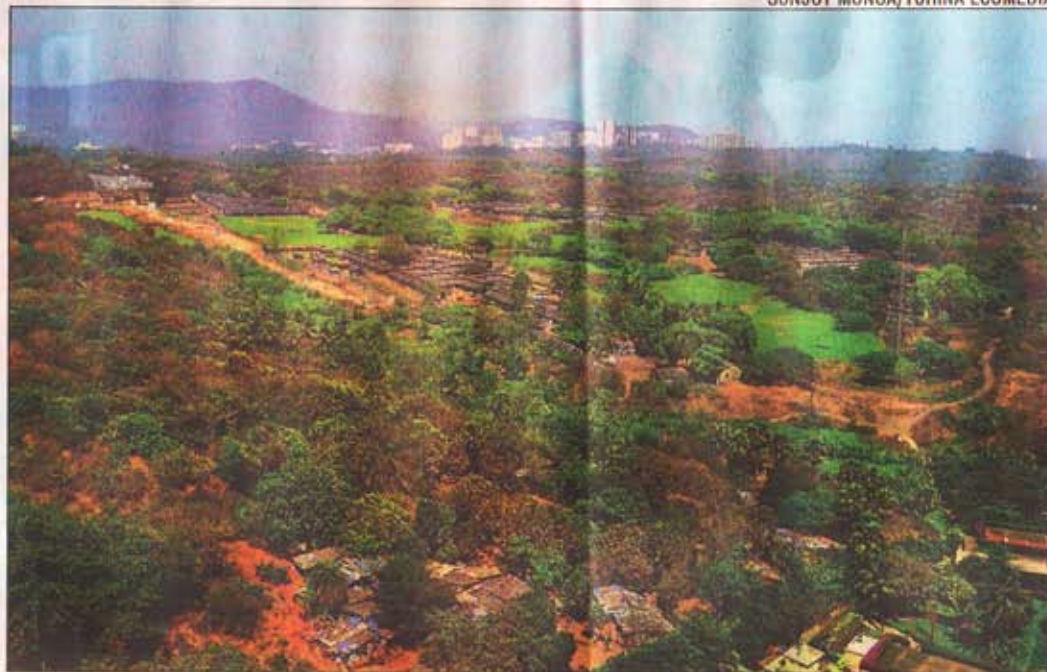
Nor was any noise heard when the old leafy environs of Mumbai's mill lands were turned to concrete and glass. Ditto with the vast Navi Mumbai SEZ. Perhaps because all of that was private?

Remarkably, the extent of public ire, or as portrayed in the media, seems to be only focused on 'direct' depredations done by the State.

Similar actions when connived at by the city's burghers, who blatantly disregard our well-meaning policies, hardly attract attention.

Amidst the confrontational din, it has become difficult to have a constructive dialogue, to sit across the table and work out a solution for the gargantuan urban environmental issue at hand.

What a wonderful opportunity the Aarey issue can be if we can marry environmental concerns with demands for



■ A recent offer of land within Aarey could be bad news. It would take the Metro right into the green lung — a move that is unnecessary and comes at a huge additional cost to the taxpayer.

development. For sure, we need to protect most of Aarey, partly as a biodiversity park and as an educational-cum-recreational park.

We also need to save as many of the indigenous trees as possible, either through careful transplantation or slight design twitches.

To say that transplantation of trees hasn't met with much success is defeatist. Other countries have certainly managed to make a better go of it

than our dismal 1% success rate.

We must all get up and shout for balanced development. A critical public transport project that could alleviate suffering of many who travel great distances is at stake.

And accepting this offer of land from the private enterprise could be damaging for Aarey. It will take the Metro yard right into Aarey's innards. A move that is unnecessary and comes at a huge additional cost to the taxpayer.

And of course it will also have its own cost of tree loss thanks to a pointless extension of nearly 2 km.

It will take the Metro to the very spot where this generous dollop of philanthropy will be rewarded with a towering FSI of 4, as requested, just the right recipe for more than a little township amid the trees.

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