

SO IT BEGINS

Ek Nath Shinde and Devendra Fadnavis flag off Metro-3 trial run

- Proclaim timely schedule despite obstacles posed by MVA
- Some earlier tests done at Sri City in Andhra Pradesh



SWEETY ADIMULAM / MUMBAI

Tuesday was the time for the Ek Nath Shinde-Devendra Fadnavis government to give itself airs about the Colaba-Bandra-Seepz Metro-3 line being bang on schedule despite the Aarey car shed controversy. Its trial run was flagged off with quite a bit of pomp by the Chief Minister and his deputy, the only two allowed to travel by it along with a few other important officials.

The 3-km-long underground tri-

al started from the temporary facility in Sariput Nagar and ended at the Marol Naka Metro station. The temporary facility was built within weeks by the Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Limited (MMRCL) to house the rolling stock after Shinde took oath on June 30.

MMRCL managing director Ashwini Bhide claimed that the line's phase 1 between Aarey and Bandra Kurla Complex will be commissioned as scheduled despite the "obstacles" its car shed has faced.

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Trial run triggers a war of words CITY

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To ensure a smooth kick-off, a few of the necessary tests – such as the driverless element and coordination with the signalling system – were carried out in Andhra Pradesh's Sri City, which is also the manufacturing site for Metro 3 rakes.

Fondly known as 'Metro woman', Bhide was reinstated back in her post by the new government after its decision to shift the car shed back to Aarey. Bhide said Metro-3 will prove to be the city's second lifeline after local trains. The 33.5 km line, connecting Colaba in south Mumbai with the western suburbs, can carry 17 lakh passengers daily. Talking about the design aspects of the rake, she said it will comprise eight coaches, each 3.2 mt wide, and carry 2,400 people in a single trip. As for the uphill political journey, Fadnavis said that the depot work was impeded despite a favourable interim order of the Supreme Court. Justifying the move to reverse the Uddhav Thackeray-led government's order and shifting the car shed back to Aarey from Kanjurmarg, he said, "Two years would have been needed to stabilise the marshy land of Kanjurmarg, and another

two years for depot construction. This would have further delayed the project." He added that even the committee report under the previous Thackeray-led government had also stated that the Kanjurmarg shift will not only increase the project cost by Rs 20,000 crore but also delay it by four years. "Eventually, this would have impacted the citizens. For the larger interest of Mumbaikars, the CM took this prompt decision," he added. Meanwhile, Shinde said that he doesn't see any more obstacles in the commissioning of the Metro-3 corridor. "The project has been taken up to strengthen public transport," he underscored.