

HC slams activists over Metro project

REPRIMAND Court says there is already a delay of more than 30 yrs in bringing Metro to city

● **STAFF REPORTER**
Mumbai

After a huge hue and cry over the cutting of trees, Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation (MMRCL) has now entered in a fresh legal battle over removing mangroves for construction of Metro III project. The agency has dragged activists, who have opposed the project, to Bombay High Court.

On Thursday, the High Court slammed the activists and said there is already a delay of more than 30 years in bringing Metro to Mumbai.

A Division Bench presided over by Justice Vidyasagar Kanade and Justice Anant Badar was hearing a notice of motion moved by MMRCL. MMRCL had approached the Bench seeking permission to remove nearly 100 mangroves from the Bandra-Kurla-Complex area.

Justice Kanade said, "We are of the opinion that everyone must take a pragmatic view. There is a constant increase in traffic which has also led to a rise in the number of deaths due



to accidents. The lives of people are at stake."

"We are concerned about the environment but at the same time we also want development. We think citizens should not oppose this public utility project (Metro III). We need this service to de-congest roads," Justice Kanade said.

This comes after MMRCL informed the Bench that it required to cut down these mangroves for the underground construction of BKC station. The company also told the Bench that it would replant more mangroves than the ones it would be removing.

On the other hand, the counsel appearing for Bom-

bay Environment Action Group, told the Bench that MMRCL has not obtained necessary clearances from the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF).

However, MMRCL informed the Bench that it has already placed all the permissions before the Bench headed by Chief Justice Manjula Chellur, who was hearing the petitions that challenged the felling of trees.

Meanwhile, the activist group sought time to respond to MMRCL's motion on legal grounds and accordingly requested the Bench to adjourn the matter. The matter will be next heard on Tuesday.