

HC: City getting Metro 30 yrs late

Slamming opposition to the Colaba-Andheri Metro 3 line, the Bombay HC said on Thursday that the city needed not only the Metro but water transport too. It said the Metro should've come up 30 years ago. **P 3**

HC says Mumbai needs Metro, raps green activists

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Mumbai: Bombay High Court on Thursday reprimanded activists opposing the Colaba-Andheri SEEPZ Metro 3, saying they must take a pragmatic view considering the ground realities of travel in Mumbai.

"We need the Metro. We need water transport. It is for the future benefit of our children and grandchildren," said a bench of Justice Vidyasagar Kanade and Justice A M Badar. Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Limited (MMRCL) moved the court seeking permission for the Bandra Kurla Complex and Dharavi stations affected by mangroves. The HC, in an earlier order on a PIL by Bombay Environmental Action Group (BEAG), had mandated taking its nod for anything regarding mangroves.

MMRCL's advocate Kiran Bagalia said 108 mangroves are to be cut for BKC station and none for Dharavi as there is "not a single mangrove there". She said in another litigation, MMRCL has undertaken to restore the green cover removed for construction of stations. "We'll replant mangroves and even do compensatory mangrove plantation," she said. Bagalia informed the contract is funded by a Japanese loan and each day's delay has cost repercussions.

Advocate Robin Jaisinghani, who appeared for a petitioner in challenges by activists to the proposed cutting of 5,000 trees for Metro 3, said both stations fall under CRZ-I and no underground construction can be carried out. The judges said there is no need for activists to take an adversarial stand. "Metro should've been in Mumbai 30 years ago. You are doing it 30 years later," said Justice Kanade. The judge also said, "Traffic is going from bad to worse. Every single day there are deaths. Are the lives of people in Mumbai travelling from north to south not important? Is it not more important to find out ways and means to ease traffic?" asked Justice Kanade. Jaisinghani said, "It can't be that the law is violated."

The judges said they are more concerned about environment than green activists and the HC has passed orders to ensure all rules and regulations are followed. "We are sorry at the stance taken in every public utility project, with the result that it gets delayed at the cost of residents of Mumbai who actually suffer. We are happy you (activists) are vigilant. At the same time don't oppose as if it is some personal property matter," said Justice Kanade. The judges posted the next hearing on June 13 after BEAG's advocate sought time to respond to MMRCL's plea.