

BMC TREE AUTHORITY REPORT

'Metro site at Aarey home to heritage trees; retain them'

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MUMBAI: Expert members of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC)'s tree authority surveyed Aarey Colony and submitted in their report to the civic body that the site of the Metro 3 car depot in Aarey Colony is home to trees that should be retained as "unique/ heritage trees".

The report also suggests that

A FINAL DECISION ON CUTTING, REPLANTING 2,700 TREES IS LIKELY TO BE TAKEN TODAY

any tree above 50 feet in height should be retained.

Three expert members of the BMC's tree authority visited the proposed site for the car depot on August 10. The final decision on cutting or replanting 2,700 trees

at Aarey Colony, to make way for the car depot, is likely to be taken at the tree authority's meeting on Wednesday. The cutting and transplanting of trees for the Colaba-Seepz Metro-3 has been a controversial issue since October 2015, when an expert committee constituted by chief minister Devendra Fadnavis identified three sites in Kanjurmarg, Backbay Reclamation and Aarey Colony as viable options for Metro-related construction. »P2

Retain 'heritage trees' at Metro-3 shed site in Aarey, says BMC panel

PLAN TO HIT 2.7K TREES Committee suggests saving trees over 50ft in height; civic body to take final decision today

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MUMBAI: Expert members of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC)'s tree authority surveyed Aarey Colony and submitted in their report to the civic body that the site of the Metro-3 car depot in Aarey Colony is home to trees that should be retained as "unique/ heritage trees". The report also suggests that any tree above 50 feet in height should be retained.

Three expert members of the tree authority visited the proposed site for the car depot on August 10. They formally submitted their observations to the BMC last week. The final decision on cutting or replanting 2,700 trees at Aarey Colony, to make way for the car depot, is likely to be taken at the tree authority's meeting on Wednesday.

In the report, which HT has a copy of, the experts observed, "Terminalia, bellerica/beheda trees found on the site seem very old and need to be retained as a unique/ heritage trees as they are presently harbouring orchids." Further, the report reads, "Aden-sonia digitata tree is recommended for cutting in the inventory, but it is [a] long-living tree and responds well to transplanting, hence can be put under transplanting category. All trees along the Aarey-Powai road, along the boundary wall that are not falling in the construction area and are very tall may be retained. These trees are acting as a green belt."

With reference to the area

THE BATTLE FOR METRO-3 SHED

Nov 2014: Aarey residents gather after witnessing notices on trees for the felling of 2,298 trees

Dec 2014-Feb 2015: Citizens start a petition; first major protest is staged

October 2015: State accepts six-member committee report to shift Metro-3 car shed to Kanjurmargin

Nov 2015: Land being considered at Kanjurmargin is under litigation; State bounces back to Aarey

Dec 2015: State hands over 30ha to MMRCL and additional 3ha, violating NGT status quo

Jan 2016: Union environment ministry declares Aarey an eco-sensitive zone of SGNP

May 22, 2017: NGT asks MMRCL to produce construction permits for Metro-3 car shed at Aarey

Jun 2018: NGT orders no dumping of debris, levelling of mud, cutting of trees till July 11. Next hearing scheduled for July 12



Aug 2018: MMRCL files appeal in the Supreme Court seeking interim relief through a special leave petition on the NGT order

Aug 6, 2018: The SC bench disposes the matter, transferring it back to NGT Delhi, the principal bench; NGT stay order continues

Sep 20, 2018: Stay on debris dumping, tree felling and land reclamation at Aarey lifted; NGT principal bench says it cannot declare Aarey Colony as forest

area. NGO Vanshakti withdraws application and the case is disposed of.

Oct 2018: Bombay high court dismisses a separate petition by Amrita Bhattacharjee and Biju Augustine, challenging land use change of Aarey

November 2018: Petitioners file a special leave petition in SC, challenging the order

April 1, 2019: SC directs MMRCL to

file its response within a week, explaining why alternative sites were not chosen for Metro-3 car shed despite availability

April 8, 2019: Maharashtra government and MMRCL seek extension to file responses

April 15, 2019: SC dismisses application to look into alternate sites for car depot, citing that options had already been looked into and found unviable by MMRCL and a technical committee

ABOUT METRO-3

Metro-3 (Colaba-Bandra-Seeppz) is the first and only fully-underground Metro proposed for the city. After its completion, it will be the fifth-largest underground tunnel in Asia

33.5 km length

27 stations

(Cuffe Parade, Vidhan Bhavan, Churchgate, Hutatma Chowk, CST Metro, Kalbadevi, Girgaum, Grant Road, Mumbai Central Metro, Mahalaxmi, Science Museum, Acharya Atre Chowk, Worli, Siddhivinayak, Dadar, Sitaladevi, Dharavi, BKC, Vidyanagar, Santacruz, Domestic Airport, Sahar Road, International Airport, Marol Naka, MIDC, Seeppz and Aarey Depot)

Deadline: December 2021

₹23,136 cr
Project cost

where the car shed is planned, the experts said, "There are many indigenous trees in a construction area that also can be preserved by either retaining or transplanting. Any tree above 50 feet height requires to be retained."

Dr Shashirekha Suresh-kumar, a botanist from Mithibai

College and member of tree authority, along with Dr Chandrakant Salunkhe, another expert member of the tree committee, confirmed the above.

Corporators from Shiv Sena, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Congress and Nationalist Congress Party, who are members of the tree authority, visited the site

of the proposed car shed on Tuesday. While the BJP supported the cutting and transplanting of trees on the ground that it is necessary for development, other parties maintained their stand of not supporting the cutting of around 2,700 trees for the Metro-3 shed.

The cutting and transplanting of trees in Aarey to construct a

car depot for the Colaba-Seeppz Metro-3 has been a controversial issue since 2015 when an expert committee formed by chief minister Devendra Fadnis identified three sites in Kanjurmargin, Backbay Reclamation and Aarey Colony as viable options for Metro-related construction.

Environmental activist Stalin

D, who had filed a petition against the car depot construction in Aarey, said, "The state should have anticipated our opposition and taken a firm decision on moving out of Aarey instead of wasting five years." Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation (MMRC), which is constructing Metro-3, did not comment on the issue.