

HC raps activists opposing Metro — III

By Philip Varghese

The people who are opposing the destruction of the green cover need to take a pragmatic view of the Metro III project considering the ground realities," observed the Bombay High Court yesterday, while hearing a petition filed by the Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Limited (MMRCL) seeking permission to cut 108 mangroves for the Bandra Kurla Complex station.

The HC in an earlier Public Interest Litigation (PIL) regarding mangroves filed by Bombay Environmental Action Group (BEAG), had mandated taking the court's nod for anything regarding the mangroves.

The division bench of Justice V. M. Kanade and Justice A.M. Badar said, "We need the Metro as traffic in Mumbai is becoming from bad to worse."

This comes as advocate Kiran Bagalia representing MMRCL told the bench that although the Coastal Regulation Zone III covers BKC and Dharavi station areas, no mangroves are required to be cut for the Dharavi station, as there are no mangroves there. "The MMRCL has undertaken to restore the green cover removed for construction of stations. We will be replanting

and even do the compensatory mangrove replantation. A loan has been taken from Japan and delay in work has huge cost repercussions," advocate Kiran contended.

Advocate Robin Jaisinghani, who had appeared for one of the petitioners which had challenged the proposed cutting of 5000-odd trees, argued that no underground construction can be carried out in CRZ III.

Reacting to this, the bench observed that the residents and activists should not take an opposition stand and must consider the worsening traffic situation in the city. "We feel that the Metro should have been constructed 30 years ago in the city. The authorities are constructing it 30 years later. Thousands of people travel between north and south Mumbai each day and several others die in road accidents. The Metro III project will prove immensely useful for these people and thus, those opposing the project must first consider the ground situation," the bench observed.

The bench later adjourned the matter for further hearing on June 24 after advocate representing Bombay Environment Action Group (BEAG) sought time to respond to MMRCL's petition.