

Trial run of Metro-3 line to be held in Aarey underground site

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MAHARASHTRA CHIEF Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday announced that trial runs of Mumbai Metro-3 line, which will run between Colaba and Seepz, will be conducted in Aarey Colony's Marol Maroshi underground site.

The statement said the site for the trial run is not the same as the one on which the controversial car shed for the Metro line was to be located before it was shelved.

In October 2019, Thackeray had announced that he was scrapping the construction of a car shed at Aarey Milk Colony to save the forest in the area. Thackeray had announced that the car shed would be moved to Kanjurmarg, but the move was stayed by the Bombay High Court in December 2020.

The statement issued by Thackeray's office on Thursday said the proposed trial run will be held in the ramp area, which will be constructed at the Marol Maroshi area and the work will be undertaken there "without touching any trees".

Marol is a km away from the shelved car shed site.

Sources said the chief minister's announcement of "not touching any tree" in Aarey is to reiterate his commitment to protecting the green area. It also assumes significance ahead of the local bodies polls next year.

The 33.5 km underground Colaba-Seepz Metro is being developed by Mumbai Metro Rail

Corporation (MMRC).

Government sources said permission to conduct the technical trials for the Metro-3 line has been given as 97 per cent of tunnelling and 70 per cent of civil work has been completed. The area where the trials will be conducted is outside Aarey.

"The underground site in Marol-Maroshi is close to the Aarey site on which a stay has been given by the state government earlier. Since the site is closer to the Aarey site, it is possible that there may be a misunderstanding that the work has been started in the Aarey site where there is a stay. So, the chief minister made the announcement," said a government official.

According to MMRC officials, a temporary facility for parking the new car that is coming will be constructed and the facility for the trial run will be constructed in two-and-a-half months. The trial runs will begin when the prototype train comes. But MMRC officials didn't specify the exact location where the facility will be.

An eight-bogie train has been manufactured by Alstom, an Andhra Pradesh-company. The prototype train has undergone technical tests at the site.

State government officials said the trials will be done near the ramp area of Aarey, which is on a site opposite the car shed. The trial train will be run for at least 10,000 km and 31 such trains will be deployed on this route after successful completion of trials.

The managing director of MMRC, Ranjit Singh Deol, said, "The permission by the state gov-

ernment (for the temporary facility) provides a great impetus to the project. With 97 per cent of tunnelling and 70 per cent of civil work completed, start of technical trials of the prototype train is another milestone."

Currently, at least 1 km of tunnelling in each of the up line and down line remains between Mahalaxmi and Mumbai Central Stations, which will be completed in four to five months. So far, 7 km of track work is completed on the Metro-3 line.

Activist Amrita Bhattacharjee said, "I am concerned about the temporary facility as in these kinds of projects, there is nothing like temporary. These are huge structures and how are they going to remove them further? There is nothing mentioned about it by them."

Zoru Bathena, also an activist, said, "We are deeply concerned about why the work on Metro-3 and Metro-6 line merger (from JVL) has not begun as this interconnection is the only way for Metro cars to be shifted to Kanjur instead of Aarey. If the government can start work on their test track, they can surely start work on the interconnecting track, too, after all, this interconnecting track is the most critical part of their plan to move the depot out of Aarey."

D Stalin of NGO Vanashakti said, "We understand that the ramp is needed to move the car shed to another location...So long as the ground in Aarey is not being used to sneak into the railway service depot, there is no problem. The restoration of the site, which has been reclaimed, must also be done on priority."