

## NGO Vanashakti condemns Devendra Fadnavis' statements on Aarey car shed

By A Correspondent | Posted 03-Apr-2016



Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis, on Friday once again said that the constructing car depot at Aarey Milk Colony will save Rs 1500 crore that might have to be spent if the car depot is constructing at Kanjurmarg.

Stalin D on behalf of NGO Vanashakti and Save Aarey Conservation Group has written a letter to CM Devendra Fadnavis condemning the statement.

Stalin D said, "We are disappointed with your statement appearing in today's newspapers that Rs 1500 Cr is preventing the Kanjurmarg site from being used for the Metro carshed. We have been campaigning to save Aarey for over one and a half year. We have repeatedly reached out to you and have failed to get a meeting with you. You have said on camera that you are committed to protecting Mumbai's Green spaces and by supporting the destruction of Aarey you are doing the opposite. We have the following questions for you since you have been (mis)led into believing that 1500 crores is a huge waste of money. Kindly take the trouble to read this letter and share it with those who advise you on financial matters."

In the letter it has also been pointed that the areas of Powai, Chandivli with burgeoning populations are in the middle of nowhere with no rail or bus depots nearby. The entire population along JVLR till Kanjurmarg has to put up with severe traffic congestion and poor connectivity. If the line is extended till Kanjurmarg and integrated with the Jogeshwari Kanjurmarg route, then the government is saving money and not spending it.

"This is an investment that you will eventually have to make considering that you are in a hurry to complete the Metro network of Mumbai."

"Let us help dissect the financials in simpler terms. The cost of the project is Rs 23500 cr. If you take 1500 cr it means that the project cost goes up temporarily as per our understanding and let us take it as permanent for your convenience by a mere 5% approximately. Considering that capital cost will not account for more than 50% of the total ticket price (other expenses being running costs, electric power, salaries, maintenance, etc.), the net impact to the final ticket price will not be more than 3.2%."

"Please consider that the Metro 1 project overshot its cost by 84% ( a whopping 1900 crores) and if one calculates that factor the net increase in ticket fare would not be more than 1.5% which is not a major sum. We are assuming and accepting this figure of Rs 1500 cr as a loss stated by you, only if NO ONE uses the metro from Jogeshwari to Kanjurmarg. This, you very well know is not the case. When people use this extended route you will make money and profits instead of losses as claimed by you." added Stalin

The letter also states that the increase will be in the capital cost that is funded at negligible interest rates by JICA. An additional Rs 1500 crores will not sink the boat especially since it is interest free.

"CM and MMRC have said that Kanjurmarg is a marshy land. This is not true and the dried up salt pans have not received any tide water for the past 15 years thanks to the Brimstovad Walls that were built along the salt pans creeklets. Today the sewage water from nearby slums is spread out on the surface and this wet surface is used to grow fodder grass. The original character of the wetland has been severely compromised. If the sewage water is blocked even for a month, the entire land will be hard as a rock and not a marsh land. Today the landward side of the eastern express highway witnesses this phenomenon." Letter further stated

The environmentalists also feel that the entire construction debris of Mumbai has no place to go and is officially sent to Vasai. "If this land is given (landward side which we have suggested) is given for dumping of debris, developers whose projects are going on in Mumbai and other nearby areas will pay money to dump and help raise the height of the land. So both the reasons stated by you as being a deterrent due to cost and geological factors are not maintainable in the light of the above facts." Said Stalin

The letter also states that "besides Kanjurmarg, Kalina Campus is the best option considering that there is a station proposed at that location and more than 27 ha of land is available free from any trees. Then why is that location not being considered? Why this stubborn redirection towards Aarey and not enough weightage given to other equally and better suited sites? We once again call upon you, request you to drop the plan for the Metro Car Shed in Aarey. Mumbai's last green space and lungs need to be protected and developed into a recreation and eco tourism zone without change of landscape. We humbly request you not to be misled by wrong facts and figures."

"Mumbai despite being the financial and growth capital of Maharashtra has not been able to witness the Governance of a Mumbai born Chief Minister. This is more evident by your statements on this issue. We are also deeply disturbed by your statement that you are not connected to Mumbai and that you will go back to Nagpur. This is a disturbing and disappointing statement to make. You are the chief minister of the State of Maharashtra and must think inclusive. Nagpur has horribly hot weather which does not need to be replicated in Mumbai by destroying the green spaces. Please tell your team of scientific advisors to inform the people about what is the economic value of a tree considering the ecological services provided to life forms."

"Please take bold decisions which are not guided by developers needs. Invest in BEST transport with good quality AC buses and long routes with high frequency. All said and done we once again request you not to pursue the idea of Aarey as the location for the Metro 3 car shed," the letter concluded.