

Mumbai's destiny linked to market forces'

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MUMBAI: Architect-activist P K Das' well-researched dissection of the draft development plan (DP) set the tone at the seminar, Aapli Mumbai, at a Bandra auditorium.

Flaying the plan for a Metro III car shed in Aarey Colony, actor Aamir Khan said the wildlife in the belt needs to be protected at any cost. "Some of the features in the DP are disturbing and shocking... It appears that the wildlife in Aarey will be destroyed because of the wanton cutting of trees to make way for the Metro car project," he said. He asked the government to recognize the widespread ire over the DP and make a presentation. "We invite the government to tell us what is in store for Mumbai in the DP... Common citizens can't wade through the development plan couched in technical language. Mumbaikars need sound and sage advice on the plan," he said. "There should be a comprehensive debate on the DP."

In a hard-hitting speech, Javed Akhtar said Mumbai had fallen prey to the machinations of the builder-politician nexus. "There are some 5,000 politicians who have formed an exclusive club. Power often changes hands, but everything else remains the same... We should not let Mumbai die because of our indifference and apathy.," he said, describing the DP as 'fanda' (noose) around the city's neck. "The sooner we get rid of this noose, the better it will be for us," he added amid applause.

Das accused the government of "monetizing" FSI at the cost of Mumbai's basic needs such as housing, healthcare, good roads, water and education. The DP will also trigger exclusive growth, he predicted. The DP, if accepted as it is, will result in marginalizing 85% of the city's populace from development and quality life, he warned. Offering more FSI near railway stations will result in massive congestion in areas already choked, Das added.

Salim Khan exhorted Mumbaikars to wake up and work out a game plan to save the city from further ruin. “Citizens should realise their collective strength and strive to keep their neighbourhoods clean,” said the renowned script writer.

Bharat Dabholkar spoke about the need to kickstart stage-II of the anti-DP stir. Ritesh Deshmukh suggested the DP should be discussed threadbare in the bastis and mohallas.