Government’s decision on Aarey forest lands

What is the issue?

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- Maharashtra government is firm in ceding the Aarey forest land for metro projects.
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- This has aggravated distress among civil society as the forest area falls under eco sensitive zone.
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What is the significance of Aarey forest?

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- It is considered to be Mumbai’s green lung which spreads over 1,300 hectare in the city's northern suburb.
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- It is home to several species of birds, insects and leopards, and was once part of the adjoining Sanjay Gandhi National Park.
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- This forest was once used to be over 3,000 acres in north Mumbai has been reduced to around 1,300 acres.
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What are the threats faced by the Aarey forest?

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- In 1949, 3,160 acres were pencilled off for the Aarey Milk Colony, which comprised a milk factory, pastures for cattle grazing and residential units for labourers.
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- The land was handed over to Aarey Milk Colony, an autonomous body, and was declared a No-Development Zone.

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- That changed in 2014, when the State government converted it into a Development Zone.
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- Recently the Maharashtra government has decided to provide 3% (which will around 21 sq. kms) of this ecologically sensitive zone for a Metro car shed.
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- Government is firm in its decision even after the recommendations of a technicalcommittee appointed by Bombay HC to relocate the car shed.
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- Apart from the Metro car shed, the Goregaon-Mulund Link Road, now in its planning phase, will eat into the forest area.
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What will be the consequences of government's move?

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- The developments in this area have consequences of the felling of over 2,000 trees.
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- The car shed construction is expected to be declared as a high security area which will rob enthusiasts of one of their favourite cycling or trekking venues.
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- There are also concerns related to tribals who stay in Aarey and their rehabilitation.
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Source: The Hindu

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