



4FSI, riverfront project and new roads. We're building our own heat trap

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Recently, the usually pleasant neighbourhood of Koregaon Park registered a scorching 44.4°C. This is a place where people have successfully saved the old banyan trees on one avenue while sacrificing them on



another.

We were told the roads needed to be widened. However, an arterial flyover wasn't considered. Neither were more bridges across the river, nor a riverfront elevated freeway. Still, old trees were chopped.

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Trees cannot complain. They don't pay bribes or taxes. They don't enrich politicians. So, they can be sacrificed. It is all done in the name of progress.

In the latest development, entire swathes of riparian forests are set to be cleared. Thousands of trees, bushes and shrubs have already gone. There used to be bird sanctuaries there once where Flamingos would fly in to rest. We may lose all of it.

This, in addition to the 4FSI norms, has compounded the problem. For the uninitiated, 4FSI simply means



'4FSI' has made parts of Koregaon Park a cluster of high-rises. Almost 300 people now live where 30 used to. Traffic is a nightmare in the evenings. The roads are overburdened with garbage trucks and tankers ferrying water. The sewage being dumped into the river has only increased in volume

you can build four times your plot size or land area. If you own 10,000 sqft of land, you can build 40,000 sqft. 4FSI has made parts of Koregaon Park a cluster of high-rises. Almost 300 people now live where 30 used to.

Traffic is a nightmare in the evenings. The roads are overburdened with garbage trucks and tankers ferrying water. The sewage being dumped into the river has increased in volume. As have mosquitoes. Up the North Main Road, more bridges have come up giving Magarpatta accessibility. Soon, the rail overbridge in Ghorpadi, through Mundhwa, will become operational.

Now, we know concrete is a heat trap. Trees absorb heat and deflect high temperatures. But we are pouring more concrete whilst chopping our green cover.

It is simple maths really. If 300 people move in where

there were just 30, everything — garbage, sewage and pollution — will go up by 10 times. This logic is lost on our city's engineers. They want to redo roads. Dig them up again and again to lay more pipelines, power lines and sewage lines. It's an endless cycle.

Our politicians and engineers do not consider biocapacities. They insist, if you build more roads, you get more roads. That's an oversimplification. The truth is, if you build more roads, you get more traffic. If you build more highrises, you get more people. More heat islands.

If we live in a city, we need to be mindful of some facts. Our food comes from elsewhere. Our water too. As does everything we consume. All our excesses are supported by fossil fuel consumption. This creates more emissions. More pollution. More load on the ecosystem. Those old banyans used to keep Koregaon Park, Sinhad Road, FC Road, Prabhat Road, Law College Road, and Ganeshkhind Road cooler. Malls stand where these trees once stood.

Concrete is only heating things up. Pune should just learn to say no. Say no to the RFD. No to the proposed Bal Bharati-Paud Phata road. And no to 4FSI.

— The writer is an economist