

Getting Green Clearance For Real Estate Projects To Get Speedier In Mumbai

Developers in Mumbai can now expect quicker environmental approvals for their housing and commercial projects as they will no longer be required to seek green clearances from the Centre.

The city's local municipal body, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), has set up a six-member environmental cell to clear proposals from builders as part of the government's efforts to cut down on administrative delays and improve ease of doing business.

Until recently, real estate projects with a built-up area between 5,000 square metres and 1,50,000 square metres needed a green signal from the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Fast-tracking of environmental approvals will save time and cost for developers in a metropolis like Mumbai, where an estimated 1.5 lakh new apartments would be ready for sale by December. Earlier, proposals would get delayed up to one year at the Centre, said a civic official requesting not to be identified. "With this cell, we hope to clear files in two to three weeks."

The cell comprises three experts from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation and as many from outside. The members will examine proposals on six parameters, said a notification on the civic body's website.

They are waste management, water conservation and management, transport planning and management, air quality management, energy efficiency and renewable energy, and resource efficiency, including building materials.

Gulam Zia, executive director, Knight Frank India, a global real estate consultancy firm, said the move will benefit the sector. "If they have done this to make it simpler to get permission and reduce the time of regulatory process requirement, it will help the industry," he said.

The municipal corporation formed the environmental cell on August 19, nearly nine months after the Centre issued a [notification](#) allowing local bodies to form dedicated units.

The corporation has received 26 enquiries about the cell in its first week, said the official. A soft copy of the proposals are to be submitted at present in a CD or a pen drive. "We are working towards making the entire process online which will take about three months," he said.

For projects with a built-up area of 5,000- 20,000 sq mt, a qualified building environment auditor would self-assess the project, which would be monitored by the environment cell.

The Centre's decentralisation initiative may spark apprehensions about mismanagement, but Zia said they can be dispelled with proper checks and balances. "This is definitely a positive step and we welcome it."