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Only 45 colleges got building approval: CTCP

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Safety of students in educational institutions a cause for concern

The Madras High Court Bench here was informed on Monday that only 45 out of 2,906 colleges (including engineering, medical, para-medical, arts and science and polytechnic colleges) functioning in various parts of the State, except Chennai metropolitan area, had obtained approval for their buildings from the Town and Country Planning authorities.

Special Government Pleader (SGP) M. Govindan made the submission before a Division Bench of Justices R. Sudhakar and V.M. Velumani during the hearing of a writ petition filed by Chettinad College of Engineering and Technology in Karur district. The petitioner had challenged a final notice issued by the officials asking it to either obtain approval within 15 days or face 'lock and seal' proceedings.

Opposing the writ, the SGP submitted a copy of a letter written by the Commissioner of Town and Country Planning A. Karthik to the District Collectors on July 3, 2013. The letter stated that a special drive conducted by the field offices of his department had led to unearthing of “quite a lot” of educational institutions having been constructed without the permission of his department.

“A rough estimate shows that out of a total of 2,906 colleges, only about 45 colleges have got valid approval from the department. In addition to this there are about 17,000 schools. Buildings constructed in educational institutions without permission are a cause of concern in view of safety of students and non conformity to government regulations,” the Commissioner had said.

He also pointed out that the Housing and Urban Development Department had passed a Government Order on June 26, 2013 providing a concession of 50 per cent in Infrastructure and Amenities Charges to be paid by all categories of non multi-storeyed buildings, constructed before July 1, 2007, for getting them regularised. However, the concession was available only for six months from the date of G.O.

The G.O. also permitted educational institutions to earmark 10 per cent of their site area under the category of 'Open Space Reservation' and utilise it as a park rather than handing it over the jurisdictional local body as required under the old rules. Hence, the Commissioner had urged the Collectors to ensure that all educational institutions obtain clearance within the stipulated time.

However, the writ petitioner claimed that it had obtained building plan approval from the Puliur Panchayat president and hence there was no necessity to obtain technical approval from Town and Country Planning Authorities. The judges directed the High Court Registry to tag the petition along with a similar case already pending before the court and post them for hearing on Thursday.