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Corporation acts against unauthorised structures

COIMBATORE: The long pending issue of taking appropriate action against illegal constructions in the city is expected to be revived soon with the Madras High Court verdict against the regularisation of illegal buildings in the state on Monday. The court order has literally left the city municipal corporation and Local Planning Authority (LPA) with no option but to take proper action against illegal structures which in most cases will lead to demolition. The first bench of the court in its ruling has clearly asked the government to refrain from giving further extension to violators of building rules. However, the ruling has evoked mixed response from the construction sector as builders believe the authorities should ensure stringent implementation of the building rules right at the point of construction itself, to stop the proliferation of illegal structures.

"We are hoping for the building rules to be a bit more relaxed in the state. It should be framed in such a way so as to allow some variations based on the size of the plot. We welcome the court verdict but also demand that the enforcement of rules should be stringent in the initial phase itself rather than later, after completion of construction work," said K Viswanathan, Former Vice President, Builders Association of India and a city-based builder.

The verdict was the result of PILs filed before the court challenging the earlier recommendation of the Justice Mohan committee to stretch the cut off date for regularisation of illegal structures build up to 2007. Builders feel that though the regularisation option was extended to concrete structures constructed till 2007, there were certain clauses like only those with 50 percent deviation which make it literally impossible to make use of the building regularisation scheme.

"It is a welcome development for those who abide by the law and do not opt to take shortcuts. More people will probably try to follow the norms now and think twice before making any deviations from the approved plan," said S Kanagasundaram, Former President, Association of Licensed Building Surveyors, Coimbatore.

Senior officials of the corporation and Local Planning Authority claimed that the number of regularisation applications received were extremely low. The Local Planning Authority (LPA) officials claimed that they had earlier identified about 250 educational buildings alone in the district that were constructed in violation of the norms and had served notices to them.

The corporation had issued notices and initiated lock and seal action against 68 unauthorised structures. The drive gained momentum after the massive fire at Vigneswar Cresta building in the city in April 2013.