

# Builders' pardon a bane to citizens?

Pune Municipal Corporation's new amnesty scheme for builders has come under NGO and NCP scanner, who believe it has no benefits for common people

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**A**fter doling out the amnesty scheme for property tax defaulters, the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) has landed in a soup over its amnesty scheme for builders. The scheme, which will regularise constructions (with a heavy fine, of course), is supposed to benefit common people. However, these it has been questioned by city-based NGOs and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), with the latter claiming that the decision was made in the interest of builders and developers, and certainly not the common man.

On Saturday, NCP's member of legislative council (MLC) Anil Bhosale criticised the civic body's partial behaviour, saying, "If builders can reap benefits from the amnesty scheme, why can't the commoners do the same? I appeal citizens to build homes without permissions and benefit from the scheme." The new amnesty scheme will be applicable to those builders, who haven't acquired completion certification for their already occupied housing projects. In 2003, the then civic body commissioner had imposed a penalty on developers of such projects. A penalty of Rs 16.50 per square metre was imposed for the first month of occupancy, followed by Rs 3.30 per square metre on the following days.

These rates were revised further with the builder being charged 20 per cent of the total construction's rate. The revision was challenged by the Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (CREDAI) in the Bombay High Court (HC), which directed the civic body to "not take any coercive action by charging hefty amount to builders" in December 2012.

Currently, there are more than 100 constructions in the city without any completion certificates that fall within the ambit of the amnesty scheme. The scheme, that came into force on April 20, will be applicable for constructions dated December 31, 2012 and ahead. A fine of Rs 5,000 per square metre will be imposed on con-



100 plus buildings have no completion certificates.

structions without plinth inspections. If flat owners have taken residence in such buildings and are paying property tax, they will be penalised with the prescribed fine. A commercial property will be fined up to Rs 10,000 per square metre.

Retired Major General SCN Jathar, president of the Nagrik Chetna Manch launched an inquiry, presided by former Supreme Court judge Justice P B Sawant to push the civic body against the illegal constructions.

"HC enables the civic body to regularise lawful constructions without permission certificates. However, they cannot regularise violators of the Development Control (DP) rule. I insist the corporation to levy heavy fines to avoid repeat of such acts. Moreover, the builders should compensate the flat owners who are suffering due to their negligence," Jathar said.

CREDAI president Shantilal Kataria reiterated a similar opinion. He believed builders are only left with two ways, either to pay the fine or wait for HC's ruling on the issue. Contrary to the questionable nature of the scheme, Kataria stated that the scheme is beneficial for builders as well as individual flat owners. "The residents can also acquire the commencement certificate by paying the fine," he stated. While speaking to *Mirror*, city engineer Prashant Waghmare also talked of the benefits. "The commencement certificate will help individual flat owners," he said.