

'Order will boost redevelopment, improve lives of those living in dilapidated structures and slums'

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MUMBAI, JUNE 9

THE BOMBAY High Court's Friday order vacating the stay on cluster re-development projects in Navi Mumbai, Thane and suburban areas of Mumbai has been welcomed by various stakeholders. While bureaucrats said the decision would aid in development of congested areas, builders said that the cluster re-development of buildings would improve the lives of many who have had to continue living in dilapidated structures owing to the stay order.

The repercussions of the High Court order will be more on Thane, owing to the large number of old and in some cases unauthorised buildings in its residential zones. Expressing relief over the decision, Thane Municipal Commissioner Sanjeev Jaiswal said civic officials had put in a lot of effort to come up with a detailed impact assessment report, prepared considering every eventuality.

"It is a big achievement for the TMC since it was the first corporation to submit the impact assessment report to the state government. After the government resolution is issued, we will form a study team to help with the implementation of the cluster development policy,"

Jaiswal said.

According to the policy, an FSI of four or double the existing, whichever is higher, will be adopted for such projects. Jaiswal added that the policy would bring relief primarily to the congested areas of the city, especially the haphazard and dilapidated buildings and some slums.

Many builders pointed out that cluster re-development was the only solution for many dilapidated buildings that stand on small plots.

Kailash Agarwal, chairperson of One Avigna Park, a real estate firm, said, "It (the HC order) is very good news since cluster re-development is essential for old buildings that have been unable to undergo re-development. A Supreme Court ruling mandates that depending on the size of the plot, 8-25 per cent of its area has to be reserved for a recreation ground. Due to this, re-development is impossible in small plots and many projects are halted because of it," he said.

Agarwal added that the state government should also amend the rule that mandates consent of 70 per cent of the residents before a redevelopment project can be taken up.

"There are always some residents who will hold up the re-development since they either want more money or area. The government should bring down

the requirement to 51 per cent instead," he said.

Rajan Bandelkar, the managing director of Raunak Group as well as the vice-president of National Real Estate Development Council, lauded the High Court's decision. "This policy will help regularise large number of illegal buildings, especially in Thane, just as it has done so in countries such as China. Majority of the buildings are dilapidated and are not being developed because of the restrictions. This will help improve the quality of life of the residents living in such buildings," he said.

After the High Court's decision was pronounced on Friday, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis took to Twitter to express his views. His posts said that 30-year-old buildings would be covered under the cluster re-development scheme and 50 per cent of slum area would also be included.

In one of his posts, Fadnavis referred to the ruling's effect on Mumbai suburbs too. It read, 'Great relief for Mumbai suburban too! With the approval of Hon High Court, now Govt can speed up cluster redevelopment in Mumbai suburban'. He added that the decision would pave the way for planned development, with availability of more public amenities and wiser use of spaces.