

A shift in the approval framework for High-Rise Buildings in Chennai Metropolitan Area

The Housing and Urban Development Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, has recently issued a government order¹ dated June 15, 2026 (“**Order**”), amending Rule 39(25) of the Tamil Nadu Combined Development and Building Rules, 2019. This amendment pertains to the approval process for the High-Rise Buildings (“**HRB**”) within the Chennai Metropolitan Area (“**CMA**”) and is slated to have substantial implications for developers, landowners, financial institutions and other real estate stakeholders. Though the amendment seems to be procedural in nature, it has a significant effect on administrative efficiency and urban governance.

Earlier approval mechanism

Before this amendment, the proposals for construction of HRBs situated within the CMA had to undergo a dual-step process.

First, a panel of members from various government and technical departments examined the proposals and provided its recommendations. Thereafter, the Government received the proposal for its final approval.

In practice, this meant that even if a proposal passed the technical evaluation, it would still have to go through another level of bureaucratic scrutiny before receiving approval.

While the intention was to ensure supervision of large and complex projects, this approval mechanism often led to prolonged timelines, overlapping reviews and ambiguity in ultimate decisions. Such delays in projects resulted in higher project costs, financing issues for the developers and uncertainty for investors. For landowners partnering with developers under joint development arrangements, these delays also created significant exposure, as prolonged approval timelines could trigger disputes over project milestones and entitlements under the joint development agreements.

What has changed?

The Order has fundamentally modified this approval mechanism. The Government has reconstituted the HRBs evaluation panel comprising officials from Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (“**CMDA**”), Fire and Rescue Services, Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board, Greater Chennai Corporation, Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation Limited, Water Resources Department, Public Works Department, Traffic Police Officials and an independent architect.

¹ G.O.(Ms). No. 126

Further, CMDA now holds the power and authority to grant or refuse planning approvals for HRBs, based on the recommendations of the panel. This completely eliminates the necessity of obtaining separate approval from the Government. This is perhaps the most essential point of the amendment. From a practical standpoint, this consolidation of decision-making authority at the CMDA level is expected to significantly reduce approval timelines, which should in turn lower holding costs for developers, improve project bankability for lenders, and provide greater certainty to investors evaluating HRB projects within the CMA.

Potential concerns

All regulatory amendments have both benefits and drawbacks. In this instance, expedition must not be at the cost of oversight. HRBs create a strain on aiding infrastructure such as roads, water supply, sewerage lines and electricity. Now as CMDA has taken over as the final decision-making authority, the success of this newly implemented process depends on its transparency and procedural fairness.

Conclusion

While this Order appears to be a positive as well as pragmatic change towards facilitating housing developments. The implementation of this amendment will determine its effectiveness. If CMDA can combine expedited approvals alongside thorough technical evaluation and transparent decision-making, this will be a significant stride in the continuous advancement of urban planning and development in Tamil Nadu.

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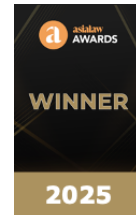
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