

HARYANA REAL ESTATE REGULATORY AUTHORITY PANCHKULA

Website: www.haryanarera.gov.in

Complaint no.:	1648 of 2022	
Date of filing:	12.08.2022	
Date of first hearing:	14.10.2022	
Date of decision:	20.08.2024	

- 1. Mrs. Savita madan, w/o Sh. Surender Madan,
- Mrs. Ruhi Madan, d/o Sh. Surender Madan, Both R/o House no.44-R, Model Town, Rewari, Haryana (123401)

...COMPLAINANTS

Versus

- Choice Real Estate Developers Pvt. Ltd,
 Regd. Office at 14/185-14/186, Ground Floor,
 Malviya Nagar, Main Shivalik Road,
 New Delhi -110017
- 2. Vipul Limited

Regd. Office at Regus Rectangle, level-4, Rectangle 1, D-4, Commercial Complex, Saket, New Delhi- 110017

...RESPONDENTS

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CORAM: Dr. Geeta Rathee Singh

Member

Chander Shekhar

Member

Present: - Sh. Harsh Ahuja, Advocate, counsel for the complainant, through VC. Sh. Vineet Sehgal Advocate, counsel for the respondent through VC

ORDER (DR. GEETA RATHEE SINGH - MEMBER)

1. Present complaint has been filed on 12.08.2022 by complainants under Section 31 of The Real Estate (Regulation & Development) Act, 2016 (for short Act of 2016) read with Rule 28 of The Haryana Real Estate (Regulation & Development) Rules, 2017 for violation or contravention of the provisions of the Act of 2016 or the Rules and Regulations made thereunder, wherein it is inter-alia prescribed that the promoter shall be responsible to fulfill all the obligations, responsibilities and functions towards the allottee as per the terms agreed between them.

A. UNIT AND PROJECT RELATED DETAILS:

2. The particulars of the project have been detailed in following table:

S. No.	Particulars	Details		
1. Name of project		Pratham Apartments, Sector-10 A, at Village Bawal, Rewari, Haryana.		
2.	Nature of the Project	Group Housing Project		
3.	RERA registered/not registered	Registered no. 38 of 2018		
4.	Date of Allotment	07.10.2013		

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5.	Flat no.	504, 5 th floor, Tower- 04	
6.	Flat area	765 sq.ft.(71.07 sq.mtrs)	
7.	Date of builder buyer agreement	20.01.2014	
8. Deemed Date of Possession As per clause fulfilment of a stated therein, per delivered within date of signing a days as grace per and obtaining Certificate in phase			
9.	Basic sale price	Complex. ₹19,82,880/-	
10.	Amount paid by complainant	₹19,16,302/-	
11.	Offer of possession	Not made	

B. FACTS OF THE CASE AS STATED IN THE COMPLAINT FILED BY THE COMPLAINANT

3. That the complainant booked a unit in the respondents' project i.e. "Pratham Apartments" in Bawal, Sector 10 A, district Rewari, Haryana in the year 2013. On 07.10.2013, the respondents furnished an allotment letter to the

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complainants and allotted unit No. 504, 5th Floor, Tower No.04, admeasuring 765 sq. ft. in the project. Total sales consideration was agreed to be Rs.22,25,420/- against which complainants had paid over Rs.19,16,302/- by year 2017 in the following manner:

Sr. no.	Receipt	Receipt	Amount	Cheque	Cheque
	no.	date	(Rs.)	no.	date
1.	0286	07.10.2013	3,06,622/-	773107	08.10.2013
2.	Bank statement	30.11.2013	2,04,416/-	217287	30.11.2013
3.	0450	10.01.2014	2,63,702/-	023483	06.01.2014
4.	Bank statement	22.10.2014	2,64,222/-	023488	22.10.2014
5.	Bank statement	21.02.2015	1,25,161/-	023489	21.02.2015
6.	Bank statement	22.05.2015	1,28,000/-	023490	22.05.2015
7.	Bank statement	12.06.2015	70,000/-	023491	12.06.2015
8.	1913	29.12.2016	1,00,000/-	041848	29.12.2016
9.	NEFT	16.01.2017	2,46,933/-	-	-
10.	NEFT	15.04.2017	1,03,623/-	-	-
11.	NEFT	14.03.2017	1,03,623/-	-	-
	Total		19,16,302/-		

4. That on 20.01.2014, complainants and respondents entered into a builder buyer agreement (herein referred to as BBA). As per Clause 8.1(a) of the

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said agreement, the possession of the unit was deemed to be handed over by respondent within 60 months of the agreement along with grace period of 90 days, i.e., by 20.04.2019, however respondents failed to hand over the possession within the stipulated period of time. In the present case, the respondents had allotted themselves more than reasonable period of time, i.e., 5 years from the date of the agreement. Yet the respondent is unable to complete the project and even till date, the project is incomplete i.e., after more than 10 years from the date of agreement.

- 5. That complainant had opted for construction linked plan and complainant paid the entire amount as and when demanded by the respondent and has complied with his legal obligation against the unit on time without fail. The total amount paid along with receipts/account statement is proved by way of an affidavit filed by complainants on 20.09.2023.
- 6. That after visiting and inspection of the site it was revealed that the construction of the Tower No. 4 in which complainants are allotted the flat is under construction. No development works were carried out and only a concrete structure exists with no efforts put by respondents in order to complete the project even after more than 10 years from the date of the agreement.

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- Further, complainants have pleaded that the agreement clearly mentions 7. about the proportion of BSP (basic sale price) to be paid as per the construction linked plan and other charges to be paid as the time of offer of possession but the respondents deducted the same from the deposited amount of the complainants as per construction linked plan and further on seeking explanation, it was informed that the portion of amount was adjusted in other facilities like club, covered car parking for the project as assured by the developers. They submit that the act of respondent builder in adjusting the deposited amount was done in a secretive manner and even as per payment demand letters there is no mention of the same. On the contrary, there is no development or construction of the clubhouse and other amenities etc. for the amount deposited by the complainants. Thus proving that developer/ respondents acted in a malafide manner and violated provisions of RERA Act and Rules.
- 8. Furthermore, complainants submitted that the BBA is arbitrary and one-sided and in violation of business ethics as it is nowhere stated about the failure of services by the respondent builder. In case they fail to hand over the possession in time, they shall continue to pay meager compensation for delayed period but the allottee cannot walk out of the project. Thus, such act of respondent has caused huge financial loss and mental stress to the

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complainants and their family, which is why the promoter/ developer is liable to pay interest to the allottee as per rule 15 of the Haryana Real Estate (Regulation and Development) rules, 2017.

9. Aggrieved by the same, complainants have filed the present complaint.

Complainants have prayed for relief of refund of the amount paid by complainants till date along with the prescribed rate of interest from respective dates of payment till the actual realization.

C. RELIEF SOUGHT:

- 10. The complainant in his complaint has sought following reliefs:
 - i. To refund back the amount deposited by the buyer/ complainant i.e. Rs.19,16,285/-. The present offer to be declared incomplete offer and as the project offer and as the project is not complete which is evident from the fact that the occupation certificate is also not issued to the builder company.
 - ii. To pay interest @18% p.a. on the delayed possession starting from 2013 till date from the respective dates of deposits by the complainants to the builder company as specified in section 18 of the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act 2016, read with rule 15 and 16 of the Haryana Real Estate (Regulation and Development) rules, 2017.

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iii. To pass any other order, in favour of the complainants and against builder company-developer as specified under the RERA Act and HRERA Rules, in the interest of justice.

D. REPLY:

- 11. Respondent has filed reply on 05.01.2023 in the registry. Respondent has submitted as follows:
 - a. That the complainants have concealed the fact that the respondents have duly intimated them with regard to various restrain orders having been passed against the construction activities by the Hon'ble NGT on various occasions, which ultimately acted like Force Majeure and caused unwanted delay in finishing the project. Further, in the present scenario of Covid-19 pandemic the construction activities on all the project sites have virtually stalled since March 2020 and the same has caused delay in finalizing the development works and handing over the possession of the Apartment to the complainant. The intimation of same was duly sent to the complainant but the said fact has been concealed by the complainant while filing the present complaint.
 - b. That as a part of its business, the respondents had acquired and purchased the land admeasuring 9.60 acres situated within the revenue estate of village Bawal, Sector-10 A, Tehsil & District, Rewari, Haryana

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with a view to promote and develop a group housing colony known as "Pratham Apartments".

- c. That the complainants only after being completely satisfied in all respects with respect to project had booked a flat/residential unit in the Group Housing Project known as "Pratham Apartments" and vide application in the month of August 2013 had applied for provisional registration of a residential unit in the aforesaid group housing complex i.e. "Pratham Apartments".
- d. That the respondent company in furtherance of the application form so submitted by the complainants and the earnest money so received from the complainants, accordingly made the provisional allotment of one residential flat bearing No. 504 in Tower-4, at 5th Floor, in the aforesaid group housing in favor of the complainants. It is further submitted that the respondent company along with said allotment letter had sent the terms and conditions for allotment of flat as well as schedule of payment which was construction linked plan, as opted by the complainants. The allotment letter, terms and conditions for allotment of flat were voluntarily agreed by the complainants.
- e. That the respondent company, on 20.11.2013 sent the 'Flat Buyer Agreement' to the complainants, which was voluntarily and consciously

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executed by the complainants and in terms thereof he had assumed and undertaken to perform the terms and conditions of the agreement.

- f. That the complainants defaulted in making timely payments to the respondents as per the agreed schedule. Further the total payment as alleged by complainants to be made to the respondents is disputed by the respondents. Respondents submit that till date, complainants have only made payment of Rs.19,11,320/- and not Rs.19,16,285/- as alleged by complainants for which complainants must be put to strict proof in order to prove such payments.
- g. That they have acted fairly and made every endeavor to perform their part of responsibility in completing the project work and handling over the possession of the flat in issue to the complainants at the earliest but it is only due to force majeure and covid 19 pandemic that the completion of project has been delayed. However sincere efforts have been undertaken with promise to offer possession of the flats to the complainants at the earliest.
- 12. In conclusion it is submitted by respondents that their project is near completion and is on final stage and shortly the company will approach the DTCP, Haryana for the grant of Occupation Certificate. Therefore, the complainants cannot be allowed to withdraw from the same, as per the law

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settled in various cases and also as per the principles of equity as further hindrance will be caused to the respondent in completing the project.

E. ORAL SUBMISSIONS OF LEARNED COUNSEL FOR COMPLAINANT AND RESPONDENT:

- 13. During oral arguments, learned counsel for the complainants reiterated the facts mentioned in para 3-9 of this order and submitted that there is no progress at the site and project cannot be completed in near future.

 Therefore, they requested to dispose off the case and decide the matter on the basis of facts in complaint file as it is exhaustive and self-explanatory and requires no further arguments on his end.
- 14. Learned counsel for respondent reiterated the facts mentioned in para 11-12 of this order. He submitted that the facts that are stated in his written submissions vide reply dated 05.01.2023, may be taken as his oral submissions.

F. ISSUES FOR ADJUDICATION:

15. Whether the complainants are entitled to refund of amount deposited by them along with interest in terms of Section 18 of Act of 2016?

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G. OBSERVATIONS OF THE AUTHORITY:

- After considering facts and circumstances of the case and going through oral 16. as well as written submissions, Authority observes that flat-buyer agreement between complainants and respondents was executed on 20.01.2014. Total sales consideration was agreed to be Rs.22,25,420/- against which complainants had allegedly paid Rs.19,16,302/- by year 2017. However, respondent in its reply has disputed the total amount paid by the complainant and has stated that complainant has only paid an amount of Rs. 19,11,320/-. In this regard on perusal of file, Authority observes that the vide application dated 20.09.2023, complainant had filed an affidavit along-with copy of receipts and bank statement which proves that total amount of Rs. 19.16.302/- stands paid. After paying almost 86% of sales consideration amount, legitimate expectations of complainants would be that possession of the apartment will be delivered within the time stipulated in the flat buyer agreement; however possession has not been delivered till date.
- 17. As per clause 8(8.1)(a) of the flat buyer agreement, possession was to be delivered within 60 months from date of signing agreement plus 90 days as grace period for applying and obtaining the occupation certificate in phases in respect of different towers of group housing complex. Ld. counsel for respondent has submitted that they had made every endeavor to complete the

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project work and handover the possession of the flat to complainant at earliest, however it was only due to force majeure and covid 19 pandemic that there was a delay. Further he submitted that in the present case repeated orders were passed by Hon'ble NGT, New Delhi whereby construction work in entire NCR was stayed on many occasions which was duly intimated to complainant. It is an established fact that due date of possession was in 2019 i.e. on 21.02.2019, whereas covid 19 lockdown was imposed later in the month of March, 2020 i.e. post the deemed date of possession. And as far as delay in construction due to outbreak of Covid-19 is concerned Hon'ble Delhi High Court in case titled as *M/s Halliburton Offshore Services Inc. vs Vedanta Ltd & Anr. bearing OMP (1) (Comm.) No. 88/2020 and I.A.s*

"69... The past non-performance of the contractor cannot be condoned due to Covid-19 lockdown in March, 2020 in India. The contractor was in breach since September, 2019. Opportunities were given to the contractor to cure the same repeatedly. Despite the same, the contractor could not complete the project. The outbreak of pandemic cannot be used as an excuse for non-performance of a contract for which the deadline was much before the outbreak itself.

... The respondent was liable to complete the construction of the project and the possession of the said unit was to be handed over by September, 2019 and is claiming the benefit of lockdown which came into effect on 23.03.2020, whereas the due date of handing over possession was much prior to the event of outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, Authority is of view that outbreak of pandemic cannot be used an

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excuse for non-performance of contract for which deadline was much before the outbreak itself."

Therefore, respondent cannot be given the benefit of halt in work due to covid-19 pandemic. Secondly, there is no document placed on record to prove as to when and for how much period ban by NGT due to pollution imposed on construction, halted their work. In absence of such proof, benefit of such circumstances cannot be awarded to respondent builder. Therefore respondent cannot be allowed to take the plea of force majeure conditions towards delay caused in delivery of possession as the same is considered to be without any basis and the same is rejected. Thus, the deemed date of possession comes out to be 21.02.2019 i.e. 60 months from the date of execution of flat buyer agreement without any grace period of 90 days.

18. Further complainants in complaint filed by them have alleged that the flat buyer agreement executed by respondent on 20.01.2014 is unfair and arbitrary with it terms being one-sided. It is asserted by the complainants that they had an unequal bargaining power. Authority observes that since BBA constitutes the sole basis of subsisting relationship of the parties, both the parties are lawfully bound to obey the terms and conditions enunciated therein. Complainants after thorough reading and understanding of the terms and conditions as mentioned in the BBA signed the agreement that too

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without any protest and demur. It is pertinent to mention that here the agreement was executed prior to the coming in force of Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 (RERA Act in brief). Therefore, agreement executed prior to the coming into force of the Act or prior to registration of project with RERA cannot be reopened.

- 19. Thus, facts set out in the preceding paragraphs demonstrate that construction of the project had been delayed beyond the time period stipulated in the flat buyer agreement. Authority observes that respondent has failed to fulfill its obligation stipulated in BBA dated 20.01.2014. Possession of unit should have been delivered by 20.01.2019. Now, even after a lapse of 5 years, respondent is not in a position to offer possession of the unit since respondent company is yet to receive occupation certificate in respect of the unit. Fact remains that respondent in its written statement has not specified as to when possession of booked unit will be offered to the complainant.
- 20. Complainants in their relief clause have claimed the relief of refund and also sought relief of delay possession charges. On perusal of file it is observed that in the complaint in para no. 30, complainants have prayed for relief of refund, may be allowed along-with interest as the project is still incomplete and no occupation certificate has been received.

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- 21. In view of aforesaid, Authority observes that the relief of refund was allowed in similar cases against the same project of the respondent where the facts and issues were similar. Vide order dated 07.12.2022 passed in lead complaint no. 389 of 2021 titled "Meenakshi Kamboj vs. Choice Real Estate Developers Pvt. Ltd.", Authority had allowed relief of refund and specifically stated that respondent has failed to deliver the possession to the complainants even after inordinate delay from the due date of possession. Allottees cannot be made to wait for an indefinite period of time for a unit for which the allotment and BBA dates back to 2013. Relevant part of the order dated 07.12.2022 is reproduced below:
 - "6. Counsel for the complainant argued that project is at complete halt and there is no likelihood of its completion in near future. Project has been already delayed by more than 3 years and they further cannot wait for an uncertain amount of time. Therefore, he pressed for refund only. Further in complaint no. 578/2020, complainant also stated that he has paid more than 85% of the agreed sale consideration by 2016 and there is no progress at project site since 2016. Photographs dated 10.10.2022 shows that there is no work ongoing at the site. No progress has been made at the site in the last 6 years as is clear from comparison of the photographs dated 01.12.2016 and latest photographs dated 10.10.2022.
 - 7. Ld. Counsel for respondent submitted that more than 80% of the work at the project site has already been completed and the project is currently ongoing. Project has been registered with RERA as HRERA-PKL-RWR- 38-2018 and as per it, completion date was 2020 which has been further extended by concerned Authority till December 2022. As the project is still at an ongoing stage, the Occupation Certificate has not been applied

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till date. He requested for an adjournment to comply with the directions given by Authority vide order dated 11.10.2022.

8. Authority has gone through respective written submissions apart from noting verbal arguments put forth by both the sides Respondents admitted that construction of the project has not been completed. In Real E fact, it is still going on. Further, no specific time period has been committed for its completion. Arguments in respect of force majeure conditions cannot be accepted, and no such conditions have been shown to be applicable. Nothing extraordinary have taken place between the date of executing the BBA and due date of offer of possession, and for that matter even till now. As per the photographs submitted vide application dated 25.11.2022, it is clear that project is at halt and incomplete. Further, Occupation Certificate has not been applied till date and there is no scope the same will be applied by end of this year by which respondent claimed to complete the project as per the registration certificate. Declared policy of this Authority in all such cases where projects are neither complete nor likely to be completed within the foreseeable future and delay has already been caused from the due date of offer of possession, the complainant would not be made to pay the remaining amount.

This right of the complainant to claim refund in case of delay has been made into a more substantial right by way of 'Newtech Promoters and Developers Pvt. Ltd. v. State of UP and Others2021 (11) ADJ 280. where the Hon'ble Supreme Court has expressly observed that allottee has an unqualified right to claim refund even if there is delay of one day Relevant paragraph is produced below:

"25. The unqualified right of the allottee to seek refund referred under Section 18(1)(a) and Section 19(4) of the Act is not dependent on any contingencies or stipulations thereof It appears that the legislature has consciously provided this right of refund on demand as unconditional absolute right to the allottee, if the promoter fails to give possession of the apartment, plot or building within the time stipulated under the terms of the agreement regardless of unforeseen events or stay orders of the

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Court/Tribunal, which is in either way not attributable to the allottee/home buyer, the promoter is under an obligation to refund the amount on demand with Interest at the rate prescribed by the State Government including compensation in the manner provided under the Act with the proviso that If the allottee does not wish to withdraw from the project, he shall be entitled for interest for the period of delay till handing over possession at the rate prescribed."

In this case, the agreement was entered into on 01.01.2014 by which the due date to handover of possession was set to January 2019. Nearly four years has passed and still there is no certainty that this project will see light of day in the foreseeable future. Thus in such cases complainant would be entitled to relief of refund because they cannot be forced to wait for completion of project for endless period of time.

- 9. Authority accordingly hereby orders refund of the amount paid by the complainants along with interest in accordance with Rule 15 of the RERA Rules, 2017."
- 22. Since captioned matter is also based on similar facts, relating to same project of the respondent, this complaint is also disposed of in terms of complaint no. 389 of 2011 titled "Meenakshi Kamboj Vs. Choice Real Estate Developers Pvt. Ltd." Therefore, the Authority finds it to be a fit case for allowing refund in favor at the complainant. As per Section 18 of Act, interest shall be awarded at such rate as may be prescribed. Rule 15 of HIRERA Rules, 2017 provides for prescribed rate of interest which is as under: The definition of term 'interest' is defined under Section 2(za) of the Act which is as under:

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(za) "interest" means the rates of interest payable by the promoter or the allottee, as the case may be.

Explanation.-For the purpose of this clause-

- (i) the rate of interest chargeable from the allottee by the promoter, in case of default, shall be equal to the rate of interest which the promoter shall be liable to pay the allottee, in case of default;
- (ii) the interest payable by the promoter to the allottee shall be from the date the promoter received the amount or any part thereof till the date the amount or part thereof and interest thereon is refunded, and the interest payable by the allottee to the promoter shall be from the date the allottee defaults in payment to the promoter till the date it is paid;

Rule 15 of HRERA Rules, 2017 which is reproduced below for ready reference:

- "Rule 15: Rule 15. Prescribed rate of interest- (Proviso to section 12, section 18 and sub-section (4) and subsection (7)ofsection19]
- (1) For the purpose of proviso to section 12; section 18, and subsections (4) and (7) of section 19, the "interest at therate prescribed" shall be the State Bank of india highest marginal cost of lending rate +2%: Provided that in case the State Bank of India marginal cost of lending rate (NCLR) is not in use, it shall be replaced by such benchmark lending rates which the State Bank of India may fix from time to time for lending to the general public".
- 23. Consequently, as per website of State Bank of India i.e. https://sbi.co.in, the marginal cost of lending rate (in short MCLR) as on date i.e. 20.08.2024 is

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- 9.10%. Accordingly, the prescribed rate of interest will be MCLR+2% i.e. 11.10%.
- 24. Accordingly, respondents will be liable to pay the complainant interest from the date amounts were paid by them till the actual realization of the amount. It is observed that as per the affidavit filed by complainants on 20.09.2023, amount of Rs.19,16,302/- paid to the respondents stands duly proved. Hence, Authority directs respondents to refund to the complainants the paid amount of ₹19,16,302/- along with interest at the rate prescribed in Rule 15 of Haryana Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Rules, 2017 i.e. at the rate of SBI highest marginal cost of lending rate (MCLR)+ 2 % which as on date works out to 11.10% (9.10% + 2.00%) from the date amounts were paid till the actual realization of the amount. Authority has got calculated the total amount along with interest at the rate of 11.10% till the date of this order and said amount works out to ₹39,27,970/- as per detail given in the table below:

Sr. No.	Principal Amount	Date of payment	Interest Accrued till 20.08.2024 (in Rs.)	TOTAL (in Rs.)
1.	3,06,622/-	07.10.2013	2,88,546/-	5,52,768/-
2.	2,04,416/-	30.11.2013	71,484/-	1,41,484/-
3.	2,63,702/-	10.01.2014	1,32,039/-	2,57,200/-

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Total	19,16,302/-	-	20,11,668/-	39,27,970/-
11.	1,03,623/-	14.03.2017	84,612/-	1,88,235/-
10.	1,03,623/-	15.04.2017	85,620/-	1,89,243/-
9.	2,46,933/- 16.01.2017 2,08,3		2,08,313/-	3/- 4,55,246/-
8.	1,00,000/-	29.12.2016	84,907/-	1,84,907/-
7.	70,000/-	12.06.2015	1,31,531/-	2,59,531/-
6.	1,28,000/-	22.05.2015	3,10,833/-	5,74,535/-
5.	1,25,161/-	21.02.2015	2,43,500/-	4,47,916/-
4.	2,64,222/-	22.10.2014	3,70,283/-	6,76,905/-

25. Furthermore, complainants in their complaint have averred that the proportion of BSP (basic sale price) was to be paid as per construction linked plan upon floor wise construction and other charges like covered car parking, club charges were to be paid at the time of offer of possession but the respondents deducted the same from the amount deposited by complainants in lieu of construction linked plan. Authority observes that as complainants have already paid such amount with installments in year 2017 and now that they in exercise of their right u/s 18 of the Act are seeking refund of total amount paid, therefore, Authority is of the view that it is not

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relevant to adjudicate/ discuss issue of these charges at this stage after the refund of relief has already been granted.

H. DIRECTIONS OF THE AUTHORITY:

- 26. Hence, the Authority hereby passes this order and issues following directions under Section 37 of the Act to ensure compliance of obligation cast upon the promoter as per the function entrusted to the Authority under Section 34(f) of the Act of 2016:
 - (i) Respondent is directed to refund the entire amounts along with interest of @ 11.10 % i.e. Rs. 39,27,970/- to the complainant as specified in the table provided in para 26 of this order.
 - (ii) A period of 90 days is given to the respondent to comply with the directions given in this order as provided in Rule 16 of Haryana Real Estate (Regulation & Development) Rules, 2017 failing which legal consequences would follow.
- 27. Captioned complaint is, accordingly, <u>disposed of</u>. File be consigned to the record room after uploading orders on the website of the Authority.

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CHANDER SHEKHAR [MEMBER] DR. GEETA RATHEE SINGH [MEMBER]

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