



HARYANA REAL ESTATE REGULATORY AUTHORITY PANCHKULA

Website: www.haryanarera.gov.in

Complaint no.:	1547 of 2023
Date of filing:	19.07.2023
Date of first hearing:	31.08.2023
Date of decision:	20.08.2024

Mr. Amit, S/o Sh. Bharat Singh,
R/o House no. 744, Sector-18, Old Faridabad,
Faridabad, Haryana- 121002

...COMPLAINANTS

Versus

1. 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

Patwe

CORAM: Dr. Geeta Rathee Singh
Chander Shekhar

Member
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 19.07.2023 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	22.08.2013

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5.	Flat no.	102, 1 st floor, Tower- 03
6.	Flat area	1610 sq.ft. (149.57 sq. mts.)
7.	Date of builder buyer agreement	21.02.2014
8.	Deemed Date of Possession	21.02.2019 As per clause 8(8.1)(a), on fulfilment of all conditions as stated therein, possession is 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.
9.	Total sale price	₹46,59,902/-
10.	Amount paid by complainant	₹42,09,245/-
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 by payment of booking amount of Rs.5,00,000/-. On 22.08.2013,

respondents furnished an allotment letter to the complainant and allotted unit No. 102, 1st Floor, Tower No.03, admeasuring 1610 sq. ft. in the project namely "Pratham Aprtments". Total sales consideration was agreed to be Rs.46,59,902/- against which complainant had paid over Rs. 42,09,245/- by year 2018 in the following manner:

Sr. no.	Receipt no.	Receipt date	Amount (Rs.)	Cheque no.	Cheque date
1.	0144	22.08.2013	5,00,000/-	406392	21.08.2013
2.	0289	08.10.2013	5,09,953/-	623961	08.10.2013
3.	0406	20.11.2013	1,50,000/-	000012	20.11.2013
4.	0407	20.11.2013	1,75,000/-	719401	20.11.2013
5.	0408	20.11.2013	2,00,000/-	304696	20.11.2013
6.	0498	25.03.2014	930/-	623969	25.03.2014
7.	0666	27.10.2014	5,91,909/-	623948	20.10.2014
8.	0813	16.01.2015	3,27,862/-	623952	16.01.2015
9.	0896	23.02.2015	3,21,000/-	623956	21.02.2015
10.	1081	23.05.2015	2,08,124/-	623960	23.05.2015
11.	1228	29.07.2015	2,08,523/-	719413	28.07.2015
12.	1404	06.11.2015	2,07,960/-	719415	06.11.2015
13.	1511	02.02.2016	2,08,211/-	719421	02.02.2016
14.	2076	23.03.2018	2,70,120/-	833764	22.03.2018

15.	Bank statement	-	1,04,000/-	719438	08.12.2016
16.	Bank statement	-	15,679/-	719439	08.12.2016
17.	Bank statement	-	2,09,969/-	719434	07.09.2016
	Total		42,09,245/-		

4. That on 21.02.2014, the complainant and respondents entered into a builder buyer agreement (herein referred to as BBA). As per Clause 8.1(a) of the said agreement, 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 22.05.2019, however respondents failed to hand over the possession within the stipulated period of time. In the present case, respondents had allotted themselves more than reasonable period of time, i.e., 5 years from the date of the agreement. Yet 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 requested to respondent several times by making telephonic calls and also visited the offices of respondent to deliver the flat along-with delayed penalty interest of 18%. Now the complainant has dropped the decisions of taking possession and has decided to get the refund of the amounts paid by him along-with interest equivalent to at the rate of interest 18% charged by respondent for late payment.

6. That complainant submits that respondent has expended the money collected from the instant project in other projects at Dharuhera and have stopped the further construction in the instant project at Bawal. Now the respondent has no money to complete the instant project. Moreover, the license also expired in March, 2020.
7. That further, the complainant also submitted legal notice dated 22.04.2023 whereby respondents were called upon to refund the entire amount paid till date along-with interest @18% per year, within 7 days failing which complainant will approach the appropriate court for his legal right.

C. RELIEF SOUGHT:

8. The complainant in his complaint has prayed for refund of entire amount collected from him along-with interest @18% p.a. as per section 18 of the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act 2016, in the facts and circumstances of present case.

D. REPLY:

9. Respondent has submitted reply on 28.03.2024 in the registry. Respondent has submitted as follows:-
 - a. That the complainants have concealed the fact that the respondents have duly intimated him 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 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 has 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 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. 102 in Tower-3, at 1st 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 21.02.2014 sent the flat buyer agreement to the complainant, which was voluntarily and consciously executed by the complainants and in terms thereof he had assumed and undertaken to perform the terms and conditions of the agreement.
- f. That they have acted fairly and made every endeavor to perform their part of responsibility in completing the project work and handing 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

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undertaken with promise to offer possession of the flats to the complainants at the earliest.

10. In conclusion it is submitted by respondents that their project is near completion and is on final stage. Therefore, the complainants cannot be allowed to withdraw from the same, as per the law 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:

11. During oral arguments, learned counsel for the complainants reiterated the facts mentioned in para 3-7 of this order and submitted that there is no progress at the site and project cannot be completed in near future. Therefore, he 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 at his end.
12. Learned counsel for respondent reiterated the facts mentioned in para 9-10 of this order. He submitted that the facts that are stated in his written submissions vide reply dated 28.03.2024, may be taken as his oral submissions.

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F. ISSUES FOR ADJUDICATION:

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

G. OBSERVATIONS OF THE AUTHORITY:

14. After considering facts and circumstances of the case and going through oral as well as written submissions, Authority observes that flat buyer agreement between complainants and respondents was executed on 21.02.2014. Total sales consideration was agreed to be Rs.46,59,902/- against which admittedly complainants had paid Rs.42,09,245/- by year 2018. After paying almost 90% of sales consideration amount, legitimate expectations of complainants would be that possession of the apartment will be delivered within time as stipulated in flat buyer agreement, however possession has not been delivered till date.
15. 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 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. 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 3696-3697/2020*** dated 29.05.2020 has observed that:

*“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 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.

16. Further 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 fulfil its obligation stipulated in BBA dated 21.02.2014. Possession of unit should have been delivered by 21.02.2019. Now, even after a lapse of 5 years, respondent is not in a position to offer possession of the unit since respondent company has yet to receive occupation certificate in respect of the unit. Fact remains that respondent in his written statement has not specified as to when possession of booked unit will be offered to the



complainant. Therefore it is relevant at this stage to grant relief of refund as prayed for by the complainant.

17. 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 has 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 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 Others 2021 (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 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."

18. 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) of section 19]

(1) For the purpose of proviso to section 12; section 18, and sub.sections (4) and (7) of section 19, the "interest at the rate 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”.

19. 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



9.10%. Accordingly, the prescribed rate of interest will be MCLR+2% i.e. 11.10%.

20. 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. Hence, Authority directs respondents to refund to the complainants the paid amount of ₹42,09,245/- 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 ₹ 84,95,824/- 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.	5,00,000/-	22.08.2013	6,10,804/-	11,10,804/-
2.	5,09,953/-	08.10.2013	6,15,674/-	11,25,627/-
3.	1,50,000/-	20.11.2013	2,08,992/-	3,83,992/-
4.	1,75,000/-	20.11.2013	1,79,136/-	3,29,136/-
5.	2,00,000/-	20.11.2013	2,38,848/-	4,38,848/-

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6.	930/-	25.03.2014	1,075/-	2,005/-
7.	5,91,909/-	27.10.2014	6,45,499/-	12,37,408/-
8.	3,27,862/-	16.01.2015	3,49,469/-	6,77,331/-
9.	3,21,000/-	23.02.2015	3,38,446/-	6,59,446/-
10.	2,08,124/-	23.05.2015	2,13,802/-	4,21,926/-
11.	2,08,528/-	29.07.2015	2,09,968/-	4,18,496/-
12.	2,07,960/-	06.11.2015	2,03,072/-	4,11,032/-
13.	2,08,211/-	02.02.2016	1,97,745/-	4,05,956/-
14.	2,70,120/-	23.03.2018	1,85,495/-	3,95,464/-
15.	1,04,000/-	08.12.2016	88,968/-	1,92,968/-
16.	15,679/-	08.12.2016	13,413/-	29,092/-
17.	2,09,969/-	07.09.2016	1,92,468/-	4,62,588/-
Total	42,09,245/-		44,92,874/-	87,02,119/-

H. DIRECTIONS OF THE AUTHORITY:

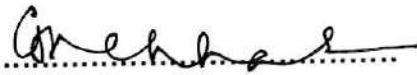
21. Hence, the Authority hereby passes this order and issues following directions under Section 37 of the Act to ensure compliance of obligation cast upon the promoter as per the function entrusted to the Authority under Section 34(f) of the Act of 2016:



(i) Respondent is directed to refund the entire amounts along with interest of @ 11.10 % i.e. **Rs. 87,02,119/-** to the complainant as specified in the table provided in para 20 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.

22. Captioned complaint is, accordingly, **disposed of.** File be consigned to the record room after uploading orders on the website of the Authority.



CHANDER SHEKHAR
[MEMBER]



DR. GEETA RATHEE SINGH
[MEMBER]