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he civic authorities are concerned since out of the 31,000 housing societies in Mumbai, hardly 10 per cent of old building structures undergo structural audits, inspite of a strict regulation in place. The officials have, on the other hand, given a figure of around 15,000-16,000 buildings, which urgently need repairs. We find out why the numbers are so lopsided.

ISSUES OF CONCERN:

According to Ramesh Prabhu, chairman, Maharashtra Society Welfare Association, "The major challenge every housing society faces is in the department pertaining to the collection of the required contribution to carry out the repairs. The residents always feel that the repairs are an additional burden and a majority of the members in the general body, tend to postpone the same. The tenanted buildings, where the owners receive very less

rent, do not want to spend on the repairs and the tenants think that it is the responsibility of the owner of the building to conduct re-

pairs. If the internal leakages between the flat and seepage outside the building are not attended to as required, from time-to-time, it leads to severe structural damage. In some cases, the terrace waterproofing is not carried out and always, other members of the society or other floor tenants expect such expenses to be borne by the top floor owners/tenants. The officials, many-a-times, have been forced to declare such buildings as 'dilapidated' and have urged the residents to vacate the building, which is the ultimate goal of many owners of such tenanted buildings, when they

structural audits.

It is obligatory on the part of every owner and occupier of buildings, which are in existence and in use for more than 30 years, to have them inspected through qualified structural engineers, registered with the Municipal Corporation of Greater

want to go in for redevelopment."

The owner/occupants of the

residential/non-residential

Mumbai, as per the

provision of section 353B of the MMC

Act 1888, are required to carry out the

buildings/co-operative housing societies in Greater

COVER STORY

After the structural audit is carried out, if the structural engineer recommends any corrective repairs, such repairs shall be carried out by the owner or the occupier of the building within a period as suggested by the engineer in his report, not exceeding six months, failing which, action as per the due procedure shall be taken.

> load bearing members such as columns and beams without consulting the consultants and engineers, is also a serious issue. In new structures, the fault generally centres on poor engineering design, poor execution and poor quality materials.

TIMELY AUDITS HELP:

A regular health check-up of our body is needed to understand if our body is functioning just right. Similarly, the building also needs intervention at regular intervals to understand if it is facing any problem. It's that simple. And if there is any issue, it needs to be nipped in the bud with the right treatment. Ashish Prasad, chief operating officer, construction chemicals, Pidilite In-



The co-operative housing society bye-laws highlight the need to conduct the structural audit of buildings aged 15 years and above

and urge the society to carry out the audit once in five years.

Is there a way through which collapses of buildings can be curbed? Timely structural audits could help achieve just that. Read on...

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REASONS FOR COLLAPSE OF BUILDINGS:

A major reason for the collapse of buildings is due to the lack of timely preventive actions in the form of regular maintenance and inspection of every flat at least once in six months (to identify the leakage and discontinue it by applying various waterproofing techniques) and postponing the decision till the building is declared as 'dilapidated'. Using low quality and cheap materials; hiring a bad contractor to reduce the cost; irregular repairs and renovation and shifting of the kitchen, toilets, etc, within the flat

The said period of 30 years shall be from the date of issue of its completion certificate by the corporation; or issue of permission to occupy a building under section 353A; or its physical occupation of atleast 50 per cent of its built-up area; whichever is earlier.

without having proper drainage pipes, etc, are cited as reasons that lead to the eventual weakening of a building. The removal of

dustries Limited says, "Timely structural audits with the accurate detection of water leakage and structural damage; right diagnostics and use of expert waterproofing solutions to create a waterproof building envelope, lead to healthy buildings.

Kanika Bawa, celebrity architect and installation artist, adds and explains, "The most common problems faced by buildings are related to vertical landscaping; indoor swimming pools; misuse of interior swapping of spaces; incorrect waterproofing; tampering of beams and columns; changes made without consulting the structural engineer and encroaching of interior spaces. Also, buildings collapse as a result of faulty designs and changes in layouts such as residential to commercial conversions. Repairs not only reinvent the structure but also rehabilitate and reinforce it."

So, if you want your building to stand tall for another 60-70 years, make sure you get the required structural audits done regularly along with the necessary repairs.



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