

BUILDING PLAN APPROVAL PROCEDURE IN KERALA: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

In Kerala, the approval procedure for building plans is essential to guaranteeing sustainable, safe, and lawful growth in both urban and rural areas. Local Self Government Institutions (LSGIs) enforce the Kerala Municipality Building Rules (KMBR, s2019) and the Kerala Panchayat Building Rules (KPBR, 2011), which serve as its primary regulations. Multiple departmental clearances, architectural and structural documents, and ownership verification are required for the process. Kerala has embraced the K-SMART technology, which incorporates online application tracking, automated rule checks, and GIS mapping, in response to the swift transition from manual processes to digital government. The approval processes, necessary paperwork, advantages of digitization, and difficulties encountered by stakeholders are all examined in this review. Future enhancements like single-window clearance and AI-based scrutiny are proposed, and the legal ramifications of non-compliance are emphasized.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the Kerala Building Rules, construction cannot begin in Kerala without local authorities' consent. The approval process guarantees that suggested developments adhere to environmental factors, building safety regulations, and zoning laws. Unregulated construction could result in safety risks, conflicts, and unsustainable development given the growing urbanization and scarcity of land resources. As a result, the approval procedure is a systematic defense against unethical behavior rather than just a formality. Municipal and metropolitan jurisdictions are governed by KMBR, whilst rural areas are governed by KPBR. Licensed professionals and civil engineers are essential to the creation and certification of plans. The legal framework, approval procedures, the transition to digital governance, typical problems, and legal ramifications are all reviewed in this article. Future enhancements required for effective, transparent approvals are also examined.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a review approach that examines Kerala's building plan approval process in a methodical manner. To comprehend the legal and procedural framework, secondary data sources such as government circulars, published literature, and notifications from the Kerala Gazette were analyzed. For clarity, the methodology is separated into two subheadings.

2.1 Evaluation of the Procedural and Regulatory Structure

The Kerala Municipality Building Rules (2019), Kerala Panchayat Building Rules (2011), and Local Self Government Institution (LSGI) rules were all examined during this phase. To determine operational strengths and reoccurring issues, the procedural workflow—which includes site verification, application submission, scrutiny, inspections, and final approval—was examined.

2.2 Digital Transformation Assessment

A critical evaluation was conducted on the shift from manual approvals to Sanketham and then the K-SMART platform. Prolonged difficulties such portal outages, documentation mistakes, and delays in interdepartmental collaboration were contrasted with advantages like transparency, GIS-based validation, automatic rule-checking, and real-time tracking.

3. MODELING AND ANALYSIS

Despite the lack of actual testing or physical modeling, an analytical framework has been used to assess Kerala's building plan approval procedure. The review contrasts the K-SMART system's digital approval model with the manual approval methodology that has been in place for a long time. Multiple visits, paper-based review, and human intervention were necessary for the manual method, which resulted in delays, inefficiencies, and a lack of transparency. On the other hand, the digital model includes instant permits for modest residential projects, online fee payment, GIS validation, and automatic rule-checking (e-DCR). This comparative study demonstrates how governance has changed from being a document-heavy, bureaucratic process to a digital approach that is more open, accountable, and user-friendly. Better comprehension of system enhancements and enduring difficulties is made possible by this type of process modeling.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The evaluation emphasizes Kerala's organized construction plan approval process, in which LSGIs are the main granting authorities. Title deeds, tax receipts, encumbrance certificates, technical drawings, and NOCs from specialist authorities like the Coastal Regulation Authority, Fire & Rescue, and Pollution Control Board are among the necessary paperwork. Delays and corruption resulted from the old manual system's frequent inaccuracies, lack of transparency, and time commitment. Through e-DCR rule verification, GIS-based validation, real-time application monitoring, and fast permits for low-risk residential projects, K-SMART adoption has increased efficiency. Notwithstanding these benefits, problems including missing documentation, portal outages, and departmental coordination delays still exist. Penalties, the refusal of utility connections, and even demolition orders are among the legal repercussions of non-compliance. The system thus strikes a balance between regulation and facilitation.

5. CONCLUSION

Kerala's building plan approval process serves as an example of how organized governance guarantees sustainable and safe building. Efficiency, openness, and public satisfaction have all significantly increased when manual approvals were replaced by digital platforms like K-SMART. However, obstacles like interdepartmental delays, documentation problems, and technical issues prevent it from reaching its full potential. Unauthorized constructions still put owners at risk financially and legally, which emphasizes the need for more awareness and enforcement. Future enhancements ought to incorporate a single-window clearance process, AI-driven scrutiny for intricate projects, and full GIS integration with property records. Enhancing the ability of professionals and local organizations is also crucial. In order to guarantee sustainable urbanization and legal compliance throughout Kerala, the system must ultimately strike a balance between the demands of development and regulatory control.

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