

## VALUE ADDITION

# Residential apartments may soon get rated for energy efficiency

Such a rating for houses can help market them too as ecological awareness grows, say experts and builders

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Residential flats may soon be rated for energy efficiency, much like refrigerators and air conditioners.

The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), a statutory body under the power ministry that looks at energy conservation measures, is planning to extend its so-called star labelling system—currently used to grade consumer appliances—to apartments.

“We are considering a labelling system in (new) high-rise apartment complexes. We are now at the stage of collecting data, deciding where the benchmarks should be, talking to developers and builders,” said Sanjay Seth, energy economist at BEE. “Although we don’t have the mandate (to rate houses) under the (Energy Conservation) Act, it would be worthwhile to target this sector.”

Currently, the labelling system rates appliances on a scale of one to five—one star indicating the least energy conservation. Participation was initially voluntary for appliance manufacturers, but it has been made mandatory since 1 January in a bid to curtail India’s gross energy consumption.

India, the world’s second fastest growing major economy, is among the highest consumers of energy and contributes significantly to the emission of gases that cause global



**New initiative:** The Unitech and HSBC offices in Gurgaon, which have been certified as green buildings. BEE plans to ask developers to build a model green flat, with energy-efficient features.

warming and large-scale climate change.

As ecological awareness grows, experts and builders say an energy efficiency rating for houses can help market them too.

“There is cut-throat competition in terms of value in this (housing) sector, so this is significant. There are clear benefits attached to this in terms of quality of life, ventilation, better daylight and lower energy consumption,” said S. Raghupathy, who heads the Confederation of Indian Industry’s-Sohrabji Godrej Green Business Centre (CII-GBC), which advises the Indian industry on energy efficiency.

The Indian Green Building Council, or IGBC, is a part of CII-GBC, which promotes environment-friendly buildings and even rates them according to its own code.

Less than one-fourth of the

674 buildings that the agency has rated as “green” are residential, but Raghupathy expects their numbers to grow fast when it becomes cheaper to build energy-efficient houses. “The thinking has changed; it does not need to be expensive,” he said.

Property developers also realize the merits of going green. Bangalore-based **Sobha Developers Ltd**, for instance, has promised to conform to IGBC norms in all its upcoming projects.

Managing director J.C. Sharma welcomed the proposal to give energy efficiency ratings to apartments. “It will give home buyers a choice between good and bad projects and developers will strive for higher standards.”

R.K. Arora, managing director at Delhi-based **Supertech Ltd**, said energy efficiency ratings will create long-term val-

ue for his clients.

“Buyers opting for such star-rated or energy efficient residential projects will save a significant amount in the longer run. For developers also, the initial cost will be higher to develop such projects but ultimately, will benefit them,” he said.

Arora said the government should incentivize such projects by offering tax exemptions on energy efficient material and fixtures, and issue clearances for such projects fast.

BEE plans to ask developers to build a model green flat, with insulation and incorporated energy efficient features, and use at least three-star refrigerators and air conditioners. “Then we will judge its performance,” said Seth. “Once that happens, we can call it a sample flat.”

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