

## Jinx on Chandigarh luxury hotel continues

A five-star hotel in the heart of Chandigarh has once again fallen prey to its 'jinx'. The site of the James Plaza Hotel, where work has been in progress for 23 years, has been taken back by the government for the third time after the owners failed to ensure its completion this month.

The hotel, in Chandigarh's commercial hub in Sector 17, is on a site said to be costing nearly Rs.2 billion in the realty market and adjoining the upscale Taj Hotel. It had been restored to the owners in May last year with the condition that the building - which has been in place for over a decade - would be completed within one year.

Even though work had been going on in full swing for the last few months, it was far from complete, resulting in the Chandigarh administration's estate office last week passing the order for the 'takeover' of the site and the building.

The owner and the contractor have been asked to cease all construction and finishing work immediately. Window panes were being fitted on the first three floors while another four floors remained. Work on the interiors was yet to be completed.

'The owner was given one year to complete work. The main structure was already in place last year. Only finishing touches and interiors had to be done. They had time for one year to do that but it has not happened. It has been resumed (taken back by the government),' an estate office official said.

Deputy Commissioner and Estate Officer R.K. Rao said the sub-divisional magistrate has been instructed to get the work stopped and take possession of the site and the building.

'If work is not stopped and the construction goes on, the building will be sealed,' Rao said.

The estate office got the progress of the building video-graphed Saturday to build a strong case of non-compliance of completion against the owners.

This is not the first time that the site and the building have been 'resumed'.

The site was first allotted to Mehfil hotels in August 1985 for over Rs.8.3 million. The lease deed was signed in January 1986. However, the site was taken back the same year after the group failed to deposit the amount.

The technical term used by officials is 'resumed' - the failure of the owner to fulfil conditions of lease for payment of money or completion of the structure within a time specified by the government leading to resumption or taking back of the site by the government agency.

In December 2004, the site was restored to the owner, who was asked to deposit Rs.8 million. However, he failed again and the site was once again resumed in February 2006.

The site was restored to a new owner in May 2007 with the condition that it would be completed within one year. But the deadline was again breached.

*Jaideep Sarin ( © IANS / India eNews)*