

## Another setback to WTC management

# Complainant shopkeepers can now intervene in case

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**T**he management of the World Trade Centre (WTC) in Cuffe Parade suffered further setback on Monday, more than two months after the state government issued it a notice seeking to take back the land over alleged lease violations.

The Maharashtra Revenue Tribunal has now decided that an association of shopkeepers operating out of the WTC, known as the Lessees' Association, which had accused the management of large-scale corruption, can intervene in the case to decide whether the WTC twin towers can remain in the present management's control.

In a spate of allegations against the WTC management, headed by former Union minister Kamal Morarka and veteran industrialist Vijay Kalantri, the city Collector, Ashvini Joshi, noted that profits were not shared with the state government.

It also said large-scale illegal alterations were made within the towers, including the 30-storey M Visvesvaraya Industrial Research and Development Centre (MVIDC), and a restaurant was allowed to come up in the refuge area. The allegations were reported in a series of articles by Mumbai Mirror.

The Lessees' Association had also written to

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis alleging an association formed by Morarka and Kalantri, called the All India Association of Industries, was controlling the WTC.

In an order issued on Monday, SB Patil, administrative member of the Maharashtra Revenue Tribunal, said the Lessees' Association will be affected if any order was passed in favour of the Collector (which is taking back the land), therefore it should be made party in the case. The WTC management had filed an appeal before the tribunal after its offices in the towers were sealed in November last year.

The Lessees' Association, represented by advocate Vivek Kantawala, submitted that it was based on a complaint by the association itself that the government had initiated action against the WTC management, and any order in the case could affect its rights. Kantawala told the tribunal that the association comprised people who had signed lease agreements with the WTC over four decades ago.

The WTC management opposed the application citing various judgments to argue that the association did not have any position or place in the case, and also disputed the association's claim of having initiated a complaint.

The tribunal, however, noted that if the present management lost control of the WTC, lease agreements between it and the association's members would automatically stand cancelled, which meant that the tribunal proceedings could affect them.



Mirror reports on the authorities' tussle with the World Trade Centre