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Pune stadium left high and dry

HC stays renewal of water supply agreement between MCA and State Irrigation Department

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The Bombay High Court on Wednesday stayed until further orders the renewal of an agreement between Maharashtra Cricket Association (MCA) and the State Irrigation Department. The agreement allows the Pune stadium to purchase 2.5 lakh litres of water per day from the Pavans Dam for the stadium's upkeep.

A division bench of Justice Abhay Oka and Justice Riyaz Chagla said the agreement entered between the stadium and the government in 2012 was incorrect. As per the agreement, the water supply was meant to be for industrial purposes which the stadium is not. In a lighter vein, the court remarked, "Are you saying that playing cricket matches is an industrial thing?"

The bench will now pass a



Image for representation

detailed order on the issue of fixing the responsibility of the wrongdoing and also suggesting the future course of action.

The stadium is to host matches of the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL). Six of the matches were recently shifted from Tamil Nadu to

Pune over the water scarcity dispute.

MCA informed the court that it has water reserve from its internal rainwater harvesting project that will last for 32 days.

Advocate Rakesh Singh, appearing for NGO Loksatth Movement, which high-

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lighted the issue of water being used for maintaining pitches during IPL when there is overall scarcity, said, "Until the renewal of the agreement application made by the association was pending, the water was being supplied. Now it will have to be stopped until the

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final judgment is delivered."

In 2016, the High Court had directed shifting 13 matches out of Maharashtra while hearing the petition filed by the NGO which sought directions to the government to move IPL outside Maharashtra, claiming that around 40 to 60 lakh liters of water will be used to maintain the pitches and that this could instead be diverted to people facing severe shortage of water in Vidarbha and Marathwada regions.