

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3641
ANSWERED ON:01.12.2010
GUIDELINES FOR IMMERSION OF IDOLS
Ramasubbu Shri S.

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the National Pollution Control Bureau (NPCB) has issued any guidelines for immersion of idols in ponds, lakes and rivers;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the State Governments have taken any steps for compliance of the guidelines of Central Pollution Control Board;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) if not, the action taken by the Union Government thereon?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH)

(a) & (b) In pursuance to the directions of the Hon'ble High Court of Mumbai, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has formulated guidelines for immersion of idols into the water bodies. The guidelines provide indicative specifications for preparing idols, responsibilities of the Local Bodies and the State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) and location specific requirements for idol immersion. The details are given at Annexure.

(c) to (e) As reported by CPCB, the State Pollution Control Boards have taken action as per the formulated guidelines and some such action taken reports have been received from the States of Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Karnataka.

ANNEXURE REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) & (b) OF LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3641 TO BE ANSWERED ON 1st DECEMBER, 2010 REGARDING GUIDELINES FOR IMMERSION OF IDOLS RAISED BY SHRI S.S.RAMASUBBU.

1. General Guidelines for Idol Immersion

- (i) Idols should be made from natural materials as described in the holy scripts. Use of traditional clay for idol making rather than baked clay, plaster of Paris, etc. may be encouraged, allowed and promoted.
- (ii) Painting of Idols should be discouraged. In case idols are to be painted, water soluble and nontoxic natural dyes should be used. Use of toxic and non-biodegradable chemical dyes for painting idols should be strictly prohibited.
- (iii) Worship material like flowers, vastras (clothes), decorating material (made of paper and plastic) etc. should be removed before immersion of idols. Bio-degradable materials should be collected separately for recycling or composting. Non-biodegradable materials should be collected separately for disposal in sanitary landfills. Clothes may be sent to local orphan house(s).
- (iv) Public should be educated on ill effects of immersion in the holy water bodies through mass awareness programme.
- (v) The 'Idol Immersion Points' shall be cordoned off and barricaded. Synthetic liner may be placed in the bottom, well in advance. The said liner shall be removed on completion of immersion ceremony so that remains of idols would be brought to the bank. Bamboo and wooden logs, if any would be reused. Clay, etc may be taken to sanitary land fill for disposal.

2. General Guidelines for Local Bodies/ Authorities

- (i) Local bodies /District Authorities generally make efforts to identify adequate number of designated immersion spots to avoid overcrowding and also to reduce pollution load on water bodies, such spots need to be notified and public & pooja committees be informed of such designated sites through awareness programme preferably a month before such events of idol immersion. All the stakeholders such as River Authority, Port Authority, Water Supply Board, Irrigation Department, etc. be consulted for identification of the Immersion Ghats, where flow in stream is naturally available.
- (ii) A co-ordination Committee comprising Police, Non-Government Organizations, Local Authorities, SPCBs, representatives of pooja committees and stakeholders may be set up for guiding the public in carrying out the immersion with minimal impact on water

bodies.

(iii) At the immersion sites, burning of solid wastes, so generated comprising of used flowers, clothes, decorating materials, etc. should be prohibited.

(iv) Within 48 hours of the immersion of idols, the left over material at idol immersion points on the banks of rivers, lakes, beaches, etc. should be collected by the local bodies for disposal as per point 1 (iii) above.

(v) In case of immersion of idols in rivers and lakes, arrangement may be made for construction of temporary confined ponds with earthen bunds for the purpose of immersion of idols. After the completion of immersion, supernatant water may be allowed to flow in river, pond and lake, as the case may be, after checking for colour and turbidity. Lime may be added in temporary confined ponds.

(vi) The Pooja organizers be involved in a campaign on the ill effects of the toxic components of colouring materials, not only of the idols, but also other decorating materials used during the festive season. Specific leaflets and poster for mass awareness may be prepared and the Pooja committees persuaded to be display such posters and distribute leaflets among worshippers.

3. Guidelines for Idol Immersion in lakes

In case of immersion of idols in lakes or ponds, all the flowers, leaves and artificial ornaments of idols should be removed and idols may be immersed into a corner of pond using removable synthetic liners in the bottom. Post immersion, liners may be taken out along with remains of idols and lime should be added to the pond water for settling the solids. Desludging of the pond should be undertaken afterwards.

4. Guidelines for Idol Immersion in Rivers

Temporary ponds having earthen bunds along river bank should be created as idol immersion spots. Removable synthetic liner may be placed well in advance in bottom of pond. The said liner alongwith remains of idols should be removed from the point within 48 hours of immersion of idols.

5. Guidelines for Idol Immersion in Sea

In case of Idol immersion in sea, immersion may be done between low tide line and high tide line (irrespective of its depth). The low-tide line and high tide lines may be identified and marked well in advance. Motor Boats with security personnel/home guards with adequate safety equipments be deployed to supervise the immersion.

6. Role of State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) and Pollution Control Committees (PCCs)

(i) Concerned SPCB/ PCC should conduct water quality assessment of the water body, preferably in Class-I cities (having population more than one lakh), at three stages i.e. pre-immersion, during immersion and post immersion. Considering the size of water body, appropriate number of sampling locations may be determined in order to get a fairly representative assessment of water quality. For ascertaining water quality, Physico-chemical parameters such as pH, DO, BOD, COD, Conductivity, Turbidity, TDS, Total Solids and Metals (Chromium, Lead, Zinc and Copper) may be analyzed and results posted on the SPCB's website.

(ii) SPCB/ PCC shall help to local administration in preparing material for mass awareness for the purpose.