

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
STARRED QUESTION No. 167
TO BE ANSWERED ON 29.11.2019

Ban on Idols Made with Toxic Materials

*167. SHRI SRIDHAR KOTAGIRI:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has imposed ban on Ganesh idols made with plaster of paris, paints and other synthetics and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) the steps taken by the Government to stop making Ganesh idols using the aforementioned toxic materials;
- (c) whether the Government has approached technical institutions to come up with solutions based on locally available materials that are bio-degradable, sustainable for fifteen days, mobile, vertically stable with capacity to withstand tall heights and can serve as fish feed; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR)

(a) to (d): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT IN REPLY TO PARTS (a), (b), (c) AND (d), OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. *167 FOR ANSWER ON 29/11/2019 REGARDING BAN ON IDOLS MADE WITH TOXIC MATERIALS

(a) & (b) Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) issued guidelines entitled “Guidelines for Idol Immersion” in the year 2010 which prohibits use of toxic paints and non-biodegradable chemical dyes and encourage use of traditional clay for idol making. The guidelines were circulated by CPCB to all the States/UTs to ensure its implementation. Salient features of the guidelines are as follows:

- (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 orphanhouse(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.
- (vi) Concerned SPCB/PCC should conduct water quality assessment of the water body, preferably in Class-I cities (having population more than one lac), at three stages i.e. pre-immersion, during immersion and post immersion.
- (vii) All the SPCBs/PCCs, local & Urban bodies, etc. in the respective States/UTs are required to ensure implementation of guidelines circulated by CPCB.

In accordance with the CPCB guideline, the State Government of Karnataka has issued directions on 20th July, 2016 banning the use of Plaster of Paris (PoP) in making idols. The Govt. of Delhi during 2018 directed all the concerned agencies in Delhi to create artificial ponds for green immersion of idols and prohibited immersion activity on the occasion of Ganesh Puja and

Durga Puja both. To make the arrangements, assignments of duties were given to the different departments and district administration.

The State Government of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Kerala also issued following instructions in this regard :

- (i) Proposed to make use of clay, may be in combination with ecofriendly material.
 - (ii) Recommended to encourage the use of alternative recyclable material like paper pulp, metal, wood, vegetative fiber, stone etc. which could be easily disintegrated/ reused/ recycled.
 - (iii) Restrict use of colors containing metals like Hg, Pb, Cd, Ni, Zn etc.
 - (iv) Promote use of certified eco-friendly natural and/or biodegradable colors, which are nontoxic, water soluble and free from harmful metals.
 - (v) Use of Natural colors used in food products and permitted in Pharmaceuticals may be preferred.
 - (vi) Recyclable and or biodegradable material is recommended to use for decoration.
 - (vii) Consultation with NGOs and mass manufactures of idols to encourage making of idols with mud.
- (c) & (d)The CPCB has decided to review the existing guidelines to make them more effective in addressing the environmental issues associated with idol immersion. The technical institutions like NEERI and Central Water Commission and other concerned departments have been consulted in this regard.
