

## **Initiatives taken by the KSPCB for prohibition on immersion of Ganesha idols in the water bodies in the state of Karnataka**

Traditionally, clay is used to make Ganesh idols. Over the years however, plaster of Paris (POP), which is lighter and cheaper, has become the favoured material to mould idols. POP contains chemicals such as gypsum, sulphur, phosphorus, and magnesium. The dyes used to colour these idols may also contain mercury, cadmium, arsenic and lead. Plastic and thermocol accessories are used to decorate these idols. Such materials are not biodegradable, hence are toxic when immersed in water bodies. Thus adversely impacts the aquatic ecosystem and aquatic organisms and subsequently affecting the health of human from water contamination. In this matter Hon'ble High Court has issued notification WP No.: 927 to 931 of 2017 & 1322 of 2017, dt. : 31.1.2017.

In this regard, the Board with the aim of bringing down the volume of plaster of Paris Ganesha idols in Karnataka, the following steps have been implemented by the Board to preserve the water bodies and celebrate the Gauri-Ganesha festival in an environmental friendly.

1. To prevent water pollution in the State, the Board issued a notification dated 20/07/2016 banning the immersion of POP idols in any water bodies.
2. In the order issued by the High Court (WPNo.927 to 931 2017 & 1322 of 2017, dated 31/01/2017), the Board has notified the Commissioner, BBMP, Bangalore, Karnataka Lake Conservation and Development Authority and all concerned Departmental Officers to take action as per the notification.
3. To protect the water bodies from pollution, Board wrote on 15/05/2019 to all District Commissioner advising them to take action on this matter by taking appropriate action from the Departments in charge of the District Commissioner.
4. It was also advised to investigate any POP or paint idols that have not been immersed within the limits of all the local bodies in the state and take them to solid waste disposal units located in local bodies and use the shredders to dispose of them.
5. To restrict POP idols coming from other states, check post officers were given relevant directions by District Commissioners in consultation with the officers of such Departments in the State.

6. The District Commissioners were instructed to direct all local bodies and GPs not to make POP and chemical colored idols and that such idols are not immersed into any water source and such violators would have to face action according to IPC 1860.
7. The Board informed the Regional Officers, KSPCB and Officers of all concerned Departments to notify the manufacturers to prepare the colourless clay idols instead of Plaster of Paris (POP) idols.
8. Committees are also constituted at the local level in collaboration with District Officers and Local Authorities, Police, Pollution Control Board and Non-Governmental Organizations to monitor and act on POP idol makers and vendors. The Committee consists of the following members:
  - Local Authorities - Commissioners/Chairman
  - Relevant Regional Officer, KSPCB - Members
  - Police Department Representative - Members
  - Representative of Non-Governmental Organizations – Members
9. The Board directed all the Local Authorities to conduct awareness programs for the Public Sector Organizations/Ganesh Mahamandals using the details of licenses issued by the Police Department and Local Authorities regularly every year.
10. Public were made aware to celebrate the festival with idols of 'colorless' clay and then dispose of them within the designated places assigned by the Local Authorities.
11. Public were instructed to segregate the solid waste (flower, fruit, bamboo, mango, etc.) besides the mobile tank/kalyani in case of disposal of clay Ganesha idols.
12. The ULBs were directed to identify lakes/kalyani in each ward and take appropriate action for the safe disposal of clay idols.
13. The Mahamandals wherein the Ganesh idols are worshiped in public places were made to obtain prior mandatory permission from Local Authorities and police departments. The conditions of the permissions issued included a ban on the use of plastic plexes and other materials in licensing situations and the use of loudspeakers from 10 pm to 6 pm.

Every year, Karnataka State Pollution Control Board during the Ganesha festival makes an effort to protect water bodies by advocating eco-friendly clay Ganesha idols without any metallic colour for Ganesha Festival celebrations. Due to the COVID situation this year, the Board came out with a unique **“Turmeric Ganesha Campaign”** – To Sensitize

and Motivate people to make and worship 1 Lakh Turmeric Ganesha Idols by reaching out to 10 million citizens of Karnataka. This programme was appealed the general public to celebrate Ganesha Festival by making Idols (maximum 1 feet height) using turmeric mixed with wheat or ragi millet flour at home. Considering the antibacterial, antiviral, anti-inflammatory properties of Turmeric, the public was appealed to celebrate Turmeric Ganesha to combat COVID eventualities. Several outreach activities were undertaken by the Board to promote Turmeric Ganesha that including radio talks, TV promotions, videos, appeal from eminent people, political leaders, religious leaders and celebrities, paper advertisements, door to door campaign, billboards displays, webinars, advertisement on products like Milk sachets, matchboxes, incense stick boxes, sweet boxes, one to one interaction with apartment owners associations and extensive use of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Whatsapp, Google. All these outreach activities helped to reach over 15% (1.58 Crore people) population of the state. Also, this programme bagged ASIA BOOKS OF RECORDS for the creation of the largest number of eco-friendly turmeric Ganesha idols.

In this regard, for the year 2021-2022 Gauri - Ganesh festival the Regional offices of KSCPBB had organized many awareness activities as listed below:

- Creative poster and fliers.
- Radio campaigning through Radio city.
- FM Rainbow talks for promotion of turmeric Ganesha idols.
- TV campaigning about eco-friendly turmeric Ganesha idols.
- Organising quiz programmes for the children.
- Creating awareness through audio notes about eco-friendly turmeric Ganesha idols by ULBs.
- Webinar for Industrial association, scouts and guide/NCC students, teachers and students.
- Articles and press releases about the turmeric Ganesha campaign.
- Doordarshan talks involving resource persons.
- Actively posting on social media platforms.
- Engaging FKCCI, KASSIA, ELCITA, Plastic manufacturing association, NGOs, rotary and lion clubs.
- Creating awareness by displaying banners at premises of KSRTC, BMTCL, BMRCL and the Airport.

Post Ganesha festival, data were collected from the lakes of Karnataka to determine the changes in the water quality. From the data collected for this year and when compared to previous years i.e., 2014 - 2019 as shown in the table below indicates that deterioration of lakes (Class 'E') during Ganesha Festival – 2021 is very less (i.e. 14% in Class 'E'). This can be attributed to the collective effective outreach activities carried out by Karnataka State Pollution Control Board.

Sl. No	Year	Class of Lakes water quality (in percentage)											
		Before idol immersion						After idol immersion					
		A	B	C	D	E	<E	A	B	C	D	E	<E
1	2014	-	-	87	13	-	-	-	-	-	33	67	-
2	2015	-	-	87	13	-	-	-	-	-	63	37	-
3	2016	-	-	35	65	-	-	-	-	-	52	48	-
4	2017	-	4	48	48	-	-	-	-	4	48	48	-
5	2018	-	4	15	81	-	-	-	-	-	77	23	-
6	2019	-	-	9	91	-	-	-	-	-	-	100	-
7	2021	-	-	-	98	2	-	-	-	-	86	14	-

Karnataka State Pollution Control Board has always taken up eco-friendly initiatives for creating awareness regarding the banning of plaster of paris (POP) Ganesha idols in Karnataka, to protect water resources and celebrate the Gauri-Ganesha celebration in an environmentally sustainable manner.

**Enclosure: Brochure on Turmeric Ganesha Campaign 2021 in the State of Karnataka.**

This is for your kind information.

Sd/-  
**Member Secretary,**  
**KSPCB**