

TALKING ON THE PHONE WHILE CROSSING TRACKS
PROVES FATAL FOR K'KHAIRANE WOMAN

MPCB wants an eco-friendly touch to Ganeshotsav celebrations this year

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Navi Mumbai: The Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) has plans to discourage the use of plaster of Paris (PoP) and chemical colours during the making of Ganesh idols. The apex body that has initiated a campaign to promote the use of eco-friendly idols has chosen Navi Mumbai as a model area for the forthcoming Ganesh Chaturthi festival on September 1. With just about a month for the festivities to begin, the body has targeted around 200 small sized idols that would be put up on sale either at Vashi or Belapur.

Regional officer of MPCB, Bharat Nimbarde said, "We have been trying to promote the use of degradable materials for idol making, decorations and also the use of paper bags for collecting nirmalya (the floral and other leftovers after the festivities) in Mumbai and this year decided to go a step forward and train people in Navi Mumbai that would result in increased awareness about the use of eco-friendly idols." Nimbarde said that providing training at workshops was aimed to engage people to promote the cause and take it beyond next year.

Navi Mumbai accounts for around 20,000 idols (big and small) during the festival and the humble attempt this year would be to make a difference by making as many idols in a short span of time so that devotees who perform the puja at their homes would be encouraged to buy the eco-friendly idols. As big idols take time for making, the board has decided to concentrate on smaller ones.

The MPCB laboratory at Mahape is currently the centre of the workshop that started on July 22 and ends on July 31. The workshop is presently imparting training to some 20 selected persons who in turn would extend the art of making the idols to institutions like handicraft



GREEN GANESHA: A training session on how to model eco-friendly idols is currently being conducted at the MPCB lab in Mahape. (Inset) An idol of lord Ganpati made of eco-friendly materials

centres, Taloja jail, women self-help groups and differently-abled students. The training is in three phases - idol making, decorations replacing thermocole and paper bags for collection of nirmalya.

Nimbarde pointed out that PoP used for idols and the colours and thermocole used for decorations are not eco-friendly and they are now encouraging the use of shadu, a special type of clay brought from Gujarat. The use of clay and vegetable colours would result in lesser pollution. PoP is said to be non-biodegradable and the colours pollute water bodies and are harmful for marine life.

With some 20,000 idols to be installed in the satellite city during the festival, the concern is rather high to prevent the pollution of water bodies where immersions are done. In view of the shared objective to minimise pollutants destroying marine life, several industries in the Taloja industrial area have also joined hands to promote awareness and con-

tributing for the cause. A member of the industry informs that paper and pulp industries are now contributing recycled papers to help boost the cause.

Nimbarde said once training in the art of idol making is over, the next stage is to understand colouring them, for which those undergoing training are taken to a plant in Dombivli. An NGO-Shaswat Eco-solution Foundation, associated in the campaign to promote use of eco-friendly Ganesh idols, has exported around 40 idols to the US this year. They have a factory in Dombivli where training in colouring of idols is provided. As part of the campaign, the board is rather happy to point out that a 20-feet-high idol, made with eco-friendly materials will be installed in Mumbai this year. Surely, people would see reason and disband the use of non-degradable materials, Nimbarde observed. The idols look the same, and members say that the price is also more or less the same as well.

Photo: Jagadeep Singh