

Yamuna foams at mouth after idol immersions

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The temporary gains from monsoon seem to have already been lost: the Yamuna, which was visibly cleaner due to rain, once again wore a foamy look on Monday after thousands of idols were immersed for Ganesh Chaturthi.

Many such idols could be seen floating on the ghats — some half-dissolved, others completely intact — perhaps indicative of the Plaster of Paris (PoP) that is used to make them. Decoration material, flowers and pieces of cloth provided a grim reminder of how NGT orders continued to be blatantly flouted.

Pollution levels in the river were already extremely high, according to a test conducted by Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) on August 8. It was found that dissolved oxygen — required to sustain aquatic life —

was 0 in seven of the nine ghats. DO levels should be 4 mg/l or above. Similarly, the report found Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) to be as high as 40 mg/l at places like Kudesia Ghat against a prescribed standard of 3 mg/l or below.

DPCC officials said the immersion process, especially the usage of PoP, was likely to push these levels further up. "We have started the testing process and will compare pre- and post-immersion samples. These will also be compared with last year's readings," an official said. 9/25/2018 Yamuna foams at mouth after idol immersions –

An SDMC official claimed that while immersions were lower this year, the preparation was also a lot better. "We did not allow PoP idols to be immersed and they were kept on the ghats from where they were collected on Monday," the official said.

A corporation worker, who didn't want to be named, said: "Water levels have been extremely low at some locations and, as such, idols could only be half-submerged. Decoration pieces were recovered in kilos from the river." The use of PoP idols was banned by NGT in 2015 as they don't dissolve easily in the river. The tribunal had later issued instructions to remove all decorations before the idols were immersed.

Experts said with Durga Puja round the corner, better preparations would be required to avoid a repeat of the situation. "Idols containing toxic dyes are immersed each year and the rules are rarely followed. Better implementation of the NGT order is required on the ground," Manoj Mishra, convener of the Yamuna Jiye Abhiyaan, said.

