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## Charges for erecting pandals hiked substantially, NMC to HC

Nagpur: In some bad news for Ganesh mandals, Nagpur Municipal Corporation (NMC), on Thursday, informed the Nagpur bench of [Bombay High Court](#) that it had already proposed hike in charges for erecting pandals during [Maharashtra](#)'s biggest festival.

[NMC](#)

counsel Sudhir Puranik informed HC that the proposal on increasing charges had been forwarded to the Standing Committee, where it is pending.

The civic body's reply came in response to the court's directives at the last hearing, where it asked the standing panel to take a decision on revising the fees or charges for grant of permissions to the pandals, welcome arches/gates, flexes, banners, hoardings and stages, before the forthcoming festival season, beginning from Monday.

A division bench of justice [Bhushan Gavai](#) and justice [Vinay Deshpande](#)

then adjourned hearing for four weeks. The court was hearing a plea by Dr

[Gajanan Zade](#)

and

[Manohar Khorgade](#)

through counsel Firdos Mirza.

Earlier, Puranik said the corporation would be charging Rs2,500 for a pandal on less than 300 sq m area, Rs5,000 for structure below 500 sq m and Rs10,000 above this size. He added over thousand application forms for erecting pandals and other structures in various areas of 10 zones had been sold from NMC's single window counter, while about 500 had submitted them with necessary documents. Of these, only 13 mandals were granted no-objection certificate (NOC) so far while four were rejected since their pandals were coming up on main roads.

At the last hearing, the court had allowed pandals on internal roads only, which is a deviation from its earlier orders of September 16, 2009, February 2, March 11 and 27 last year. Surprisingly, it also allowed arches on main roads, after initially prohibiting them, but with a rider that it would not cause any obstruction to free flow of traffic. The twist came after NMC submitted a comprehensive policy to tackle the menace of pandals, welcome arches/gates, flexes, banners, hoardings and stages on roads.

Expressing concern over inconvenience to citizens and obstructions to traffic, the judges said that appropriate fees and penalties should be charged, so that permissions are not sought in a routine and casual manner.

After repeatedly facing the judiciary's flak, NMC came out with a 'Policy to grant permission for erection of temporary structures like pandals, welcome arches/gates, flexes, banners, hoardings and stages, on public streets/ roads/ footpaths/ footways, on occasion of festivals and ceremonies'. It also informed that it had started two helplines numbers (0712-2532474 and 1800-233-3764 (toll free)) for citizens to lodge a complaint if any such structures were causing hindrance to traffic or inconvenience to them.