

## Editorial

### Noise pollution in Dhaka city: What can we do about it?

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The alarmingly high noise level in Dhaka city is associated with increased number of vehicles on the city roads caused by irresponsible honking by the drivers. They do not understand the impacts of this on health of the people. Although there are several sources of noise pollution such as loud speakers, building construction, damaged roads, street markets, mechanical workshops and small factories, vehicles are the major problem and they produce about three quarters of all noise in the city.

In technical terms, noise above 50 decibels can adversely affect the public health, especially those having hypertension and heart diseases. Loud noise also make small boys and girls nervous on the street. The World Health Organization (WHO) cautions that any sound above 60 decibels can temporarily make a man deaf and prolonged exposure to high sound above 100 decibels can cause hearing impairments.<sup>1</sup> Several empirical studies have found sound levels ranging between 70 and 120 decibels in selected Dhaka city road intersections. According to the Noise Pollution (Control) Rules 2006,<sup>2</sup> the acceptable sound limit is 50 decibels during the daytime and 45 decibels in the nighttime in residential areas of the city.

Many commercial and business activities like car workshops, welding shops, flour mills etc. are allowed to operate and in fact expanding in every residential area of the city causing traffic congestion as well as serious noise problems for their residents. In busy residential areas, loudspeakers are used to advertise goods and services, microphones are used to celebrate weddings and cultural functions.

Drivers are asked to stop honking on the street and it is extremely difficult to fully convince the drivers not to use their horns so frequently and very difficult to change the drivers' attitude towards honking. The honking can be controlled by law and by imposing fines. In Calcutta, any area within a 100-metre radius of a hospital, nursing home, educational institution, library and the court is officially designated a "silence zone". Calcutta also has imposed a fine for unnecessary honking.<sup>3</sup>

The Noise Pollution (Control) Rules 2006 should be implemented strictly with the help of traffic police, Ministry of Environment and Forest, Ministry of Home Affairs and Dhaka City Corporation who need to join hands and enforce the law and make Dhaka a bit more livable in future. A general awareness campaign should be rolled out, particularly targeting the drivers and vehicle owners on the health consequences of arbitrary use of horns. We as citizens also need to educate our drivers about the negative effect of excessive use of horns.

#### Reference:

1. WHO, Hearing loss due to recreational exposure to loud sounds. Available from: URL: [https://www.who.int/pbd/deafness/Hearing\\_loss\\_due\\_to\\_recreational\\_exposure\\_to\\_loud\\_sounds.pdf](https://www.who.int/pbd/deafness/Hearing_loss_due_to_recreational_exposure_to_loud_sounds.pdf)
2. Noise Pollution (Control) Rules 2006. Available from: URL: <http://old.doe.gov.bd/publication/publication.php?cmd=details&-type=Reports>
3. The noise pollution (regulation and control) rules, 2000. Available from: URL: [http://cpcebnvis.nic.in/noisepollution/noise\\_rules\\_2000.pdf](http://cpcebnvis.nic.in/noisepollution/noise_rules_2000.pdf)

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