



Noise Pollution: Awareness, Protection & Responsibilities

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Noise pollution is becoming one of the serious health problems affecting human lives in many ways. It is caused by the high and unsafe level of noise in the environment. In cities unnecessary honking is one of the major causes of sound pollution.

In comparison to other big cities, Dhaka is the most affected zone resulting in multifaced health hazards for children, old-aged and patients. Commuters in general do not care for this issue just for their necessity outside the homes or offices, but everybody exposed to honking is bored with this reckless and irresponsible horn.

What we have in our hands to control this dangerous weapon. The Department of Environment and the Law Enforcing Agencies. The Court Orders as well. The National Parliament. The Employers. The Licensing Authority. The Registration & Regulatory Authority as well. Everybody works at their level, but still the result is negative. Then who are responsible for sound pollution on highways or roads in cities? The finger certainly goes to the driver, the employer, and the licensing & regulatory authority. This driver gentleman may solve the maximum problem on his own initiative. So, making him aware of the problem may save many resources.

BTRC has a vital role in reducing sound pollution to the ground. It may be held responsible for its inaction. On the other count, prohibition of import or production of hydraulic horn would certainly reduce the problem, but the new Import Policy 2021-24 has frustratingly allowed import of high decibel horn than its previous version, which is really an unrealistic and unreasonable decision on the part of the Ministry of Commerce. This Import Policy is a bad instance in respect of import of dangerous horns injurious to human health. Ironically it has been come into force while HRPB's Public Interest Litigation in respect of hydraulic horns is pending before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh.

Awareness Campaign may be launched frequently for drivers and technicians. Silent Zones may be extended to populous areas. Horn Detection Technology may be fixed with horns so that driving license may be suspended or canceled. At the same time an attractive incentive may also be given to a non-horn driver. Digital Apps may provide solution to this problem. Environmental organizations and Sound Health Organizations may be included in addressing the problems. Uber and similar other stakeholders may assist a lot in various aspects.

In India, Himachal Pradesh launched statewide "HORN NOT OK" campaign in 2018 and has also started the Mobile Apps "*ShorNahin*" developed for the convenience of the Citizen of Himachal Pradesh to report any Noise Pollution occurrence to the authorities for corrective measures. Bangladesh may also launch similar initiative for implementation of law at the lowest cost of resources. No horn placards may be seen at roadside pillars. Some zones are noise-restricted in some important and sensitive areas. Drivers ply their vehicles most carefully there, but under open sky they are unknown to us for honking and its unbearable sounds.

The writer knows a Dhaka based journalist who does not personally use any horn while driving his vehicle nor allow his driver to do so. This example is 360* opposite to motorcycle users and bus-truck drivers. It is seen that the motorcyclist frequently uses high volume horn while his minor baby is on his running seat of the vehicle. Drivers don't care for others' comfort while honking loudly. A competitive and aggressive mentality results in reckless driving and use of horn indiscriminately. The common phenomenon of traffic jams also provokes stimulation in the drivers to do so without thinking of others. To the young generation, the high racing speed of vehicles and use of horns has become a fashion to influence his version of people in schools, colleges, universities, and society at large.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines noise above 65 decibels (dB). It mainly causes hearing loss. Excessive noise exposure can raise various types of health hazards i.e. blood pressure and pulse rates, cause irritability, anxiety, and mental fatigue, and interfere with sound sleep, recreation, and personal communication. Children living in areas with high levels of noise pollution may suffer from stress and other problems, such as impairments in memory and attention span. Noise pollution control is therefore important in the workplace and in the community. So, industry-based noise control implementation is a dire need for a healthy society and peaceful nature.

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