

NGT Order on Noise Pollution

Why in news?

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to prepare a noise pollution map and remedial action plan.

What are the provisions in place?

- Legal provisions to prosecute the noisemakers already exist.
- Section 2 (a) of the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981, includes noise in the definition of pollutants.
- Also, noise pollution control rules were framed in 2000 under the amended and updated Environment Protection Act, 1986.
- It specifies the ambient standards for different places in respect of permissible noise.
- But unfortunately, these have remained only on paper.
- Though noise monitoring mechanisms were established in a few cities, these were hardly ever put to any gainful use.

What has the NGT directed?

- The NGT has asked the CPCB to categorise cities on the basis of their noise profile and identify the noisy hotspots.
- The CPCB has also been asked to propose remedial plans for the noise pollution, within 3 months.
- NGT has also called upon police departments in all states to procure sound monitoring devices.
- They are also directed to assist the pollution control authorities in their efforts to mitigate noise pollution.
- Manufacturers of public address systems and sound amplification equipment should provide inbuilt noise meters and data loggers in their products.
- This would help regulators to establish violation and fix responsibility.

What are the risks with noise pollution?

- Prolonged exposure to any sound louder than 80 decibels, even if it is music, can impair hearing, breathing and thinking processes.
- Besides this, it also affects overall human health and productivity.
- Noise beyond 120 decibels can cause biochemical changes in human bodies.

- It would raise cholesterol and blood pressure, with the associated health risks.
- According to the WHO, hearing loss due to excessive noise cost \$750 million to the global economy every year.

What are the sources?

- Like environmental pollution, noise pollution, too, is the outcome of human activities.
- Industrialisation, urbanisation and modern lifestyle, all contribute to noise pollution.
- Factories, airports, railway stations and busy roads usually have noise levels much above the safe standards.
- Indiscriminate honking with pressure horns, excessively loud music systems in cars, homes, dance bars and other public joints are also the causes.
- Use of loudspeakers at full volume at religious, social and political gatherings worsens this menace.

What lies ahead?

- Unlike air and water pollution that receive attention and even have some corrective action, noise pollution largely remains unaddressed.
- Given the diversity of noise pollution, only multifaceted, yet situation-specific approach can work.
- The strategies have to include measures ranging from awareness creation to punitive action.
- Religious bodies should be sensitised about the ill-effects of the loud sound to get them to change the noise-generating customs.
- [Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala makes prior permission obligatory for setting up public sound systems.
- It also bars placement of loudspeakers beyond 300 metres from the venues of religious, social or political events.]
- The youth, who face the greatest risk of irretrievable hearing damage from personal music systems, also need to be targeted specifically.
- Most importantly, pollution control bodies need to treat noise pollution on par with other kinds of pollution.

Source: Business Standard



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