

Turning down the volume on a call to prayer

Why in news?

The Uttar Pradesh government has removed the loudspeakers from various places of worship quoting a judgment of the Allahabad High Court.

What was court orders regarding the use of loud speakers?

- In 2005 Supreme Court ruled that “freedom from noise pollution is a part of the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution.”
- The apex court added that no religion or purpose can claim a right to create noise even in his own premises which would travel beyond his precincts and cause nuisance to neighbours or others.
- Recently the Allahabad High Court passed an order directing the government to take action on the use of loudspeakers on religious and public places to ensure compliance of the Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Act, 2000.

What do The Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000 say?

- Noise pollution and its sources are regulated under The Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000 under The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- The Act has defined ambient acceptable noise levels, silence zones, restrictions on the use of loudspeakers, horns, sound-emitting construction equipment, and bursting of crackers.
- Noise pollution Rules have defined the acceptable level of noise in different zones for both daytime and nighttime.
- Daytime is defined as the period from 6 am to 10 pm, and night is 10 pm to 6 am of the following day.
- The threshold limit are as follows

Area Code	Category of Area/Zone	Limits in dB(A) <u>Leg</u>	
A	Industrial Area	75	70
B	Commercial Area	65	55
C	Residential Area	55	45
D	Silence Zone	50	40

- The rules also state that a loudspeaker or a public address system shall not be used except after obtaining written permission from the designated authority.
- The loudspeakers installed in public places cannot have a sound level more than
 - 10 decibels above the ambient noise level at the periphery of a public place.
 - 5 decibels above the ambient noise level at the periphery of a private place.
- The state government can provide exemption during any cultural or religious festive occasion of a limited duration not exceeding 15 days in all during a calendar year.
- The violation of norms regarding the use of loudspeakers/public address systems can result in

seizure of the equipment, and a fine of Rs 10,000.

What was the government response?

- The state government also issued detailed directives on the use of permanently installed loudspeakers at these places.
- The order directs to
 - Get permission to install loudspeakers at religious or public places.
 - Categorise areas into industrial, commercial, residential and silence zones by the district magistrates.

What actions were taken to ensure compliance?

- A survey conducted on religious places revealed that most places of worship, mosques and temples, were flouting the court order.
- As a result Uttar Pradesh government has removed the loudspeakers from various places of worship.

How was the public response?

- The government action was met with a considerably mature response. There were no threats to hit the roads or approach the Supreme Court.

Reference

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