

NOISE POLLUTION

In early part of this century Nobel Laureate Robert Pock had said, "a time is likely to come when man will die due to sheer noise". This prediction is becoming — true as nowadays we find that because of noise pollution man's physiological state is undergoing a rapid change and causing permanent or temporary hearing impairment, cardiac arrest etc. Because blaring sound speeds up pulses and respiratory rates which results in irregularities in human body!

"Aman me cheelgar ka charcha bahut din se sun raha hoon, toba toba, wey shahr me chalegi to us ki gargarahat se petwalion ke pet gir jaya karengi..." (I have been hearing about the flying car for a long time; God forbid, when it comes, its thunder will cause miscarriage to pregnant women). This innocent remark of the last Mughal Emperor is (now) becoming true as a recent study nearby Ahmedabad Airport revealed that pregnant mothers are giving birth to still born babies, or defective one and most of them are under weight. Even cases of natural abortions are taking place. All these are happening due to noise pollution created by the zooming sound of Jets in Ahmedabad Airport.

Thus noise pollution is as serious as water or air pollution which is threatening the normal existence of mankind. With the rapid growth of industrialisation, cities are getting encapsulated with noise pollution. Whether it is a busy road intersection or a railway station or airport or the industrial units blaring sounds are aired which have a deafening effect on men. Millions of city dwellers who are working in industries are threatened by noise due to their continued exposure to high pitch noise emission which can cause hypertension, ulcers and obviously deafness.

Of late, the Government has recognised noise pollution as potential hazard and last year the Air Pollution Control Act was amended to include 'noise' as pollutant and was given an over-riding priority over air and water pollution.

Globally, speaking, noise pollution as health hazard has been acknowledged by World Health Organisation (WHO) which has bracketed this noise threat and has given it a top priority. According to WHO, "safe noise level" for any city should be 45 decibels (db). But sordidly enough, noise pollution of Indian cities rates

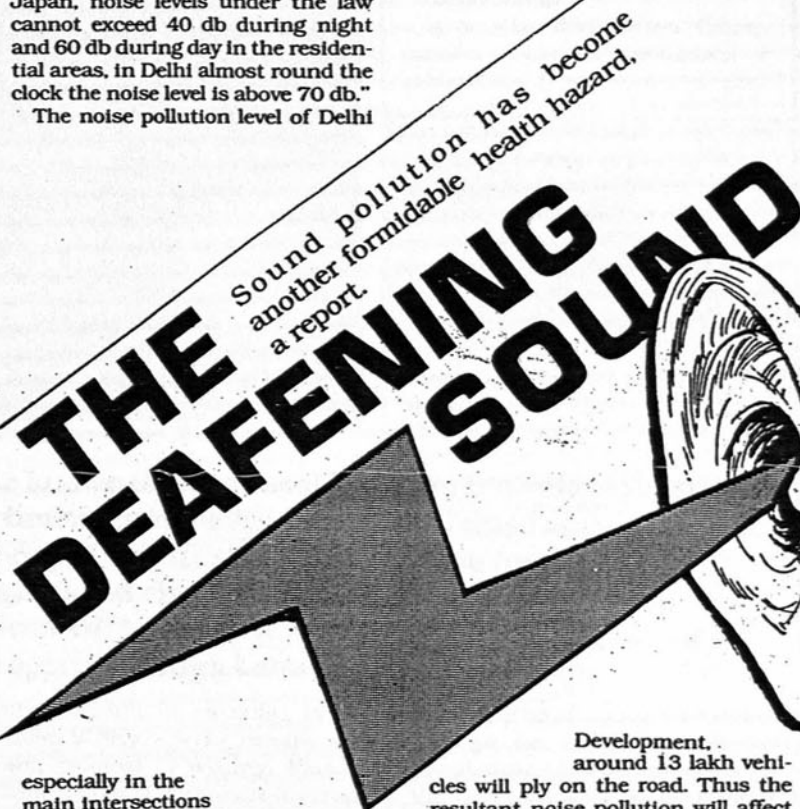
around double the decibels of the prescribed level of 'safe'! This is more in metropolises and in fact, Bombay has already earned dubious distinction of being third noisiest city in the world.

Commenting upon Delhi's condition, Prof. H.B. Mathur of the Mechanical Engineering Department IIT, Delhi said "Whereas in Japan, noise levels under the law cannot exceed 40 db during night and 60 db during day in the residential areas, in Delhi almost round the clock the noise level is above 70 db."

The noise pollution level of Delhi

ing caused by a four hour-rock concert."

However, vehicular traffic is termed as most potent noise pollutants and it is predicted that by the end of this century the population of Delhi will touch 10 million level, and by then, according to the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and



especially in the main intersections of the city is very high. In the main 32 crossings, according to a study, the db level ranges from 80-90 db, which includes ITO, Azadpur, Dhaula Kuan, Raja Garden etc.

The noise emission especially by vehicles is very high as a truck without silencer emits around 110 decibels which endangers the passersby. In this regard, Dr. R.C. Deka, Secretary to the Neuroauto logical and Equilibriomatic Society of India commented recently that exposures to noise over 90 db continuously for 10 minutes can produce damaging effects on the hearing system. And louder noise more than 100 db can even cause permanent damage to the hearing system.

According to recent report by Neelam Mathews "Audiograms of pop musicians show typical hearing loss in both the ears. For the connoisseurs of this music, it takes 20 to 50 hours of quiet to make good the loss of hear-

Development, around 13 lakh vehicles will ply on the road. Thus the resultant noise pollution will affect around 53% of total Delhi's population.

On understanding the serious noise threat most of the world's cities have banned the 'night landings' in airports. To counteract the noise emitted by vehicles, road-side sound barriers are being erected and most of the buildings are made sound proof. World vehicle manufacturers are giving thrust to produce 'noiseless' cars. But, in India, it seems, we still have miles to go before these spheres are achieved.

I recall when I was a kid during 1965 Indo-Pak War my parents once asked me to put cottons in the ears, whenever hooters sounded the signal of air attack, in order to reduce the sound effect in case of any possible bomb explosion. Now perhaps we have to ask our children to put cottons in their ears even when they go out on evening stroll!

GAUTAM CHATTERJEE