

MUMBAI HAS BEEN ADJUDGED THE WORST NOISE POLLUTER IN THE COUNTRY.
IN A TWO-PART SERIES, HINDUSTAN TIMES
LOOKS AT WHY THE CITY HAS EARNED THIS DUBIOUS DISTINCTION AND
HOW IT WILL AFFECT YOUR HEALTH IN THE LONG TERM

Maximum city, maximum noise

face to face

DR DILIP BORALKAR

'City's population major cause of high noise levels'

Badri Chatterjee

■ badri.chatterjee@hindustantimes.com

MUMBAI: Hindustan Times spoke to Dr Dilip Boralkar, former member secretary, Maharashtra Pollution Control Board. With 38 years of experience in environment protection, he now works as an independent counsel for pollution control, assessment and infrastructure development for environment Protection.

What are the main causes for high decibel levels in Mumbai?

Noise pollution in the city is a cumulative effect of motor vehicles, construction activity and ambient noise. The bad road quality enhances vibration entering homes near busy traffic junctions, aircraft and local trains also add to the noise. Religious festivals are also a source of pollution, and can be curbed by reducing loudspeakers and drums. There need to be standards for household equipment like grinders, air-conditioners and refrigerators to curb indoor noise pollution.

Compared to other cities, what factors point towards alarming noise levels in Mumbai?

The biggest problem in Mumbai is high population density. High rises on both sides of the road limit the dispersion of sound. Some precautions are being taken at newly developed areas, while older areas continue to be exposed to high noise levels. Slums might have inadequate water supply but they have access to television where the accumulated noise increases at night.

What can citizens do to control high noise levels?

Residents aware of noise rules must conduct awareness drives about the ill-effects of noise within their colony, society and schools. Using good quality sound proof sliding windows at home is one way of blocking external noise. Car-pooling decreases the number of vehicles and reduces honking.

What solutions must the government implement to control noise?

Noise should not be viewed as an enforcement problem alone. It is built into our culture; we express emotions in a loud manner. The role of police and regulatory authorities is important. The police believe apprehending vehicles flouting noise rules are not within their authority, a problem they need to rectify.

