

NOISE POLLUTION-IMPLEMENTATION OF LAWS FOR RESTRICTING USE OF LOUD SPEAKERS AND HIGH VOLUME PRODUCING SOUND SYSTEMS

DIRECTIONS

It is hereby directed as under:-

I. Firecrackers

1. On a comparison of the two systems, i.e. the present system of evaluating firecrackers on the basis of noise levels, and the other where the firecrackers shall be evaluated on the basis of chemical composition, we feel that the latter method is more practical and workable in Indian circumstances. It shall be followed unless and until replaced by a better system.
2. The Department of Explosives (DOE) shall undertake necessary research activity for the purpose and come out with the chemical formulae for each type or category or class of firecrackers. The DOE shall specify the proportion/composition as well as the maximum permissible weight of every chemical used in manufacturing firecrackers.
3. The Department of Explosives may divide the firecrackers into two categories- (i) Sound emitting firecrackers, and (ii) Colour/light emitting firecrackers.
4. There shall be a complete ban on bursting sound emitting firecrackers between 10 pm and 6 am. It is not necessary to impose restrictions as to time on bursting of colour/light emitting firecrackers.
5. Every manufacturer shall on the box of each firecracker mention details of its chemical contents and that it satisfies the requirement as laid down by DOE. In case of a failure on the part of the manufacturer to mention the details or in cases where the contents of the box do not match the chemical formulae as stated on the box, the manufacturer may be held liable.
6. Firecrackers for the purpose of export may be manufactured bearing higher noise levels subject to the following conditions: (i) The manufacturer should be permitted to do so only when he has an export order with him and not otherwise; (ii) The noise levels for these firecrackers should conform to the noise standards prescribed in the country to which they are intended to be exported as per the export order; (iii) These firecrackers should have a different colour packing, from those intended to be sold in India; (iv) They must carry a declaration printed thereon something like 'not for sale in India' or 'only for export to country AB' and so on.

II. Loudspeakers

1. The noise level at the boundary of the public place, where loudspeaker or public address system or any other noise source is being used shall not exceed 10 dB(A) above the ambient noise standards for the area or 75 dB(A) whichever is lower.
2. No one shall beat a drum or tom-tom or blow a trumpet or beat or sound any instrument or use any sound amplifier at night (between 10. 00 p.m. and 6.a.m.) except in public emergencies.
3. The peripheral noise level of privately owned sound system shall not exceed by more than 5 dB(A) than the ambient air quality standard specified for the area in which it is used, at the boundary of the private place.

III. Vehicular Noise

No horn should be allowed to be used at night (between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.) in residential areas except in exceptional circumstances.

IV. Awareness

1. There is a need for creating general awareness towards the hazardous effects of noise pollution. Suitable chapters may be added in the text-books which teach civic sense to the children and youth at the initial/early level of education. Special talks and lectures be organised in the schools to highlight the menace of noise pollution and the role of the children and younger generation in preventing it. Police and civic administration should be trained to understand the various methods to curb the problem and also the laws on the subject.
2. The State must play an active role in this process. Residents Welfare Associations, Service Clubs and Societies engaged in preventing noise pollution as a part of their projects need to be encouraged and actively involved by the local administration.
3. Special public awareness campaigns in anticipation of festivals, events and ceremonial occasions whereat firecrackers are likely to be used, need to be carried out.

The above said guidelines are issued in exercise of power conferred on this Court under Articles 141 and 142 of the Constitution of India. These would remain in force until modified by this Court or superseded by an appropriate legislation.

V Generally

1. The States shall make provision for seizure and confiscation of loudspeakers, amplifiers and such other equipments as are found to be creating noise beyond the permissible limits.

2. Rule 3 of the Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000 makes provision for specifying ambient air quality standards in respect of noise for different areas/zones, categorization of the areas for the purpose of implementation of noise standards, authorizing the authorities for enforcement and achievement of laid down standards. The Central Government/State Governments shall take steps for laying down such standards and notifying the authorities where it has not already been done.

Though, the matters are closed in consistently with the directions as above issued in public interest, there will be liberty of seeking further directions as and when required and, in particular, in the event of any difficulty arising in implementing the directions.

The CWP, CA and all pending IAs be treated as disposed of.

Before parting, we would like to place on record our deep appreciation of valuable assistance rendered by Shri Jitendra Sharma, Senior Advocate assisted by Shri Sandeep Narain, Advocate (and earlier by late Shri Pankaj Kalra, Advocate) who highlighted several relevant aspects of the issues before us and also helped in formulating the guidelines issued as above.

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New Delhi
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