

Poisonous Particles + Noise Nuisance = Death for Delhi

**Uncontrolled Lethal Dust and Noise Pollution
in India's Capital New Delhi**



A Report by Rakesh Raman of RMN Foundation September 2017

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REPORT SUMMARY

In the current phase of neo-industrialization, where the world is running faster than you think to embrace an economic model driven by hyper mechanization, people are ignoring their most formidable enemy that is constantly chasing them.

Enemy? Yes, enemy. And it is pollution – the most dangerous foe of humans in the modern world. You must know that pollution is claiming over 7 million lives every year while the number of pollution-linked deaths are increasing at a threatening pace. Careless industrialization, reckless urbanization, and undisciplined lifestyles are responsible for pollution-related diseases and deaths.

Today, your every step toward industrialization and every move toward urbanization are bringing this enemy closer to you and it is ready to devour you mercilessly. Governments world over are struggling to save their people from the cruel clutches of this invisible monster.

However, India is a peculiar case. With its cruel urbanization policies, the Indian government has become the first government in the world that is hell-bent to kill its own people and bring mass destruction in the country by damaging the environment and spreading pollution mercilessly.

This report reveals the worsening environmental situation in India's capital New Delhi because of increasing air pollution. Of late, the hazardous effects of pollution have exacerbated as the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India, has unleashed a scheme under the FAR (floor area ratio) construction policy.

The new scheme is being implemented through the office of the Lt. Governor of Delhi, which is the highest administrative authority in the city-state. The scheme allows inhabited group housing complexes of Delhi to extend their existing buildings by allowing individual flat owners to construct more rooms, balconies, etc. while ignoring the health and safety concerns of others who prefer to live in a clean, peaceful environment.

The ill-conceived FAR policy has led to a widespread building construction activity in all parts of Delhi – particularly in the group housing complexes

where nearly one-fifth of Delhi's 20 million people live. Obviously, this massive construction work is spreading lethal cement-dust and noise pollution in and around the sites where construction is happening.

The construction projects include the extension of existing buildings as well as redevelopment projects which will eventually affect the health of an estimated 10 million people in and around the city as the dust pollution will further contaminate the air leading to more dangerous air pollution.

As Delhi is already the world's most polluted city, the air in Delhi has an annual average of 122 µg/m³ of PM_{2.5} particles. That's 12.2 times the WHO safe level. This is an extremely dangerous pollution level and the FAR construction will add more pollution to the city's air.

While this construction is not required at all, the government officials have failed to understand the damaging effects of pollution on the environment as they have refused to withdraw the FAR policy despite numerous protests and representations by those citizens who want to live in a clean and pollution-free environment.

The report aims to sensitize all stakeholders particularly the Indian bureaucrats and politicians who lack awareness of the environment nuances and have blindly given permission for FAR construction in Delhi.

The report sheds light on various aspects of FAR construction and harmful pollution, and also highlights the environment, corruption, and lawlessness issues around FAR construction and its adverse impact on the local economy.

The focus of the report is on the occupied cooperative group housing societies of Delhi where hundreds of thousands of people are getting affected because of FAR construction and pollution.

The author of this report – Rakesh Raman – has been running mass awareness environment-protection campaigns since March 2017 in order to get the FAR construction stopped in Delhi. He has interacted with various government officials and hundreds of people in Delhi to inform them about the risks of extended FAR construction and pollution. Of late, he has formed the [Green Group of Dwarka](#) in order to intensify the environment-protection activities in Delhi.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The report covers the harmful effects of dust and noise pollution coming from the avoidable construction activity in Delhi's residential areas.
- The dust and noise pollution in Delhi is increasing as massive construction is happening under Indian government's new FAR (floor area ratio) construction policy.
- The pollution is affecting the health of hundreds of thousands of people - including men, women, children and even senior citizens.
- The government departments have refused to listen to people's complaints. The harsh FAR policy is depriving people of their fundamental right to live in a clean, pollution-free environment.
- With an utter disregard to the environment protection needs, the Government of India is breaking its own commitment to the global community, as India has ratified the Paris Agreement (on Climate Change).
- The FAR construction activity is illegal as it is depriving citizens of their right to pollution-free living guaranteed under the Article 21 of the Constitution of India.
- The police and law-enforcement agencies are reluctant to take action against the managing committees (MCs) of group housing societies carrying out construction because the MCs are supported by deep-pocketed builders and corrupt Indian bureaucrats and politicians.
- Various government departments in Delhi are so careless that they are ignoring the advice of specialized pollution-control agencies such as the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) which has warned them about the risks of extended construction and pollution.
- Pollution has become a major factor that is causing 'global warming' or Climate Change. As compared to the perils of environmental pollution that affect human health, the Climate Change brings mass

destruction with floods, droughts, hurricanes, tornadoes, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and tsunamis.

- Conservative estimates suggest that air pollution already causes 3,000 premature deaths in Delhi every year, the number of deaths will increase significantly if FAR construction continued in the city. While atmospheric / construction dust causes a whopping 38% of pollution, it will increase with the extended construction activity.
- The main factors responsible for releasing the FAR policy are bureaucratic naivety, political corruption, extreme lawlessness in Delhi's cooperative group housing societies, and lack of domain knowledge on environment in India.

TARGET GROUPS

The report targets the following departments, organizations, and officials in order to sensitize them about the Indian government-led pollution drive in the country.

It expects all the stakeholders including the global pollution-prevention groups to take appropriate actions to get the FAR-construction and pollution stopped in Delhi.

- Dedicated organizations such as United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the World Bank.
- Departments, Ministries, Pollution Control Boards, and officials of Delhi Government and the Government of India responsible to control pollution.
- Courts of India, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).
- Lawmakers including Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and Members of Parliament (MPs) in India.
- Trade associations including Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), The Associated Chambers of Commerce of India (ASSOCHAM), and the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM).
- Colleges and universities in India which are offering academic programs on environment.
- Citizens of Delhi and rest of India.

INHUMAN FLOOR AREA RATIO (FAR) CONSTRUCTION POLICY

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. The saying fits well for Delhi's naive politicians and bureaucrats who are hell-bent to kill the local citizens by spreading construction dust and pollution in every nook of the city.

The extended building construction which is happening under the government's cruel FAR (floor area ratio) rules is going to directly harm at least one million people who live in and around Delhi's cooperative group housing societies.

With this ill-conceived FAR policy, the Delhi government is using extended construction as a weapon of mass destruction (WMD) which will first torture people with the lethal dust and noise pollution and then finally kill them mercilessly.



Deadly dust and noise pollution is caused by illegal construction in a cooperative group housing society of Dwarka, New Delhi. Government has failed to control the corrupt managing committees (MCs) of housing societies.

The new FAR scheme allows inhabited group housing complexes of Delhi to extend their existing buildings by allowing individual flat owners to add

more rooms, balconies, etc. while ignoring the health and safety concerns of others who prefer to live in a clean, peaceful environment.

Today, it is a known fact that most politicians in India are illiterate and bureaucrats have no knowledge about any modern subject that is required to provide a smooth governance to the citizens. This fact is reflected in the worsening Human Development Index ([HDI](#)) of India.

Published by the United Nations Development Programme, HDI indicates the level of skills in a country and lets you know if people in that country are able to achieve their goals. Unfortunately, India falls at No. 131 in the global list of countries ranked on the basis of their HDI.



RMN Foundation school children demonstrating in New Delhi urging the Indian government to protect them from dust and noise pollution coming from FAR extended construction activity.

The governments in India fail to realize that in today's increasingly specialized and cut-throat world, an executive needs in-depth knowledge and extensive domain expertise to handle a particular department even in a small company. But it is highly unfortunate that people with no qualification or expertise become Presidents, Prime Ministers, ministers, and bureaucrats in India to manage highly complex domains of governance - such as the environment. That's why India continues to be a poor, [underdeveloped country](#).

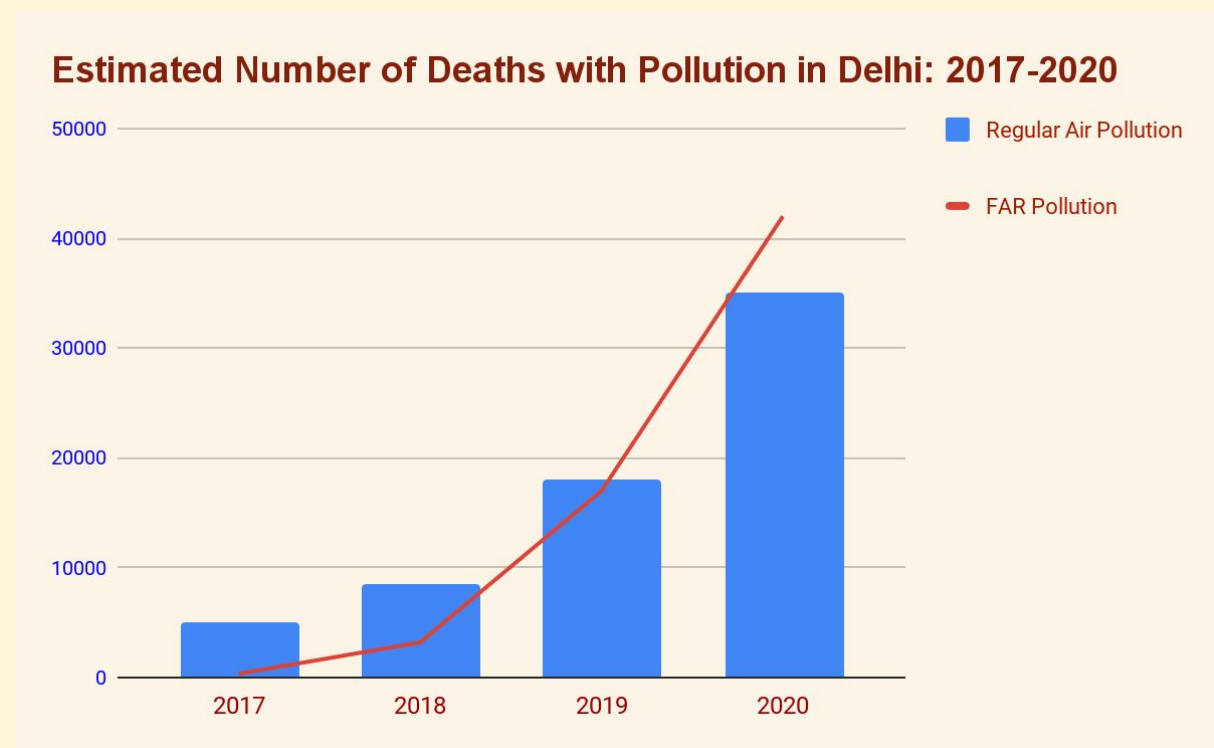
Now bureaucrats' lack of knowledge in the evolving environment domain is visible in their decision to allow FAR construction and pollution in Delhi.

With an utter disregard to the environment-protection needs, the Government of India in collusion with Delhi Government is breaking its own commitment to the global community.

The Union Cabinet of India chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi had given its approval to ratify the Paris Agreement (on Climate Change) on 2nd October 2016, the day of Gandhi Jayanti.

But unfortunately bureaucrats - who are allowing FAR-based pollution - do not understand the effect of pollution on Climate Change. They do not understand that the main cause of global warming or the human-led Climate Change is environmental pollution which contaminates the atmosphere with pollutants such as chemicals and energies.

If FAR-based construction is allowed by the government in Delhi, more local people will die with dust and noise pollution that the construction will generate.



The government departments responsible for allowing FAR construction and spreading pollution include the office of Delhi's Lt. Governor, chief minister office, Municipal Corporations of Delhi, Registrar Cooperative Societies (RCS) of Delhi Government, Delhi Police, Delhi Development Authority (DDA), Delhi Fire Service, Delhi Urban Art Commission, Ministry

of Housing and Urban Affairs, and the Ministry of Environment of Government of India.

Unfortunately, these departments are full of naive officials who lack knowledge to handle public complaints - in this case related to environment. As they are extremely inefficient and illiterate, Indian politicians and bureaucrats in these departments and ministries do not take decisions to resolve public problems. They either keep throwing written public complaints from one desk to another or simply ignore them while complainants keep suffering.

Consequently, the complainants are left with no other option but to approach the courts. As courts are always overcrowded, their decisions are either inordinately delayed or lack justice. Less said about the Indian courts, the better. Most Indian courts also lack knowledge to handle cases related to environment and pollution control as these are emerging subjects.

Governments and courts in India have failed to understand that pollution has become a major factor that is causing 'global warming' or Climate Change. As compared to the perils of environmental pollution that affect human health, the Climate Change brings mass destruction with floods, droughts, hurricanes, tornadoes, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and tsunamis.

What Is Climate Change?

Climate Change refers to the change in the distribution of weather patterns over a period of time – usually measured over decades to thousands of years. Climate Change is caused by natural factors as well as human activities.

Natural factors such as variations in solar radiation received by Earth, plate tectonics, and volcanic eruptions contribute to the change in global weather conditions. The human activities that cause Climate Change are referred to as ‘global warming’. In the modern environment science, the term ‘global warming’ is interchangeably used with Climate Change.

The main cause of global warming or the human-led Climate Change is environmental pollution which contaminates the atmosphere with pollutants such as chemicals and energies. Pollution, therefore, has become a major factor that is causing ‘global warming’ or Climate Change.

As compared to the perils of environmental pollution that affect human health, the Climate Change brings mass destruction with floods, droughts, hurricanes, tornadoes, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and tsunamis.

Climate Change, which is an emerging subject in the global debate on environment, has assumed greater significance after 2016 Paris Agreement on Climate Change or Paris Climate Agreement.

It is an agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that aims to deal with greenhouse gas emissions mitigation and overall environment protection, starting in the year 2020. As of August 2017, 195 UNFCCC members have signed the Agreement and out of them 160 have ratified it.

Recently, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres warned by saying that the world continues to witness Climate Change gather force. He expressed solidarity with all those suffering the devastating impacts of the unprecedented events seen in recent weeks –from Texas to Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Sierra Leone.

Mr. Guterres noted that the number of natural disasters has nearly quadrupled since 1970, with the US, followed by China and India experiencing the most since 1995. Incidentally, China and India - where the devastating effects of Climate Change are clearly visible - are among the most polluted countries. This shows the impact of pollution on Climate Change.

Last year alone, according to the UN, 24.2 million people were displaced by sudden-onset disasters - three times as many as by conflict and violence. Even before the current floods, preliminary reports for this year show that there have been 2,087 deaths from natural disasters.

It is true that scientists caution us about linking any single weather event with Climate Change. But they are equally clear that such extreme weather is precisely what their models predict will be the new normal of a warming world, the UN reports.

“With science forecasting a dramatic rise in both the frequency and severity of disasters, it is time to get serious about keeping ambition high on climate action - and on building resilience and reducing disaster risk,” Mr. Guterres suggested.

As India is already experiencing a trust deficit in the global arena because of its weak environmental-protection policies, the country's position will further get damaged if the government allowed the pollution-filled extended construction activity to continue in India's capital New Delhi.

Killing Effects of Pollution

Air pollution directly causes 3,000 premature deaths in Delhi every year. This is a very conservative estimate as most of pollution-related deaths are not recorded. The actual number of deaths is much higher.

The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham) has released an environment survey revealing that 5-10% of the national capital's workforce was sick due to respiratory problems - which is damaging the Indian economy.

Assocham also said air pollution is preventing workers from doing their jobs efficiently, which is affecting industrial productivity in India.

While increasing pollution will adversely impact tourism industry, most investors will be reluctant to invest in India.

Pollution kills 1.2 million Indians every year and costs the economy an estimated 3% of GDP in terms of loss in productivity, higher health care costs, etc.

Hundreds of thousands of people - particularly farmers - in India are always under the threat of environmental hazards such as floods and droughts caused by Climate Change.

There are interlinkages between greenhouse gases, Climate Change and air quality. Many air pollutants that are harmful to human health and ecosystems also contribute to Climate Change.

Atmospheric / construction dust causes a whopping 38% of pollution.

Apart from vehicular pollution, there are damaging thermal effects of dust on climate. Research reveals that dust-related atmospheric aerosol pollution has a hazardous effect on climate.

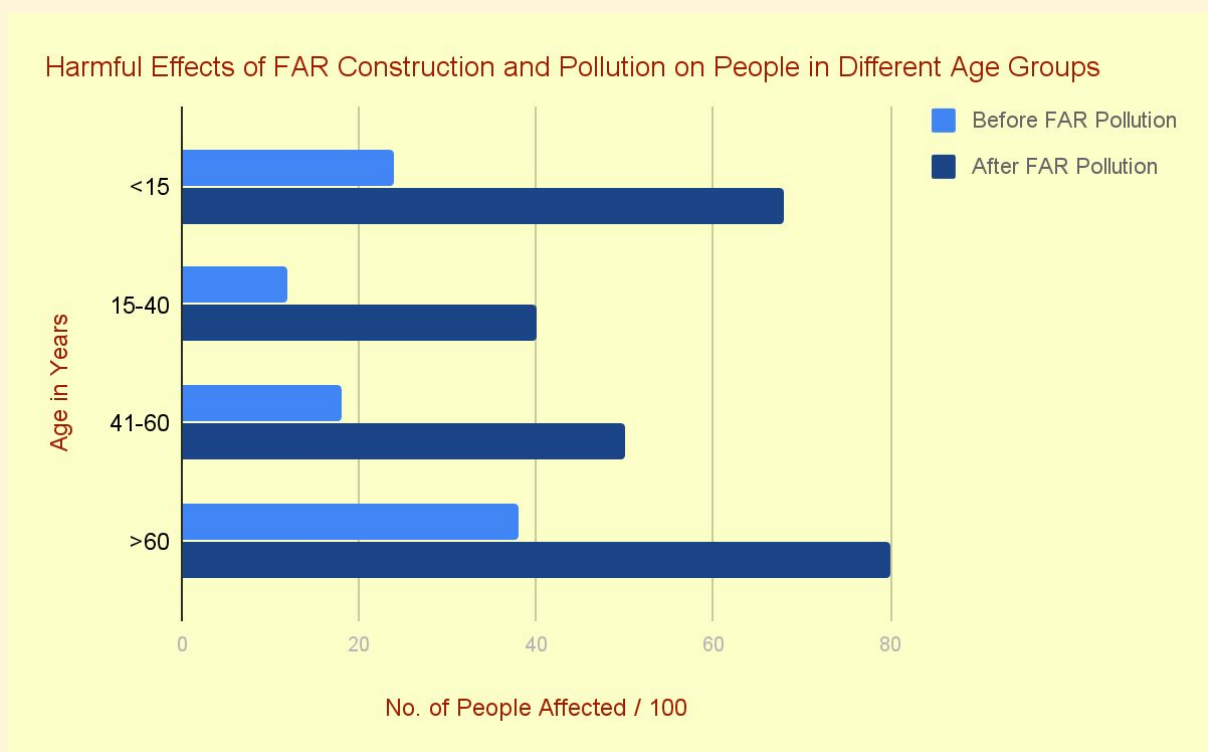
When dust particles get mixed with conventional air pollution, its lethality increases manifold causing more severe diseases and deaths.

EFFECTS OF POLLUTION FROM CONSTRUCTION

Although construction activities in the residential areas cause water pollution, dust pollution, noise pollution, and pollute the soil, this report focuses on the harmful effects of dust and noise on humans.

Increased Air Pollution

Construction increases the air pollution drastically in an area as the construction activities produce deadly smoke from diesel equipment, cement dust from demolition, and other polluted particles from use of toxic substances. When construction is carried out for longer periods of time (months or years) in housing complexes where people are living, it takes its toll on human health as they start suffering from various diseases. The effect of construction-related pollution is more harmful on children and older people because of their weaker immune systems.



Construction spreads PM_{10} particulate matter which is 10 micrometers or less in diameter. In comparison, the diameter of a human hair is 100 micrometers. That means, roughly 10 PM_{10} polluted particles can be placed on the width of a human hair. In other words, these particles are so small that these are easily inhalable and can penetrate deep into the lungs. The

conventional dust particles which are bigger in size are trapped in the human nose or mouth and therefore they do not affect the lungs. The PM₁₀ particulate matter coming from construction also increases the lethality of gases such as carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, and nitrogen oxide which pollute the air and contribute to Climate Change.

Although construction sites tend to take precautions to stop the spread of PM₁₀ or smaller particles, they are so small that their harmful effects on human health cannot be avoided. The construction dust which includes cement particles mixes with the diesel smoke in the air to pollute the entire atmosphere. When people inhale this toxic mixture, they immediately get affected and suffer from numerous respiratory ailments and cancer in many cases. The ailments – such as asthma, bronchitis, airway inflammation, coughing, and wheezing – are caused by high levels of dust pollution.

Effects of Noise Pollution

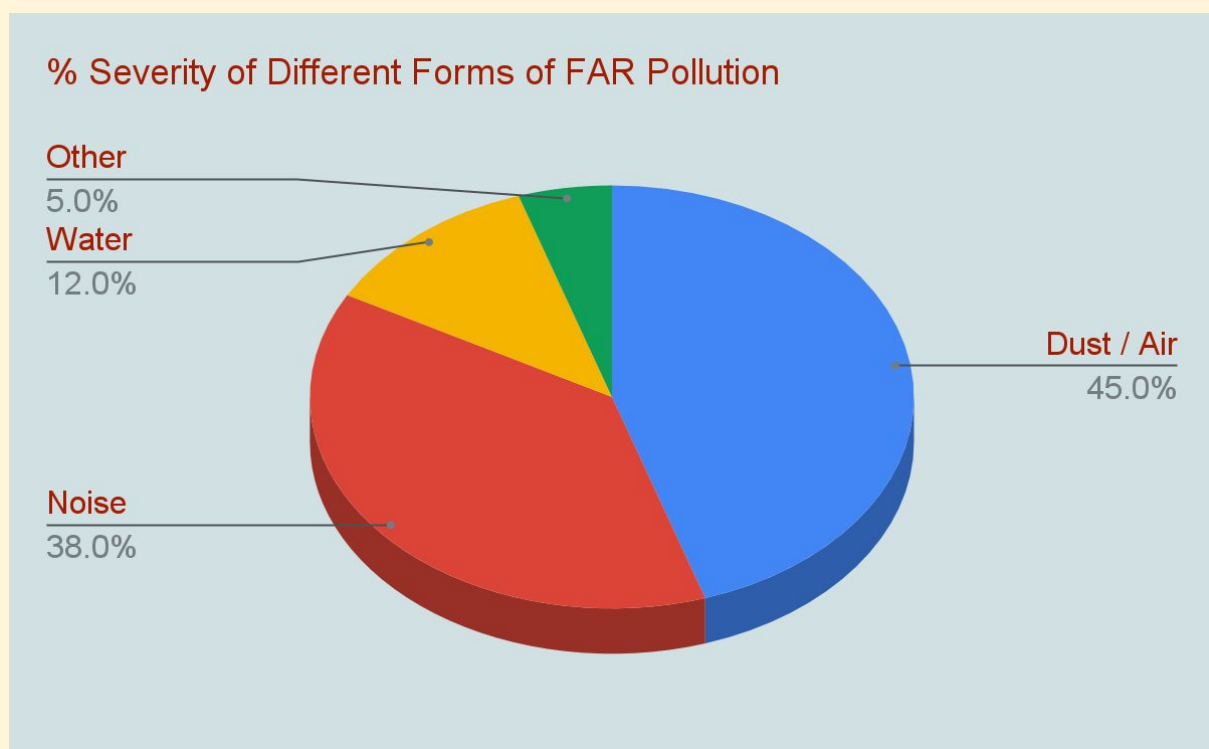
Construction sites produce abnormal amount of noise in which most people cannot live. As FAR construction is happening in occupied group housing societies, the noise pollution particularly affects children and senior citizens who stay at home. The disturbance from noise can be fatal for some senior citizens as many of them are under medical treatments that advise them to take proper rest at their homes.

The resonating noise from construction in walled housing complexes can cause health hazards including sleep disorders, increase in blood pressure, mental stress, tinnitus, and hearing loss among people – including children – living in group housing societies. High noise levels throughout the day in buildings undergoing construction can cause cardiovascular diseases among residents living in those buildings. The situation gets worse for senior citizens when they are not able to bear the health care costs for the increased physical disorders from such pollution.

According to Federal Highway Administration ([FHWA](#)) of the U.S. Department of Transportation, construction noise adversely affects people's quality of life. Noise pollution – which is forced on people in housing complexes – not only make them sick, but it also changes their behaviour as they develop a sense of hatred toward the people or firms responsible for avoidable construction.

Moreover, construction noise in a group housing complex can drastically impede people's need to communicate with others on telephones and even within a house. People will also find it difficult to hear important TV news and critical alerts on their mobile devices. The construction noise also disturbs students who have to study at their homes.

While the level of noise or the degree of loudness is measured in decibels (dB), zero decibel is the threshold level of hearing or the lowest sound level at which it is almost impossible to hear. A whisper at 20 dB is considered the lowest level of sound that can be heard by human ear. Research reveals that 80 dB sound level - which is persisting in most parts of Delhi because of vehicular traffic and blaring horns - has already crossed admissible limits. As the FAR construction sound is further increasing the noise in residential areas, people are not able to bear the pain of it.



Earlier, construction noise was considered a neighbourhood disturbance supposed to be handled by administrative agencies which are usually slow. Now, however, in a polluted city like New Delhi noise is an environmental problem that needs to be addressed quickly for which immediate police action is required to stop construction activity as and when it is reported to the police.

According to Section 2(a) of the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981, **noise is defined** as an 'air pollutant' and air pollution means any solid, liquid, or gaseous substance including noise present in the atmosphere in such concentration as may be or tend to be injurious to human beings or other living creatures or plants or property or environment. Therefore, noise pollution in occupied group housing complexes is a law & order problem which needs immediate police intervention to save the citizens.

Estimates suggest that the extended construction and building redevelopment projects in Delhi's Dwarka – which is said to be the largest residential suburb in Asia – alone are worth more than \$4 billion (Rs. 25,000 crore approximately). The value of such projects in the city of Delhi is estimated to be around \$50 billion while the construction activity will run for at least five more years – till 2022.

The builders and MCs of housing societies need various government permissions before starting the extended construction activity. As almost all the proposed or ongoing FAR extended construction projects violate various laws including the Unified Building Bye Laws (UBBL-2016), they should never get government clearances particularly from the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), Delhi Fire Service, and Delhi Urban Art Commission. However, DDA and other departments are clearing the projects, as residents claim that the corrupt MCs are [bribing the government officials](#) to get clearances illegally and start construction.

A huge part of this corruption money is expected to go to Indian bureaucrats and politicians who are allowing this illegal activity to happen while depriving citizens of their right to pollution-free living guaranteed under the Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

As most politicians in India are history-sheeters with serious criminal records, they use the corruption money to [win elections by bribing the voters](#) and tampering with electronic voting machines (EVMs).

Corruption is so rampant in India that a global anti-corruption group, Transparency International, has put [India's rank](#) for 2016 at 79 in a list of 176 countries that it has studied. In other words, India is more corrupt than 78 countries.

No government in India is willing to stop corruption because it has become the lifeblood of Indian bureaucrats and politicians. This fact is again visible in the FAR construction projects which are encouraging corruption in Delhi.

INCREASING LAWLESSNESS IN FAR PROJECTS

The police and law-enforcement agencies are reluctant to take action against the MCs of housing societies because they are supported by deep-pocketed builders and corrupt Indian bureaucrats and politicians. Various government departments in Delhi are so careless that they are ignoring the advice of specialized pollution-control agencies such as the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) which has warned them about the risks of extended construction and pollution.

In August 2017, DPCC [wrote a letter](#) to the Vice Chairman (DDA), Commissioner (South Delhi Municipal Corporation), Sub Divisional Magistrate (Dwarka, Delhi), and Delhi Police Commissioner to take action in order to stop extended construction and pollution. But all these departments have simply ignored the DPCC advice and pollution is increasing.

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) of India – established under India’s constitutional provision of Article 21 – has also observed that one of the major sources of air pollution is dust emission from construction activities, which must be stopped to avoid pollution-related diseases and deaths. But the corrupt government departments which are giving permissions for this avoidable FAR construction have even ignored the NGT directive.

The FAR construction is clearly unlawful because it defies many other government policies for environment protection. The Swachh Bharat Mission under India's Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD) envisages processing of 100% solid waste generated in cities / towns by 2nd October, 2019 as a key objective, which includes Construction & Demolition (C & D) wastes.

Unlike other rules addressing various key urban wastes, the C & D Waste Management Rules are made with the consideration that C & D is an environment issue rather than a mundane urban development subject. So, the C & D Waste Management Rules, 2016 are new rules that were notified on 29th March, 2016 by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).

As per Rule 3 (c) "construction and demolition waste" means the waste comprising building materials, debris, and rubble resulting from construction, remodeling, repair, and demolition of any civil structure.

In a report released in March 2017, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) [issued various guidelines](#) on the environmental management of Construction & Demolition (C & D) wastes.

The objective of the CPCB guidelines is to minimize the impact of construction and demolition on the environment and achieve the [Swachh Bharat Mission](#) targets of processing 100% solid waste generated by C & D activities. However, the FAR construction allowed by the MoUD is an impediment in the path of achieving the environment-protection goals set by the Swachh Bharat Mission and the MoEF&CC through CPCB. This is a typical case in the Indian government when the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing.

The FAR construction and demolition projects – which are absolutely avoidable – will generate massive amounts of solid waste to damage the environment and spread pollution in all parts of Delhi. If allowed, these FAR construction projects will violate the government's own environment-protection laws that also aim to minimize the harmful effects of pollution on Climate Change.

Effects of Dust and Noise Pollution	
On Children	Diseases include irritation in eyes, skin rashes, coughing, sneezing, hayfever, asthma attacks, and amnesia. Lack of interest in studies.
On Young Adults	Respiratory diseases, headache, tiredness, irritation, lack of focus, low productivity.
On Senior Citizens	Ailments such as asthma, bronchitis, airway inflammation, coughing, and wheezing. Higher health care costs.

Although FAR construction with pollution will affect all men, women, and children, it is extremely [harmful to senior citizens](#) (people above 60 years of age) because of their weaker immune systems. They will not be able to recover from ailments – such as asthma, bronchitis, airway inflammation, coughing, and wheezing – caused by high levels of dust pollution.

Similarly, the noise pollution from the construction activity will constantly disturb the senior citizens most of whom stay at home as they are undergoing medical treatments for various ailments. The situation will get worse for them when they will not be able to bear the health care costs for the increased physical disorders from such pollution. Moreover, they cannot spend money on the extravagant repairs or extended construction work in their buildings.

As FAR construction in housing societies will happen in different parts of Delhi, nearly 5 million senior citizens are virtually facing a painful death. And there is no government existing in Delhi that cares for these harmed senior citizens. All [their requests](#) to the Delhi Government and the Government of India to save them from harmful dust and noise pollution have been falling on deaf ears.



Senior citizens in a group housing society of Delhi urge the government to save them from dust and noise pollution of FAR extended construction activity.

Although the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007 – initiated by Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India – is supposed to provide “simple, speedy and inexpensive mechanism for the protection of life and property of the older persons,” it is a completely ineffective piece of legislation. The senior citizens say they have been running from pillar to post to get extended construction stopped in group housing societies, but the authorities have refused to listen to them.

CRIMINALITY IN GROUP HOUSING SOCIETIES

The concerned government departments and the managing committees (MCs) of group housing societies offer an invalid argument that if majority of the members in a Society supports extended construction decision, the other residents will have to accept it. An RTI (Right to Information) response in September 2017 from DDA also stated that “FAR, if available, is permissible after the consent from the MC and majority of society members in GBM.”

How is that possible? If the decision of the majority of members is driven by greed and not by need, it cannot be imposed on others who want to live peacefully in a harmless environment. As MCs contend that the majority of members support them in General Body Meetings (GBMs), their majority argument is meaningless. By this weird logic, if majority of the members say that they should kill others, will the MC of a Society kill the innocent people? The majority rule cannot apply in such cases where even one person's life is at risk.

Moreover, most MCs of group housing societies are [controlled by criminals](#) who win the vote and support of other law-breaking residents / members in elections and GBMs by allowing them many illegal activities such as [unauthorized car parking](#) inside the Society buildings, illegal alterations in individual flats, and so on. This is a kind of corruption and bribe to get others' support.

Thus, these MCs get even the illegal decisions (such as the FAR-based extended construction) approved in GBMs - which are in fact bogus meetings. Obviously, the GBM decisions cannot be imposed on other members. But the Delhi Government departments such as the DDA and the office of Registrar Cooperative Societies (RCS) have refused to acknowledge this fact and they are accepting the fraudulent decisions taken by MCs in bogus GBMs. The government fails to understand that the GBMs in cooperative group housing societies have lost their relevance.

Government also fails to understand that adding more rooms to existing rooms in a flat cannot be a need - particularly when most residents have very small families. It will also widen the rich-poor gap in a country where millions of people are still homeless and some rich are making more rooms which they do not need.

The decision for harmful construction of MCs can be construed as an attempt to murder, as the construction-related pollution, disturbance, and [possible accidents](#) can kill innocent human beings.



Illegal car parking at a cooperative group housing society in Dwarka, New Delhi. Corrupt MCs allow such unlawful acts to members in order to win their support in elections and GBMs. Government has no control on such MCs.

The different Society MCs also say that the government rules allow such extended construction. But, in fact, these rules are environmentally hazardous and will harm the health and lives of people living in a Society building. No government in the world can make any rule that is aimed to kill its own citizens.

Will the Delhi / Indian government torture and kill its own people? Maybe - because India has no respect for human rights. In a [report released](#) in September 2017, United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, said that India is among those countries where human rights situation is "Darker and Dangerous." And this dark situation is visible in the government's FAR policy which is attacking citizens' fundamental human right to live in a clean and peaceful environment.

FAR RULES FOR OCCUPIED HOUSING SOCIETIES

The idea of cooperative societies has its origins in Mahatma Gandhi's thinking of collective development in the society by forming small groups of contributors in different spheres of human activity.

While Mahatma Gandhi believed that cooperative societies are ideally suited organizations for development in the villages, he floated the 'Gram Swaraj' concept. In the post-independence era, however, India replicated Gandhi's cooperative model in urban localities also.

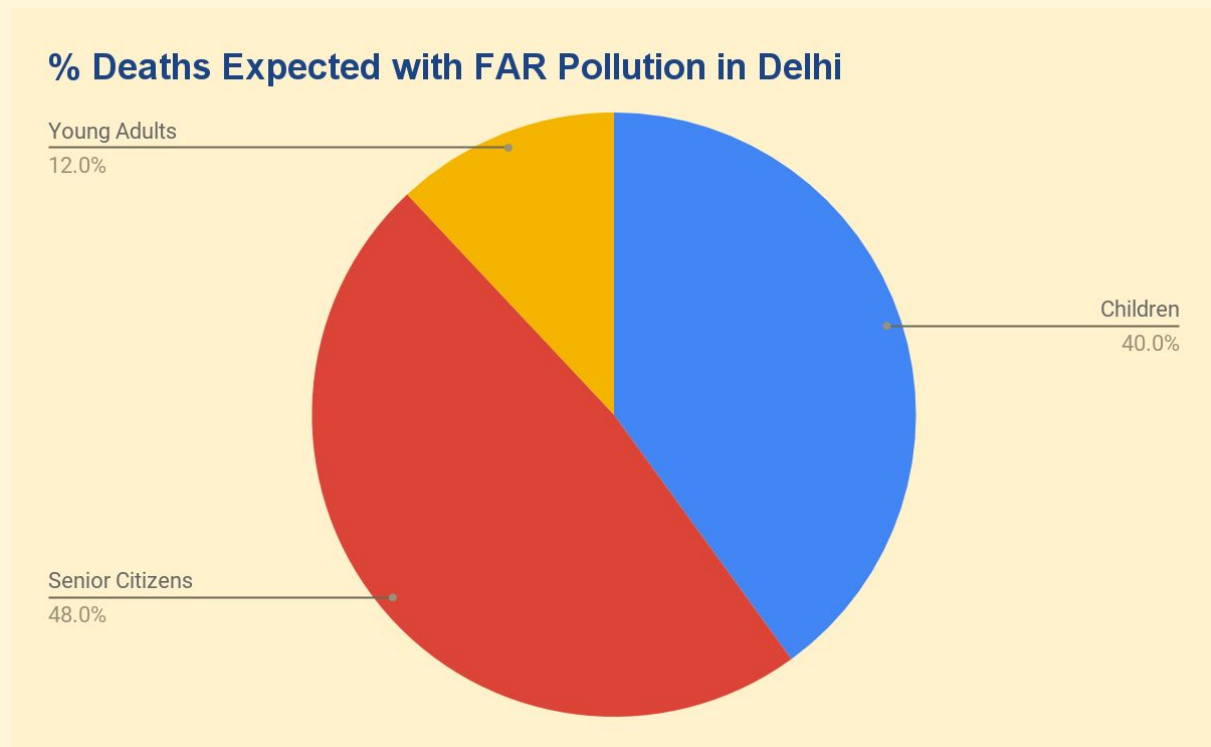
As a result, the government empowered cooperative societies so they could become change agents in the socio-economic development of the country. Cooperative housing societies are supposed to be part of the larger cooperative movement in India.

But Mahatma Gandhi must be spinning in his grave looking at the sorry state of affairs in India's housing societies – particularly in Delhi. They have become **dens of corruption** under the mis(management) of management committee (MC) members, while the Delhi Government has no control on them. FAR construction is an example of increasing corruption in cooperative group housing societies of Delhi.

As their eyes are on making easy money from high-value construction projects, the MCs of group housing societies are misleading the residents by saying that government has allowed extended construction. But earlier the government had clearly stated that extended construction under floor area ratio (FAR) rules is not allowed in already constructed and occupied group housing societies.

A **government notification** from the office of the Lt. Governor of Delhi stated that "it has been decided in public interest that increased FAR should not be permitted in respect of already constructed and occupied CGHS (cooperative group housing societies)." Many MCs baselessly argue that it is an old notification. But the point is that this rule was made keeping in view the "public interest" because extended construction will be harmful in occupied housing complexes. Then how can the "public interest" concern suddenly change after a couple of years?

Moreover, the government's oblique permission to allow extended construction in the existing upmarket flats is not addressing any housing needs in the country where millions of people are still homeless. People who prefer clean environment suggest that the government should only focus on addressing the housing needs of homeless poor by building new low-cost houses for them. The affluent property owners should not be allowed to expand their swanky flats because such an expansion will be risky for people living in the buildings.



With these facts, they urge the Delhi Government and the Government of India to immediately issue clear instructions to stop the extended construction activity at least in the group housing societies of Delhi. If the avoidable construction is carried out in the group housing complexes where people – men, women, and children – are living, it will deprive them of their right to live in a clean environment.

However, the politicians and bureaucrats are working in a totally irresponsible manner as they are not taking any steps to stop construction-related dust and noise pollution. If any government exists in Delhi and it wants to save its own people, it must immediately stop FAR construction in group housing societies. The government must clarify its stand on extended construction through advertisements in leading newspapers and information on government's own websites.

Moreover, the Delhi government must also overhaul the Cooperative Societies Rules so that the MCs should be allowed to use the majority vote only for simple, non-financial decisions, and not to impose their ill will on others, as is happening in the FAR construction projects. In these projects, massive corruption is happening in the name of construction.



Children demonstrating in the streets of New Delhi so that the Indian government should protect them from dust and noise pollution coming from FAR extended construction.

According to the new [Vigilance Manual](#) 2017 of India's top anti-corruption organization Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), corruption is manifested in various forms such as bribery, nepotism, willful action or willful inaction to benefit someone or to deny benefit to someone known or unknown. It also states that corruption includes cases of favoritism and failure to follow laid down processes leading to unintended benefit to someone or denial of benefit to the deserving.

Going by this explanation of corruption, most government officials and MC members of cooperative group housing societies are corrupt as they fail to follow the law and thus deprive the residents of their fundamental rights that they deserve to enjoy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to control the damage done by FAR construction and to prevent the future hazards, the Delhi Government and the Government of India must do the following:

- Announce publicly that extended construction under the FAR rules is not permitted in occupied cooperative group housing societies of Delhi.
- Demolish the extended construction already done in the housing societies. The individual MC members must be asked to pay the demolition costs with penalties.
- Criminal cases must be filed against the housing societies' MC members who have been pursuing FAR construction projects because this construction is spreading pollution, damaging the environment, and putting many people's lives to risk.
- The DDA officials who have been giving clearances for FAR projects must be suspended and official inquiries must be initiated against them.
- Similarly, the RCS officials - who have failed to regulate the cooperative group housing societies despite numerous complaints from the members - must be suspended and official inquiries must be initiated against them.
- Delhi Police must be directed to quickly act on pollution-related complaints in occupied group housing complexes, as pollution is a law & order problem which needs immediate police intervention to save the citizens.
- All the officials in government departments responsible for environment protection must be provided comprehensive training to handle evolving environment issues.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rakesh Raman is a government's National award-winning journalist and social activist. Besides working at senior editorial positions with India's leading media companies, he had been writing an edit-page column for The Financial Express newspaper.

Now, for the past about 7 years, he has been running his own global news services on different subjects. As a journalist, he has been regularly writing dozens of articles about corruption in India and abroad. And his work against corruption has been extensively covered by the leading newspapers of the country.

Among other top assignments, Rakesh had been associated with the United Nations (UN) through United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) as a digital media expert to help businesses use technology for brand marketing and business development.

These days, along with his editorial work, he runs a free school for poor children in the J.J. Colony of Sector 3, Dwarka, Delhi - under his NGO - RMN Foundation. He also has formed a [Green Group of Dwarka](#) for environment protection and to save the environment from air pollution, dust pollution, noise pollution, water pollution, etc. in order to minimize the effect of pollution on Climate Change. The Group's activities cover the entire city of Delhi.

Contact

Rakesh Raman

Founder

[RMN Foundation](#)

463, DPS Apts., Plot No. 16, Sector 4

Dwarka, Phase I, New Delhi 110 078

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