

# Turn off the noise from your home

## Acoustic interior designing can restrict sound and give the much-needed relief from the cacophony around

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**A**T a time when houses are becoming smaller due to space crunch, a peaceful environment would be difficult to imagine. People have become accustomed to hearing children playing outside or vehicles honking just outside their houses. Building a soundproof house, like a studio, would appear to be a joke. But if you get something on your wall that can restrict the sound and is easy on your pocket, then it might interest you.

Called acoustic interior designing, the concept is fast catching up in the world of interior designing. Recently, the Swedish company, Offecct, said it was focusing on acoustic design. According to the company, in contemporary architecture, spaces are often created in hard materials like glass, concrete and wood, which can lead to high sound volumes and problems with acoustics. After its sound wave panel collection, the company gave some international designers the task of designing their own panels. The panels are flexible, create artistic patterns and have some of the best noise-

reducing capabilities.

Talking about the Indian scenario, Himanshu Kumar, managing director of HKMT (Hemant Kumar Mini Theatres) says, "The level of awareness in India about acoustics or noise control is dismal. It would not be wrong to say that awareness about this science of acoustics has just germinated in India. It would be long before the roots spread wider and deeper."

Venkat Subramanian, manag-

ing director, Saint-Gobain Gyproc India that recently launched Ecophon - a new range of acoustic solutions for ceilings and wall panels, agrees that the concept is still alien in India. Ecophon provides high levels of acoustic performance with noise reduction coefficient (NRC) ranging from 0.80 to 1.00 (that is 80 per cent to 100 per cent sound absorption).

Kumar adds that the lasers were invented for medical use

and ended up in being used in CD players and other entertainment devices. Similarly, acoustics entered peoples' homes for home theatres, which were also rare. But as the awareness increases among the architects and allied professionals and consumers realise the hazards of noise pollution, acoustics is drawing attention and finding its way into homes.

The Ecophon range of soft felt (glass wool) based tiles are

preferred worldwide for grid ceilings and wall panels because they give very high acoustic performance. Additionally, they are lighter and have better aesthetic appeal than mineral fibre tiles. At present, the Indian market mainly uses low acoustic performance mineral fibre tiles in the NRC range of 0.50 - 0.70 (50 per cent to 70 per cent sound absorption). Ecophon solutions are available in a variety of edge designs for concealed fixing or visible grid for direct fixing. It enhances the overall appearance of edge design of the ceiling and enables different requirements for detachability and access to installations in the ceiling void.

"These walls can be recycled and the energy consumed in fixing these is much lower than the usual designs," says Subramanian. But how do you do this to an existing room? Subramanian says the effect on a block will not be that good as it would be on a planned wall. While making a wall, the sound proof material is retro fed in the false wall. Kumar adds that people mistake sound control with soundproofing, which, in fact is just one part of the total solution. The surfaces

of the walls, ceilings and floors are made to absorb sound selectively to cut reverberations, enhancing the sound quality as it was intended. Of course, design in terms of surface textures, lighting, special effects are an integral part of the change.

The cost establishing such rooms would no doubt be high. Kumar says all these installations are custom-designed as per the need and the budget of the client and depend on how much he wants. Cost also depends on the room size and hence can start from as low as Rs 10,00,000.

The amount is too high to incorporate the feature in our homes. Kumar says home theatres are over. People want to mix work with entertainment. He says, "Our high-definition multi-media rooms are much more than just 5-8 speakers, projector, and screen. With this set up, you can do much more than just watch movies. Bring your boardroom home, do video-conference, play games on the playstation and convert the same room into a discotheque. All these features will be enough for you to get one for yourself."



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