

Police hatch a sly plan to quiet India's car horns

NEW DELHI

BY JEFFREY GETTLEMAN

When driving in India, you basically need a ring of eyeballs around your head to see what's coming.

Three-wheeled rickshaws whirl out of traffic circles straight at you, packs of stray dogs dash into the road, huge buses lurch up from behind.

In this world, the car horn is a survival tool and a weapon. People use them constantly — to berate, to warn and especially to get sluggish drivers to move.

But in Mumbai it's gotten to be too much. Honking in traffic has become such a problem, creating so much noise, that the city's police have hatched a plan.

At certain vital intersections, they installed slightly sinister devices that detect horn noise. When people honked at red lights, the lights stayed red. The police put up a few signs — "Honk More Wait More" — but clearly not everyone understood what was happening.

The police filmed all this, using

sweepy drone shots and a little Bollywood magic. They posted a video on social media last week. Instantly, it went viral.

The video shows people getting out of cars with confused looks on their faces, some yelling at each other to stop hitting the horns, kids on the sidewalk cracking up and cops exchanging a happy hand slap.

"This is what we wanted to tell them: Honking or making noise doesn't move the traffic," explained Pranaya Ashok, a Mumbai police spokesman. "The traffic takes its own time to move, O.K.?"

The exercise, done in November and December, was a trial run, and police bosses are discussing how they can implement it across the city. Officials in several other places now want to rig their traffic lights with honking meters, too.

According to an old saying in India, to drive well all you need are four simple things: a good car, good eyes, good luck and a good horn.

But now, maybe you just need three.

Hari Kumar contributed reporting.



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A traffic jam in Mumbai in 2018. Driving in the city, which is home to an estimated 20 million people, can be an exercise in endurance and luck.