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Walkability Dissemination Held in Pokhara



By Amita Thapa Magar

In coordination with Clean Air Network Nepal and Clean Energy Nepal, LI BIRD organized a Walkability Dissemination program in Pokhara. The main objective of the program was to share the results of the Walkability survey which was conducted in September 2011. The program was organized in LI BIRD Office where 17 participants marked their presence. Two presentations: Walkability Results Dissemination and Sustainable Urban Transport were presented in the program.

Ms. Reshna Udas, Project Officer LI BIRD welcomed all the participants and briefed about the objective of the program. This was followed by the presentations from Ms. Amita Thapa Magar and Mr. Prashanta Khanal.

Ms. Magar shared the results of the walkability survey in her presentation. The walkability index for Pokhara is 197 compared to Kathmandu (559) and Bhaktapur (309). A lower ranking index suggests that a city is more

walkable. She also discussed about the top priorities voiced by the pedestrians' in terms of pedestrian facilities. Top three priorities came out as: 1) Wide, leveled and clean footpaths, 2) Reduced and slow traffic on roads and 3) Removal of obstructions/ parking from footpaths.

Lack of public awareness on the importance of pedestrians' safety, inadequate polices and pedestrian friendly guidelines and infrastructures, lack of coordination among the authorities, insufficient budget, poor urbanization plan and weak agency implementation were identified as barriers in improving the pedestrians' facilities in the city by different stakeholders.

Recommendations were also presented including specific ones. A strong suggestion on efforts to promote, develop and brand Pokhara as a Walkable City was perceived and a need of massive mass awareness programs with active participation of the community was advised.

Meanwhile, Mr. Khanal presented about elements of sustainable urban transportation. In his presentation, Mr. Khanal discussed about the best practices from around the world and how they are taking step towards sustainable mobility. He pointed how Pokhara, as a sizeable city, could lead in promoting Non Motor Transport system and brand for tourism.

Er. Indra Prasad Poudel, Road Department, Western Road Division Office showed his commitment to push for including the pedestrians' concerns and budget for side walk in the upcoming fiscal year plan.

After the program, a short meeting was held with Environment Officer from Pokhara Sub Metropolitan City, Mr. Khem Bhandari. The results of Walkability Survey were briefed to him and also discussions were made on how Municipality could work in improving pedestrians' infrastructures and facilities in Pokhara.

Source: <http://www.cen.org.np/ Mar 12, 2012>

Petrol, Diesel, Kerosene Dear by Rs 4 Per Liter

Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) on Tuesday raised prices of major petroleum products making petrol, diesel and kerosene expensive by Rs 4 per liter each.

The hike, which came with immediate effect, has necessitated consumers to pay Rs 120 per liter of petrol and Rs 89 per liter of diesel and kerosene in the Kathmandu Valley.

The corporation, however, left the prices of liquefied petroleum gas, the popular household fuel, unchanged at Rs 1,415 per cylinder (14.2 kgs), even though the product is causing a loss of Rs 676.08 million every month.

"The raise was a compulsion, in the absence of due adjustment of retail prices in line with the import rates, we were suffering a loss of over Rs 1.34 billion each month," said NOC Spokesperson. Following the hike NOC estimates its loss for this month will shrink to Rs 1.02 billion.

With the fresh hike, consumers in Nepal have braved 17 percent rise in prices of petrol over the span of eight-and-a-half months of this fiscal year. Likewise, diesel, largely regarded as industrial fuel, and

kerosene too has become expensive by around 19 percent during the period.

Price of LPG, which is largely consumed by politically active urban consumers, on the other hand, has gone up by just around 8 percent.

Such pricing decision, meanwhile, has widened gap between LPG and kerosene, making kerosene - previously known as poor's fuel - expensive by Rs 32 per liter. At present retail rate, each liter of LPG costs consumers Rs 57, whereas kerosene costs Rs 89.

"But who's bothered about how much low income families that cannot even afford one time investment of around Rs 5,000 (required to install LPG-based cooking system) or people in rural hinterland using fossil fuel just to light lamp are paying for the fuel? With fewer leaders living in rural Nepal, our politics has turned urban-centric and leaders feel obliged to politically active urban consumers, even though they can afford the price," said an official at Ministry of Commerce and Supplies (MoCS).

NOC has been consistently raising the

prices of kerosene after MoCS chose easy way of checking fuel adulteration, and decided to fix kerosene prices at par with diesel instead of taking other stringent steps to control anomalies in the market. But this smooth operation on kerosene pricing has come at a cost of loss coming from LPG business, 40 percent which is consumed by commercial consumers like hotels, restaurants, industries and automotive sector.

Currently, NOC is suffering a loss of Rs 563.40 on each cylinder of gas, no matter whether it is consumed by general public or industries. Despite the latest hike, the corporation is still suffering a loss of Rs 10.52 per liter of diesel.

On petrol and kerosene, however, the corporation is earning a profit of Rs 3.77 and Rs 4.88 per liter respectively. It is also earning profit of about Rs 20 on a liter of aviation fuel sold to domestic flights and Rs 25.25 per liter of aviation fuel sold to international flights.

Source: <http://myrepublica.com> March 27, 2012

KMC to Build Underground Parking with ADB's Support

By Arjun Poudel

In a bid to do away with haphazard parking, the Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) is preparing to construct underground parking lots at city centers.

The KMC also has plans to renovate and expand some existing parking lots to accommodate the increasing number of vehicles.

"We are in the final stage of hiring a consultant to build the parking lots at Ratna Park and Lainchour," Executive Director of KMC, Kedar Bahadur Adhikari, said.

The largest underground parking will span from Mahankal Mandir to Sahid Gate, covering an area of 10,500 sq meters. Similarly, another underground parking will be built in the premises of Social Welfare council.

According to Adhikari, the parking spaces will be constructed under the technical assistance of the Asian Development Bank

(ADB). The ADB had recommended to KMC to develop new parking lots in the city for easing traffic congestion. The parking lots would be built as part of 'Kathmandu Sustainable Urban Transport Project', said Adhikari.

The messy parking in city centers has been a major challenge for traffic management. Increasingly, two wheelers and cars are being parked by their owners along the roads and pavements in main city areas. "Even pedestrians are having troubles walking freely due to messy parking."

Chief of Department of Urban Development of KMC, Devendra Dangol said that the parking spaces will be constructed under Public Private Partnership model. "The private sectors will be allowed to operate the parking lots for certain period in view of their contribution in the construction," Dongol said.

He said that the Ministry for Physical Plan-

ning and Works has already approved the proposal for the construction of underground parking. After the construction of underground parking, the KMC will not allow to park vehicles in major business hubs like Sundhara, New Road and Bhotahiti.

Likewise, the metropolis has also planned to renovate existing parking lots around core city area. The KMC plans to renovate parking lot in front of Employees' Provident Fund. Similarly, the office also said that parking lots around Bir hospital, Tebahal, Khichapokhari, Sundhara and Jyatha would also be renovated.

Meanwhile, the ADB has also provided financial assistance to KMC for building pavements in core city areas. "ADB is also supporting us to build sidewalks and put railings along the main roads," said Dongol.

Source: <http://www.myrepublica.com/> March 31, 2012

Fresh Air, Fresh Lack of Kathmandu Valley

By Zhou Shengping

Citizens in the Nepali capital Kathmandu, torched by lasting four-month fuel crisis and an unending power outage, recently find themselves surrounded by increasingly deteriorating air, a new inextricable labyrinth.

It is not easy to go out for a blow in Kathmandu where the spring wind often blows particle of dust around pedestrians, plastic bags billowing in the breeze. Many people including motorcycle drivers have to wear anti-dust mask, a must even for some who run for exercise in the early morning.

Kathmandu Valley surrounded by four mountains like a bowl, however, refuses to be being made into the whipping boy for the air pollution.

Road expansion drive launched by the government about half a year ago to ease traffic

congestion in the Valley couldn't be a more obvious promoter. Many structures were pulled down, dozens of trees chopped down and some green spaces demolished during the road widening.

The chance of finding a lung in dry season is slim in the 50 km- square valley which has become more crowded and more polluted due to urban settlements extremely popular in this landlocked nation and continually encroaching on the realm of fresh air.

Strolling about in a park, a common enjoyment for citizens in many other countries' cities, is a luxury in the Valley with only four major parks. They look lethargic, sucking too much exhaust gas.

The Kathmandu Metropolitan City authority is reportedly planning to better the prevailing situation of those parks in absence of proper care and maintenance. But, to keep

the air quality of the smokey valley at bay, there are more urgent things to do than to improve the very limited green spaces.

Stopping unnecessarily and avoidable burning is a tangible way on tap. Man and woman on the street in Nepal like to burn something, which is sowing dragon's teeth. They burn wood to keep warm or to cook. They burn garbage to keep clean or just for pleasure. Farmers burn off the fields. Protesters burn up tyres. Burning permeates their everyday life so commonly that smoke abatement becomes difficulty on the bowl-like landform.

Don not forget scientists' golden saying -- Only a limited amount air is forever available to us, the more you burn, the more you replace good air with bad.

Source: <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english> March 20, 2012

Air Pollution 'Will Become Bigger Global Killer than Dirty Water'

OECD report says pollution will become biggest cause of premature death, killing an estimated 3.6 million people a year by 2050

By Fiona Harvey

Urban air pollution is set to become the biggest environmental cause of premature death in the coming decades, overtaking even such mass killers as poor sanitation and a lack of clean drinking water, according to a new report.

Both developed and developing countries will be hit, and by 2050, there could be 3.6 million premature deaths a year from exposure to particulate matter, most of them in China and India. But rich countries will suffer worse effects from exposure to ground-level ozone, because of their ageing populations – older people are more susceptible.

The warning comes in a new report from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which is a study of the global environmental outlook until 2050. The report found four key areas that are of most concern – climate change, loss of biodiversity, water and the health impacts of pollution.

If current policies are allowed to carry on, the world will far exceed the levels of

greenhouse gas emissions that scientists say are safe, the report found. "I call it the surrender scenario – where we would be if governments do nothing more than what they have pledged already?" said Simon Upton, environment director at the OECD. "But it could be even worse than that, we've found."

The report said that global greenhouse gas emissions could increase by as much as half, as energy demand rises strongly, if countries fail to use cleaner forms of energy. Water demand is also likely to rise by more than half, and by 2050 as much as 40% of the global population is likely to be living in areas under severe water stress. Groundwater depletion would become the biggest threat to agriculture and to urban water supplies, while pollution from sewage and waste water – including chemicals used in cleaning – will put further strain on supplies.

However, the OECD study also said that there are some actions that governments can take quickly to tackle some of the key problems. For instance, many governments treat diesel fuel for vehicles differently than petrol for tax purposes, with tax breaks that encourage the take-up of diesel. But although diesel vehicle fuel produces lower greenhouse gas emissions than petrol, it is far worse for spewing out small particulate matter, which is bad

for urban pollution. "In environmental terms, there is no reason to give diesel tax breaks over petrol," said Upton.

Governments could also remove other environmentally harmful subsidies, such as fossil fuel subsidies and subsidies for water that encourage irresponsible use of the resource. Biofuels are another potential danger area, because although they can emit less carbon than conventional fossil fuels, they also contribute to reducing biodiversity and put further strains on water use, so governments should consider carefully whether to go down the biofuels road, Upton warned.

Upton said that if governments took action now, and developed long-term views of these environmental problems, it would give them a much greater chance of avoiding the worst outcomes. "The key thing is that these four biggest problems are interconnected – biodiversity is affected by climate change and land use, water is linked to health problems, for instance. You can't solve any one of these in isolation. So to be effective, governments have to focus on all of these four and look very closely at the connections between them," he said.

Source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/> March 15, 2012

CSE Workshop: 'Our Right of Way: Walk and Cycle'

CSE's clean air and urban mobility team organized a workshop 'Our Right of Way: Walk and Cycle' in New Delhi on March 22, 2012.

This discussion forum included participants from all the key organisations, stakeholders, civil society representatives, policy makers, bicycle industries, cycle clubs and regulators. All witnessed the different source of knowledge at one go from different stakeholders. Several issues from different cities and countries were shared which included experiences from Sri Lanka, Chile, Netherlands, Nepal, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Delhi and Punjab.

The workshop discussed how safe our cities

can be built around walking and cycling to combat pollution, and congestion. Several issues were discussed according to the expertise: some shared the impediments faced while walking and cycling, few had ideas on designing and planning infrastructure, while some of them shared their personal experiences and all put forth their opinions. The forum supported that this sustainable mode of transport must be recognized as a key mode of transport in our cities and the users be given their right of safe commuting on all roads.

The way ahead would be to bring some changes and promote NMT and bringing the

stakeholders and cycling clubs together to have a positive outcome.

Source: <http://www.cseindia.org/> March 23, 2012

Prashanta Khanal from Clean Air Network Nepal participated in the workshop. He presented results of walkability study done in three cities of Nepal: Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Pokhara. He also shared the best practices/initiatives in three cities to promote walkability.

London to Ban 2,600 Old Black Cabs to Clean Up the Capital's Air

London's taxi regulators are to withdraw 2,600 ageing black cabs in an attempt to reduce air pollution in the capital.

No black cab over 15-years-old will be licensed by the Taxi and Private Hire Office – taking off the road 2,600 taxis this year. Now Mercedes-Benz has launched an initiative to help London cabbies keep the city moving and at the same time delivering cleaner air.

Following discussions between Transport for London and Mercedes-Benz the new scheme will see cab drivers offered a £1,500 discount

off the purchase price of a new low-emission Vito Euro 5 taxi in exchange for the driver agreeing to carry Mercedes-Benz advertising for 18 months.

John Mason, TfL's Director of Taxi and Private Hire, said: "London's cabbies are rightly regarded as the best in the world and I know from my discussions with the trade that they want to play their part in making the capital a clean, green city.

"Age limits were introduced at the start of this year and the oldest, most polluting cabs will no longer be licensed.

"We have been working hard with the taxi manufacturers to find ways to help cabbies upgrade to greener vehicles and we are delighted that Mercedes-Benz has responded in this way."

Road transport is responsible for around 80 per cent of airborne PM10 pollution in central London where air quality is worst, with black cabs contributing 20 per cent of this.

Source: <http://www.clickgreen.org.uk/> March 25, 2012

To contribute articles, news items, or event announcements for the next issue, send an email with the complete details and URL source to info@cen.org.np or anjila@cen.org.np

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Building Partnership for Clean Air

Clean Air Network Nepal (CANN) is a network of organizations and professionals involved in air quality management in Nepal. The goal of CANN is to increase the ability of professionals and other interested stakeholders to effectively address the problems of air pollution in Nepal. We encourage you to join hands with us to expand our campaign for clean and better Air.

CANN is a Country Network of Clean Air Initiative for Asian Cities.

Clean Air News is a free email publication that features news, information and events related to clean air. Clean Air News is published by CANN to highlight the activities and initiatives for clean air by CANN and its member and partners.

For more information: www.cen.org.np/cann

www.cleanairnet.org/cann