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Big PUBLIC buses, a real need

By Bigyan Adhikari

KATHMANDU: Stating that the small public vehicles like tempo, minibuses are ineffective for transportation, the Transport Sector Improvement Committee has recommended big buses which can carry large number of passengers for the



transportation purpose. Also, the committee has suggested executing night coaches for the services of general public.

Recommendations from the Transport Sector Improvement Committee-

- Execute Night public transportation
- Ban 15-year old transport
- Make overhead bridge and flyovers in more places of the valley
- Remove the old scraps from the road-side
- Manage the evening market area

Source: <http://nagariknews.com/society/nation/8789-2009-12-31-08-04-06.html>, Dec 31, 2009

Bid to streamline Valley traffic flow

By Sabin Chandra Acharya

KATHMANDU: Kathmandu Sustainable Urban Transport Project, commenced by the Ministry of Physical Planning and Works with the support of Asian Development Bank, recently presented preliminary recommendations for finding out an amicable solution to the traffic chaos in the Kathmandu Valley.

The interim report dwells on the preliminary recommendations of Asian Development Bank's technical assistance (TA) for sustainable urban transport in the Valley.

TA began on October 5, in coordination with MoPPW. The scope of work includes immediate measures to improve operations of public transport, implement a traffic management plan for the central areas of Kathmandu, introduce pedestrian areas in the old town of the capital city with links to transport facilities and improve the air quality within the Valley. David Irwin, team leader, KSUT said increasing number of private motorised vehicles, narrow roads, ill-managed and limited capacity of junctions and unattractive public transport system were worsening the prevailing level of congestion.

"Within the Valley, traffic congestion is most acute in Kathmandu. Responsibility for rectifying these problems is spread across five government departments and one municipality," he said.

According to KSUT, Department of Roads is responsible for the upkeep of most main roads in the city, Department of Transport Management for vehicle registration and regulating public transport, Traffic Police for supervision and enforcement of traffic regulations, Kathmandu Metropolitan City for local roads, parking and footpaths, Ministry of Environment for monitoring air quality and Department of Urban Development and Building Construction for the completion of a critical strategic road (the Bishnumati Road Link). KSUT is coordinating with these agencies for the purpose.

It is mandatory for these institutions to agree on a vision and work towards it in a coordinated and integrated manner. "I am hopeful that ADB and other external agencies will support this multi-agency approach," Irwin added. The interim report has proposed nine recommendations for resolving the increasing traffic congestion: increase the capacity of the strategic network with affordable reach, reduce the proportion of private motorised vehicles in the central areas, encourage people to travel by public transport or foot instead of private vehicles, managing the traffic so that people can travel without major congestion, improve the physical and social environment for greater transport equity, coordination and implementation of the vision recommended and financing the vision. The Project Preparation Technical Assistance is a project with an ADB grant assistance of \$8 lakhs for 6.5 months. It is implemented by the UK-based consultancy William Sales Partnership together with GOECE Consultants Pvt Ltd. ADB has promised an assistance of \$20 million and may provide further grant of \$3 million on the condition that the government agencies work together to translate the vision into reality, said Nairo Saito, ADB, Manila.

More than 4.5 lakhs motorised vehicles are plying on the roads of Kathmandu Valley, resulting in umpteen traffic jams.

According to Metropolitan Traffic Police Division, the number of vehicles has already exceeded what the valley roads can cope for smooth run.

Purna Kadaria, secretary, MoPPW, Babu Ram Acharya, secretary, Ministry of Labour and Transport Management and Kamal Raj Pandey, joint-secretary, MoPPW, have unequivocally lauded the vision and committed to extending their support to implement it.

Nine-point advisory

- Increase the capacity of the strategic network with affordable reach
- Reduce the proportion of private motorised vehicles in the central areas
- Encourage people to travel by public transport
- Encourage people to walk instead of using their private vehicles
- Manage the traffic so that people can travel without major congestion

- Improve the air quality to make the city a better place to live in
- Improve the social environment for greater transport equity
- Coordinate and implement the vision as recommended
- Finance the vision

Source: <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Bid+to+streamline+Valley++traffic+flow&NewsID=214639>, Dec 16, 2009

Dhaka city's air pollution

ENVIRONMENTALISTS at an international seminar recently in the city said air pollution has taken a 'serious turn' here as concentration of dust has already crossed standard limits posing threat to public health. They said air pollution causes as much as 11 per cent of the deaths and diseases every year in Bangladesh. The seminar was told that the government could save up to 3.5 per cent of national income by reducing exposure to environmental health risks. The seminar had threadbare discussion by experts and scholars before calling on the government here 'to devise a coordinated plan to contain air pollution.

Air Quality Index value in Dhaka city has reached up to 350 against the standard 100 AQI value, as a World Bank consultant for environment and social unit said while presenting his paper. Major sources of air pollution in the capital city are vehicular exhausts - of which more than 80 per cent is caused by diesel-fired vehicles, biomass burning, brick kilns, Re-suspended road dust and fugitive emission by industries. According to a professor of the National Institute of Chest Diseases, the concentration of suspended particulate matter (SPM) in the air of Dhaka is 'alarmingly' higher than the standards and is causing problem in respiratory symptoms and pulmonary functions.

There is excessive presence of some major air pollutants in Dhaka such as ozone, particulate matter of 2.5, PM10 lead, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide. The occurrence of excessive SPM and nitrogen dioxide causes respiratory infection and decrease in lung function, lung growth of children and sudden infant death syndrome. For pollution both the state-run vehicles and the privately owned buses are responsible as they are not properly maintained for public use. All out efforts are needed to keep city's air relatively free from dust.

Source: <http://expressbangla.net/newsDetails.php?nwsID=74> Dec 15, 2009

Poor air quality in southern Taiwan: EPA

Central News Agency

Taipei, Dec. 27 (CNA) The impact of a sandstorm sweeping in from China on Taiwan's air quality has subsided and air quality has gradually returned to normal, although the quality in southern Taiwan is still not ideal, the Environmental Protection Administration (EPA) said Sunday.

The EPA said in a press release that this is due to wind speed weakening in southern Taiwan, making conditions less than ideal for the dispersal of airborne suspended particles.

The latest data on air quality showed that the concentration of suspended particles in northern Taiwan had dropped to below 100 micrograms per cubic meter, with around 150 micrograms per cubic meter in southern Taiwan.

The EPA said that the sandstorm in northern China Dec.

24 mainly affected South Korea and Japan and that Taiwan was affected to a far lesser extent.

The air quality in northern Taiwan and in the southern counties of Yunlin, Chiayi, Tainan, Kaohsiung and Pingtung was poor Saturday, while the effect on eastern Taiwan was milder.

Suspended particles on the outlying islands of Kinmen and Matsu, however, came close to 300 micrograms per cubic meter, showing a more marked effect.

The EPA noted Chinese sandstorms often affect Taiwan in the winter and spring and that they are most frequent in March and April.

The EPA tracks and forecasts Chinese sandstorms between November and the following May every year and publishes the data on its Web site.

(By Liu kwang-yin and Lilian Wu)

Source:http://www.etaiwannews.com/etn/news_content.php?id=1142374 Dec 27, 2009

Pollution Linked To Hospitalizations For Pneumonia In Older Adults

Older adults with long-term exposure to higher levels of pollution are at higher risk for hospitalization for pneumonia, according to researchers in Canada.

"Our study found that among older individuals, long-term exposure to traffic pollution independently increased their risk of hospitalization for pneumonia," said principal investigator, Mark Loeb, M.D., of McMaster University.

The research will be published in the January 1 issue of the American Thoracic Society's American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine.

Pneumonia is a leading cause of sickness and death among older adults, and rates of hospitalizations for pneumonia among patients 65 and older have been increasing in recent years.

In addition to traffic pollution associated with roads, Hamilton has a large industrial steel-making complex in the north end of the city, creating a large exposure zone for residents. The researchers recruited 365 older adults from Hamilton, Ontario, who had been hospitalized with radiologically confirmed pneumonia in one of Hamilton's four emergency departments between 2003 and 2005. Control subjects from the same catchment areas as the patients were enrolled contemporaneously, and then compared their exposures to nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), sulfur dioxide (SO₂), and fine particulate matter less than 2.5 µm (PM_{2.5}) using data from air-quality monitoring stations and land use regression models.

The researchers found that long-term (more than 12 months) exposures to NO₂ and PM_{2.5} were each associated with a more than doubled risk of hospitalization from pneumonia. Individuals with long-term exposure to NO₂ had 2.3 times the risk for hospitalization with pneumonia; for PM_{2.5}, the odds ratio was 2.26.

"We postulate that long-term exposure to air pollution may have increased individuals' susceptibility to pneumonia by interfering with innate immune defenses designed to protect the lung from pathogens; this may have included epithelial cell damage, reductions in bronchial macrophages, or reductions in natural killer cells," said Dr. Loeb.

Exposure to SO₂ was not associated with increased risk of hospitalization.

"Given the large population exposure to ambient air pollution, the results of this study highlight the important health impact that long-term exposure to ambient air pollution can have on respiratory

infections," wrote Dr. Loeb. "It also emphasizes the need to monitor emissions from vehicles, given that ground level NO₂ is derived predominantly from traffic."

"While we don't know what is increasing the rates of pneumonia, we felt that studying air pollution was a good idea. Assessing if there is a correlation between rising pneumonia rates and increasing air pollution would be of interest," said Dr. Loeb.

In future research, Dr. Loeb hopes to examine whether there is a genetic component to susceptibility to the health effects of pollution. "Examining genetic variants to see if there is interaction between genetic basis and air pollution in the causal pathway of pneumonia would be very interesting," he said.

Source: American Thoracic Society, <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/174465.php> Dec 29, 2009

School Classroom Air May Be More Polluted With Ultrafine Particles Than Outdoor Air

The air in some school classrooms may contain higher levels of extremely small particles of pollutants - easily inhaled deep into the lungs - than polluted outdoor air, scientists in Australia and Germany are reporting in an article in ACS' semi-monthly journal Environmental Science & Technology.

Lidia Morawska and colleagues note increasing concern in recent years over the health effects of airborne ultrafine particles. Evidence suggests that they can be toxic when inhaled into the lungs. Much of the scientific research, however, has focused on outdoor sources of these invisible particles, particularly vehicle emissions. Little research has been done, however, on indoor sources, and even less on ultrafine particles in school classrooms.

In an effort to fill those gaps in knowledge, the scientists studied levels of ultrafine particles in 3 elementary school classrooms in Brisbane, Australia. They found that on numerous occasions ultrafine particle levels in the classrooms were significantly higher than outdoors. The highest levels occurred during art activities such as gluing, painting and drawing when indoor levels were several times higher than outdoor levels. There also were significant increases in ultrafine particle levels when detergents were used for cleaning.

Source: Michael Bernstein, American Chemical Society

Source: <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/174767.php> Dec 24, 2009

Clean Air News is a free email publication that features news, information and events related to clean air. Clean Air News is published by Clean Air Network Nepal to highlight the activities and initiatives for clean air by CANN and its member and partners. For more information on our campaign, please visit: www.cen.org.np/cann and www.cleanairnet.org/cann

Compiled and Edited by: Amita Thapa Maqar, Prashanta Khanal and Gopal Raj Joshi

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.

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