

Clean Air News

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Air Pollution Monitoring Stations Repaired

Seven air quality monitoring stations set up in six different places of the Kathmandu Valley which have been dysfunctional for over the last two years, are likely to get back into operation within a couple of weeks.

Nepal Environmental and Scientific Service (NESS) -- which had won a contract to repair all the non-functional equipment of the stations from the Ministry of Environment (MoE) -- has informed that the work for reviving the air pollution monitoring unit is already accomplished. "The work is over," NESS executive told Republica. In a contract signed with the MoE, NESS had agreed to hand over the repaired stations to the ministry within three months. The three-month-term is going to expire on Febru-

ary 24. Sushma Upadhyay, the focal person for controlling all kinds of pollution at the MoE, says, "The revival of air quality monitoring stations will hugely relieve us. We will be able to measure the level of pollution in air." The air quality monitoring stations were established in Putalisadak, Thamel, Tribhuvan University (TU), Patan Hospital, Macchegaun and Bhaktapur by the MoE in 2002. The government of Denmark had provided a grant of Rs 60 million for installation of the stations. Initially, the stations were operated as part of the Environment Sector Support Program (ESSP) launched by the Danish International Development Agency (Danida). After the Danida project term ended in 2005, the MoE struck a deal with the Environment and Public

Health Organization (ENPHO), an NGO, to operate the stations. However, all the stations became dysfunctional since their equipment failed one after another in 2008. The system operators could not regularly charge batteries required to power the stations as the country faced a heavy power outage, which further rendered the country's sole air monitoring unit non-functional. The level of air pollution in the Kathmandu Valley is higher in winter season than other months. According to several studies conducted in the past, the concentration of PM 10 (particulate matters of 10 micrometers) that is hazardous to people's health is also very high in the Valley's air.

Source: <http://myrepublica.com> February 6, 2011

Power Hope Gleams

A high level team led by Finance Minister Surendra Pandey reached Dhading district for a field study of the proposed Budhi Gandaki Hydropower Project.

The study team comprises member of National Planning Commission Dinesh Chandra Devkota, Secretary to the Energy Ministry Shitalbabu Regmi, Finance Secretary Krishna Hari Baskota and Deputy Managing Director of Ne-

pal Electricity Authority Upendra Bhatta. During the field visit, Pandey urged parties and people to help the government make the power project a success. Maintaining that people have been obstructing construction of hydropower projects on various pretexts, he urged locals not to halt work in Budhi Gandaki. Pandey said that the Detailed Project Report will be completed in two years and six more years

will be enough to accomplish the ambitious project. "The project is not only for the people of Dhading and Gorkha, but for the whole country. Its accomplishment will, to a large extent, cut the power crisis that the country is facing," he said. Snow-fed Budhi Gandaki is a reservoir type of project with installed capacity of 600 megawatt and which flows on the border of Dhading and Gorkha.



NOC, fuel shortage and loan demand

Kathmandu.

Shortage of petroleum products hit consumers across the country, earlier this month, when NOC distributed just about a day equivalent volume of fuel in the market over the last five days. They had claimed that the shortage was short term and attributed it to the day long protest of tanker operators and public holidays. The sources at NOC had revealed that the management had adopted a strategy to cut petrol imports, particularly after its cost prices went up, inflicting loss of around NRS. 4 per liter. It refrained from supplying fuel in the market on days when it didn't receive fuel because its petrol stock has depleted sharply, the sources had said. However, Dhungel had said then that there was no problems with import at all.

A week later, Dhungel again said that NOC has been supplying fuel in excess of the daily demand in the valley, still the dealers have been demanding more fuel than they actually

need. According to NOC, normal fuel consumption in Kathmandu valley is 250-300 kl of petrol and 450-500 kl of diesel. However, on Wednesday NOC supplied 390 kl of petrol and 541 kl diesel, while on Thursday, it supplied 399 kl petrol and 587 kl diesel and on Friday, 306 kl petrol and 512 kl diesel was supplied. Today, the state-oil monopoly supplied 317 kl petrol and 599 kl diesel. Cash payment before placing the order will help NOC assess the actual demand, he said, that the dealers often blame NOC for not meeting the market need. NOC also has data of import and distribution to support their statement. Hence, the ultimate reason behind the unnecessary shortage seem to be some petrol dealers, who hoard petrol unnecessarily and create market shortages.

The end of February month saw NOC demanding NRS 1.3 billion monthly loan from the government to maintain smooth supply of petroleum

products. They have attributed it to the international oil price and IOC curtailing supply. Earlier, NOC had demanded that the government allow it to adjust fuel prices in line with the international market price. After the government did not allow it to adjust fuel price, it put forth the second option of loan before the government.

The NOC has already held meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Bharat Mohan Adhikari. Now, NOC is awaiting the political decision. On Monday, the state owned oil monopoly had proposed NRS. 10.73 per liter increase in Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) price.

It has also asked the government to waive taxes in LPG until the prices drops in the international market. The losses of NOC has jumped to NRS. 1.13 billion a month in February, The government is reluctant in adjusting fuel prices in line with international price, according to the NOC, has inflated its losses.



Causeway Bay pollution level tops 180

Air pollution has again soared in Hong Kong, with a roadside reading of more than 180 in Causeway Bay. Both Central and Mongkok also recorded levels well above 100.

The government has issued a health warning for people suffering from heart and respiratory illnesses. The Hong Kong Observatory says prevailing weather conditions mean the air quality will

continue for the next few poor days.



How to Take Care of Your Lungs During Ozone Season

-University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Medicine

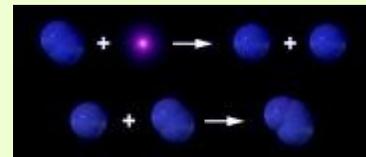
It's a harmless-looking pale blue gas, a relative of the oxygen molecule that sustains life. In the upper atmosphere, a layer of it protects us from the sun's harmful rays. But ozone molecules, composed of three oxygen atoms, can trigger breathing problems when they form near the ground, said David Peden, MD, director of the Center for Environmental Medicine, Asthma and Lung Biology at the UNC School of Medicine. Ozone pollution is more common during "ozone season," which begins in April and peaks in the warm summer months.

Ozone forms on hot, sunny days when pollutants from car exhaust, power plants, gas stations and industrial facilities undergo chemical reactions in sunlight. Meanwhile, the stagnant weather systems that often form in summer can trap pollution around a community. More than half of North Carolina's residents live in counties where ozone levels sometimes reach unhealthy levels,

according to the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Children, people with respiratory diseases and healthy adults who exercise or work outdoors are at risk. Peden investigates the health effects of ozone at the Environmental Protection Agency Human Studies Facility located on the UNC-CH campus. His team uses controlled chambers to expose volunteers to varying levels of air pollutants. That research has shown that exposure to ozone inflames the lungs, which can aggravate other breathing problems. "Those changes can exacerbate other issues," he said.

"The person is subsequently more likely to have an asthma attack or be more reactive to allergens." Those responses often do not appear until the day after ozone exposure, he said. In addition, Peden said that a study of southern California children suggested that long-term, chronic exposure to ozone may affect lung development. Ozone may also be linked

to cardiovascular disease, an area of research that Peden is now pursuing. To protect themselves on elevated-ozone days, Peden said individuals should avoid outdoor air in the afternoon, when ozone levels peak. "Do most of your vigorous outdoor work in the morning or in the evening, after the ozone has decreased," he said. But Peden said health experts learned an important lesson about ozone pollution from the 1996 Summer Olympics. During the games, Atlanta city officials aggressively restricted downtown traffic. A group of researchers found that during the 17 days of the games, ozone pollution decreased. Meanwhile, the number of severe asthma attacks fell by 40 percent. That study, Peden said, shows the importance of public health measures, such as pollutant regulations, to protecting air quality. "If we're going to really address this, it's going to be through public-policy efforts," he said.



PM Forms Mechanism On Power Shortage

Newly elected Prime Minister Jhulanath Khanal has formed a high-level mechanism to seek ways to ease the power crunch, in his first official decision after assuming the office at Singha Durbar on Sunday.

The new 23-member mechanism led by Khanal comprises of ministers and secretaries related to power and representatives from power producers, developers and promoters. "The prime minister put signature on the formation of

the mechanism and its terms of reference to mark his assumption of the office," said an official at the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers. The prime minister took the decision as the country braces a 14-hour daily power cut beginning Monday. Soon after he assumed the office, the prime minister also held a meeting with government secretaries and issued directives to top bureaucrats in the country. Khanal directed the

secretaries to work in high morale and maintain neutrality in service delivery, said a secretary. Khanal also expressed his concern over the ongoing deforestation and directed civil servants to take necessary measures to stop illegal logging. In another directive, the prime minister sought prompt action from the secretaries to deal with food adulteration.

Source: <http://myrepublica.com> February 6, 2011



Air Pollution just as dangerous as cocaine



Scientists have released findings this week that air pollution can cause more heart attacks than the illegal substance of cocaine posing a much higher risk of triggering a heart attack than substances such as coffee, alcohol and physical exertion.

In amongst these triggers, anger, sex, marijuana and chest infections also have the ability to cause heart attacks, however, air pollution is the major culprit, particularly in heavy traffic. It is said that triggers that are population-wide such as air pollution should be dealt with more seriously when dealing with heart attacks and that it should be prioritised the same as higher but less rare triggers such as drug use.

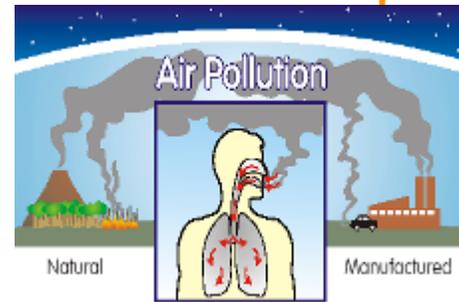


Leading the study was scientist, Tim Nawrot from Hasselt University in Belgium, who hoped that his findings would promote scientists and doctors to approach the area with greater thought of population-wide level risks and not just individual risks. If too much time is spent by physicians looking at the individual level, but, he said, if a problem is widespread then surely it has more health relevance within the public.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) states that air pollution is a major risk to health and they estimate that air pollution alone causes alone 2 million premature deaths across the globe annually.

A report in 2010 showed that

air pollution in major cities in Asia alone exceeds the air quality recommendations and that the deaths in Asia alone reach around 530,000 a year.



Air Pollution May Trigger Heart Attacks

If policy makers want to prevent heart attacks, they should focus on improving air quality, a new study suggests.

The study, which is published in *The Lancet*, is one of the first to rank the relative contributions of 14 triggers -- including cocaine and alcohol use, anger, and physical exertion -- to heart attacks in the general population.

Fine particles in the air that are generated by traffic and power plants, researchers found, trigger about the same number of heart attacks as experiencing negative emotions, heavy physical exertion like shoveling

snow, and heavy alcohol.

The researchers stress that on an individual level the risk that air pollution will trigger a heart attack is relatively low. But when those small risks are applied to a large number of people, the threat becomes more evident.

"The analysis is not very complicated, but nobody has ever done that before," says Andrea Baccarelli, MD, PhD, an associate professor of environmental epigenetics in the department of environmental health at the Harvard School of Public Health, Boston. "Especially to compare air pollution to other

risk factors, which is really brilliant, I think."

"Air pollution really is a huge problem for communities," says Baccarelli, who wrote a commentary that accompanied the study. "I think they really positioned themselves well to show that."



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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.

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.

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Glimpses of Monitoring Stations in Kathmandu



Monitoring Stations in Kathmandu: (from left) Monitoring Station in Central Department of Environmental Science, TU (Urban Background) ; in Thamel (Urban Residential) and in Putalisadak (Urban Roadside).

Photos by: Anjila Manandhar