

Clean Air News

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Black Carbon Up Threefold In Everest: Study

A study conducted by American Geophysical Union (AGU) revealed that concentration of black carbon in Mount Everest has increased threefold in the last 140 years.

“Black Carbon (BC) concentrations from 1975 to 2000 relative to 1860 till 1975 have increased by approximately threefold, indicating that BC from anthropogenic sources is being transported to high elevation regions of the Himalayas,” mentioned the AGU study released today. The authors wrote in the website that “BC, the absorbing component of soot produced by incomplete combustion of biomass, coal and diesel fuels can significantly contribute to climate change by altering the earth’s radiative balance — the equation

of incoming and outgoing thermal radiation from the sun. At a time when scientists from around the world are trying to find about the possible impact of BC on the melting of Himalayas, the study said the timing of the increase in BC is consistent with BC emission inventory data from South Asia and Middle East. “A Mount Everest ice core spanning from 1860 to 2000, analysed at high resolution for BC, using a Single Particle Soot Photometer demonstrated strong seasonality, with peak concentrations during winter-spring season, and low concentrations during summer monsoon,” the authors revealed. This suggests that a reduction in BC emissions may be an effective means to reduce the effect of absorbing impurities on snow albedo and melt, which affects

Himalayan glaciers and the availability of water resources in major Asian rivers,” the study suggested. “Though data is insufficient to confirm the exact alteration in radiation caused by BC, preliminary studies have shown that there is a significant impact on the melting of Himalayas due to the deposition of BC,” said Pradeep Mool, an expert working on the issue at the ICIMOD. A few weeks back, researchers and organisations working on air pollution gathered in Kathmandu to discuss how to tackle the problem of BC, where experts said the most effective means to reduce BC concentration would be use of clean technology while cooking food.

Source: <http://www.epaper.thehimalayantimes.com>
April 7, 2011

Methane Gas Exploration To Get Under Way In Valley

Though belated, the government’s power crisis plan says special efforts will be made to extract millions of cubic metres of methane gas in Kathmandu Valley.

A study had confirmed deposits of the gas around 16 years ago. The Department of Mines and Geology (DMG), with assistance from Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), had carried out Initial exploration in 1996 in a 26 square km area in Kathmandu

Valley and found 316 million cubic metres methane gas deposits. Fourteen sites were drilled till depths ranging from 150 to 570 metres. It, however, remained just a feasibility test. The sixth call last year had two interested companies. “We have received two proposals and they are under review. Most probably, it will be finalized in a fortnight,” said Shreeram Maharjan, deputy director general, DMG. It would be sufficient for 21000 families for

around 30 years. However, fresh feasibility study needs to be done as the excessive digging for groundwater could have depleted the source. Along with the gas, ground water can also be extracted. Maharjan said huge amounts of water could be extracted and distributed. “Within a year, it we can generate methane equivalent to at least 12 MW electricity,” he said.

Decline in the imports of vehicles



The monthly registration of vehicles has continued to decline as an impact of the slowdown in the domestic automobile market. The decline has been seen by 34.23% between Mid February to Mid March. It has been attributed to the increased excise duty, high interest rates and liquidity crisis in the banking system in the two wheeler segments, which have enjoyed robust growth until last year are now experiencing a slump, especially after the budget presentation in November 20, 2010. Rising cost, liquidity crunch in the banking system and a slowdown in the reality sector have hit the sales of two wheelers in the Kathmandu valley. Along with this observed decline in the import of vehicles, the government is

also planning on restricting imports through policy. The Ministry of Labour and Transport Management (DoLTM) is drafting a new transport policy aimed at controlling auto imports and taking old vehicles off the roads.

The policy targets limiting the import of two-wheelers in particular following the massive increment in their import during the last few years. Officials at the ministry said that they would soon complete a draft of the policy, hold consultations with the concerned stakeholders and forward it to the cabinet for its approval. Earlier, the government had introduced National Transport Policy 2001. However, ministry officials said that it was more focused on roads than on bet-

ter managing the transport sector. The proposed National Transport Policy 2011 is aimed at controlling auto imports, removing old vehicles, encouraging eco-friendly electric vehicles and fuel-efficient cars and improving management of the transport sector.

"It has become urgent to manage the transport sector in a better way with a new policy to control auto imports which have been increasing rapidly annually," said Anil Gurung, under-secretary at the ministry. He added that the government could also put a quota restriction on the import of motorcycles.

Traffic explosion: Kathmandu begs for more road

Regular traffic jams in the Valley are no surprise to us, but if one considers the increase in the number of vehicles, and compares it with the extension of roads in the country's most populous city, there certainly is one conclusion: there are more vehicles here than the roads can handle.

While there were 23,143 vehicles registered in Bagmati zone as of 2003, the number crossed 50,000 in 2009. According to the Department of Transport Management (DoTM), in the last five years (2006-010), the number of vehicles registered in the zone reached 249,219—more than

half of all the vehicles registered in the country. "The number of vehicles in the Valley is definitely more than what its roads can take," said Metropolitan Traffic Police Superintendent Rabi Raj Shrestha. "If all the vehicles in the Valley plied on the roads at a time, there would be hardly any space left."

Strangely, the DOR does not have the data on the road length for the last five years. However, its website states there was a mere 8.57 percent growth in road length in the two years between 2002 and 2004. Chandra Paudyal, however, denies the roads cannot handle the vehicles. He blames poor traffic management, rather than the road

length, for the traffic problem. DoTM Director General Sharad "Traffic management should be systematic. Drivers should park vehicles at the right place and the traffic police should manage the situation better." Suraj Sigdel, senior divisional engineer at the DoR, said. He, nevertheless, admitted that roads have not been extended in the Valley, except occasional maintenance of the existing roads, in the face of the increase in vehicles.



Traffic campaign: Police drives bearing fruit

With the Metropolitan Traffic Police Division (MTPD) rolling out traffic campaigns one after another, the Valley's traffic woes are likely to ease soon.

MTPD Spokesman Deputy DSP Jagat Man Shrestha said the overall traffic scenario in the Valley has improved in the last few months with recently-launched traffic drives including declaration of Ring Road as a no-parking zone, behavioural training for all traffic police personnel in the Valley, increased surveillance and fixed pick-up and drop stations for public vehicles, among others.

"We have been successful in reducing traffic problems in Kathmandu," he said. "Traffic activities have increased and new campaigns have also been launched to ease traffic woes."

According to him, minor campaigns such as raising public awareness on traffic rules and increasing density of traffic police in the inner road networks of the Valley have also helped reduce traffic woes.

Another important move to clear footpaths in places such as Ratna Park and Sundhara have helped reduce the number of major accidents. "We are yet to record the number of accidents which took place recently," said Shrestha. "But, it is true that accidents have been controlled. Clearing footpaths of roadside vendors has to be credited for this." According to Shrestha, MTPD is still working on clearing footpaths at other places in the Valley as well.

The initiative of launching new traffic campaigns, which began during the tenure of previous MTPD Spokesman Basanta Panta, has now been undertaken by Spokesman Shrestha, who is coordinating the campaigns launched earlier as well.

As part of the effort to reduce Ring Road traffic hustle, traffic police this January declared Ring Road a no-parking zone. "Traffic police in any part of the world do not allow parking on roads," said Shrestha. "This campaign that was launched during the tenure of DSP Panta has largely been successful in freeing the Ring Road area of jams."

Another traffic move launched two weeks ago by the MTPD to give behavioural training to traffic cops is also expected to ease the relationship between the public and the police. As part of this efforts, celebrities, lawyers, musicians, writers and people from other walks of life have been interacting with the personnel at MTPD everyday.

"Despite the good work, we realised that the behaviour of traffic police is not so good with the public at many places," said Shrestha. "Therefore, we decided to teach some clemency to police personnel." According to him, the clemency drive aims at giving a week's training each to 1,050 traffic police, representing all 28 MTPD sectors.

Shrestha said there is still more to come, one of which is allotting fixed spots on the circular road for the pick-up and drop purpose of public vehicles. "The study is underway," he said. "We will soon be launching this drive as well, which is expected to ease traffic jams not only on Ring Road but also along the inner road networks in the Valley."



School celebration: All for a clean city

Juddhodaya Public School, one of the oldest academic institutions in the country, has started its Diamond Jubilee celebration dedicating itself to the public good.

On the first day of its weeklong 73rd anniversary celebration on Saturday, the school initiated a road cleaning and awareness building campaign for a clean city. Around 400 students and teachers are engaged in the campaign that will continue till April 16.

According to Surya Raj Shakya, principal of the school, they are planning to clean major tourist areas in the city. On the first day, the Juddhodaya team cleaned Chhetrapati and Thamel areas and organised a public awareness programme urging people to work toward a tidy locality. "Kathmandu is a lucrative tourist destination. Therefore, it must be kept tidy," Shakya said.

He added that in the weeklong campaign they have plans to clean major tourist destinations in the city including Thamel, Durbar Marg, Kantipath, New Road, Basantpur and Ratna Park. "We will also conduct traffic awareness and blood donation programmes during the weeklong celebration," Shakya added.



City centre hangout, Ratna Park, in sorry state

The Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) is set to launch a project to revive the oldest recreational area in the Capital.

Ratna Park, which has been yearning for government attention for several years, will be renovated in different phases beginning July, according to KMC officials.

The environment department at the KMC has requested a Rs 1.5 million budget for reviving the lost glory of the public hangout. In the initial stage, the park will be reconstructed and repaired.

"We will need Rs 400,000 in the first phase to clean the park," said Rabin Man Shrestha, Chief of the Environment Management Department. Shrestha said the report that was sent to the central metropolis authority last month has finalised everything, paving the way for inviting tenders for the project. "A tender notice will be issued

within 15 days," Shrestha said.

To begin with, the park will be cleared of garbage and its boundary marked to protect flowers which are mercilessly plucked by visitors.

According to the official, the second and third phases will include reconstruction of infrastructure damaged during public protests or through mismanagement. The boundary wall construction will be done in one of the later phases.

"It will be difficult to restrict street vendors and check immoral activities without a wall even after cleaning the area. However, we'll have to depend on the boundary marker until the wall is constructed," Shrestha said.

In order to keep vendors away and check immoral activities in

the park, public entry will be limited to predetermined hours while the main gate will remain closed as always.

The official said the park is so badly damaged that even Rs 1.5 million would be insufficient to restore it completely. He added that additional budget would be allocated if required.



Nitrogen Pollution Costs Europe Up To £280bn A Year



Policy makers have been urged to boost efforts to curb nitrogen pollution, after a major new study found that the annual cost related to the damage caused by nitrogen pollution in Europe far outweighs the additional income gained from the use of nitrogen fertilisers in agriculture. Published today, the European Nitrogen Assessment was carried out by 200 experts from 21 countries and has been hailed as the first study to put a price on nitrogen pollution at a continental scale, incorporating the deterioration of air and water quality and damage to human health. The report estimates

that the annual cost of damage caused by nitrogen across Europe is between £60bn and £280bn - more than double the extra income gained from using nitrogen fertilisers in European agriculture. It urges decision makers to create a framework of policies which treat nitrogen pollution "holistically", rather than focusing on individual issues such as damage to air, water or soil quality. The assessment outlines seven key steps that it says decision makers should take to curb emissions across agriculture, transport and industry, waste water treatment, and consumption patterns.

Lead author Dr Mark Sutton from Edinburgh's Centre for Ecology and Hydrology urged governments to adopt the recommendations, which include more efficient use of fertilisers and manures, and encouraging people to eat less meat. "Nearly half the world's population depends on synthetic, nitrogen-based fertiliser for food but measures are needed to reduce the impacts of nitrogen pollution," he said. "We have the know-how to reduce nitrogen pollution, but what we need now is to apply these solutions throughout Europe in an integrated way."

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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 Earth Day 2011



On 22nd April, Nepalese Youth for Climate Action (NYCA) along with Clean Energy Nepal (CEN) organized an art event “Hamro Dharti Hamrai Canvasma” on Basantapur. From left top: A keen artist painting on the canvas; NYCA members speaking on the occasion; Petition collection for cycling; Former Minister Ganesh Shah painting in the canvas; An elderly man painting happily; Former Miss Nepal Sugarika KC showing her support at the event and Law enforcers supporting to save earth.