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## 16 Sajha Buses Arrive

Samik Kharel

With the arrival of 16 new buses in the Capital, the eagerly-awaited Sajha bus service will soon be plying the streets of Kathmandu. The green chassis of the buses will be ornamented with cream to match the same look it had when the Sajha Yatayat was first initiated in 1964. The bus service will come into operation in mid-March, after route permits are approved.

According to Kanak Mani Dixit, chairman of Sajha Cooperatives, the service will restart on a modest scale. "We hope to relieve traffic congestion in the trunk routes of the Kathmandu-Lalitpur sector and also provide exemplary transport services," said Dixit in a press statement.

The main goals of the service are to increase the use of public transport and reduce pollution, he said.

The newly purchased buses are complaint with Euro III emission standards

and boast 55 seats with 15 additional strap-hangers for standing passengers. The buses were manufactured by Tata motors in India and travelled to Kathmandu from Goa. The buses also have automated doors for entrance and



exit with two CCTV cameras and display screens for advertisements, public notices and entertainment.

The cooperative has been outsourcing for drivers and conductors via the Subidha Sewa Pvt Ltd and has been

prioritising women for these positions.

Sajha buses will operate along two routes—Harihar Bhawan-Tripureshwor-Ranipokhari-Kamalpokhari-Gaushala-Koteshwor-Satdobato-Lagankhel (16.5km) and Satdobato-Lagankhel-Jawalakhel-Tripureshwor-Teku-Kalimati-Kalanki (16.4km). The buses will charge government-assigned fares for public transport.

Sajha Yatayat, the Valley's pioneering bus service, halted services in 2002 due to politicisation and overstaffing. The company is now under new management and was established as a cooperative in 2011 with an executive board elected from the general body members.

Source: [www.ekantipur.com](http://www.ekantipur.com) 22 February, 2013

## 13,422 Traffic Offenders Detained in Valley

The Metropolitan Traffic Police Division (MTPD) has caught 13,422 motorists flouting traffic rules in the Kathmandu Valley in the past two-and-a-half months, say officials.

MTPD had started deploying plainclothes traffic cops on busy intersections of the city on December 11 after most of the motorists were found to be defying traffic norms, leading to traffic mismanagement.

DSP Pawan Giri, spokesperson for the

MTPD, said detectives have been mobilised in busy intersections of the valley in two shifts, at peak hours in particular.

"Plainclothes cops have been acting as surveillance cameras to catch offenders, which is proving effective for traffic management," he said, adding it has helped to keep errant motorists in check.

According to the Research and Development Section of the traffic police

division, the drive has created what it called 'positive terror' among the habitual rule-breakers.

The crackdown has not only helped keep the motorists alert about 'inevitable' action in case of rule violation, but has also reduced traffic jam. Plainclothes traffic cops have recorded 22 instances of violations, which include violation of lane discipline, wilful pick-up and drop, violation of

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traffic signals and lights, use of mobile phone while driving, wrong parking, seat belt infraction, mechanical modification of original shape of bikes, vehicles carrying passengers, violation of one-way traffic and reckless driv-

ing.

Violation of lane discipline tops the chart of offences.

MTPD has paid special attention to inter-sections at Koteshwor, Babar Mahal, Maitighar,

Keshar Mahal, Singha Durbar, Baneshwor, Durbar Marg, Thapathali, Tripureshwor, Putalisadak, Sundhara, New Road and Kamaladi.

Source: [www.thehimalayantimes.com](http://www.thehimalayantimes.com) , February 22, 2013

## Reserved Seats in Public Vehicle For Disabled

Nirjana Sharma

The Metropolitan Traffic Police Division (MTPD) has revived its plan to ensure reserved seats for women, the disabled and elderly people in public transport vehicles.

Traffic police have directed public transport vehicles to ensure six reserved seats in every bus and two seats in every micro-bus for such minorities.

The traffic division had started the campaign for the first time in February, 2011. However, public vehicle users complain of misuse of reserved seats and of vehicle owners designating such seats just to escape traffic police penalty.

In the last seat reservation campaign, MTPD had forced more than 3,000 public transporters to mark out reserved seats in their vehicles. Non-complying vehicles will now be fined Rs 200 to Rs 1,000 from next week.

"The campaign has forced transport operators to reserve seats for women, the disabled and senior citizens," said Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Pawan Giri, spokesperson of MTPD.

MTPD warned 520 vehicles on the first day of its new campaign on Friday. "Vehicle documents have been seized and will be restored only after provisions are made for reserved seats in the vehicles," he added.

The Disabled Protection and Welfare Act 1982 says that at least 5 percent of seats in

public transport vehicles must be guaranteed for the disabled.

Similarly, the Vehicle and Transport Management Act 1992 has directed the authorities to ensure easier travel for women, the physically challenged and the aged, categorizing them as a special class.

The disabled can claim 45 percent discount on transport fare if they produce identity cards issued by the Women's Development Office under the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare.



However, frustration among people with disabilities is rife due to the attitude of public transport staff and the rudeness of fellow passengers.

"Vehicle drivers generally do not stop if they see a person like me waiting for a ride," says Bhoj Raj Shrestha, rights activist for the differently abled. Some vehicles speed past, spewing thick smoke in their faces.

Welcoming the traffic police move, he added that a monitoring mechanism was needed to implement the provision effectively.

Meanwhile, transport entrepreneurs blame the attitude of fellow passengers who refuse to yield seats reserved for the disabled, the elderly and women.

"Around 300 vehicles in the Valley had initiated the seat reservation provision during the 2011 traffic campaign but passengers rebuff staff when asked to cooperate and the situation sometimes goes beyond control," said Dol Nath Khanal, general secretary of the Nepal Transport Entrepreneurs' National Federation.

As per a recent agreement of MTPD and the Department of Transport Management (DoTM) with rights activists working for the welfare people with disability and against violence targetted at women, the government announced that it was to enforce seat reservations in public transport vehicles.

Source: [www.myrepublica.com](http://www.myrepublica.com) February 10, 2013

## Kathmandu-Hetauda Tunnel Highway : Update

The Ministry of Physical Planning, Works and Transport Management has said it will sign the final agreement with the Nepal Purbadhar Bikas Company (NPBC) within a month to develop the Kathmandu-Hetauda Tunnel Highway.

Tulasi Prasad Situala, secretary at the ministry, said before signing the final agreement, the government will have to settle pending issues like how long the company be allowed to operate the road, tax facilities to be provided and the alignment of the road that is said to have overlapped with the proposed Kathmandu-Tarai Fast-Track road. "We will soon send a proposal with measures to solve these issues to the Cabinet for its approval," said Situala. NPBC, established to undertake the tunnel highway project, had planned to start the construction by mid-February. But the delay in the signing of the final agreement has delayed the construction.

The ministry had sought more time for the contract signing, citing the lack of investment commitments and overlapping of some of the road alignments with the proposed Fast

Track road. "We have received the commitment for investment and the proposal for changing the alignment to avoid overlapping," said Situala, adding they would study the proposed alignment and forward the proposal to the Cabinet for approval to sign the final agreement within a month. The company's that it be allowed to operate the tunnel highway for up to 35 years, VAT and tax holiday and the alignment issues have made it necessary to seek the Cabinet's approval, according to the Ministry. The existing build-operate-transfer (BOT) law allows companies to build and operate such infrastructure and handover the ownership to the government after 30 years.

KK Joshi, chairman of NPBC, said they proposed to operate the road for 35 years to make the project more attractive and increase the payback period as the project is the first big infrastructure project being undertaken involving locals. "We find it necessary to have 35 years of operation period as the first four years will go for construction," he said.

After the Physical Planning Ministry asked to show investment sources, the company has

submitted a report in which a dozen commercial banks have shown commitments to invest in the 51 km highway which is estimated to cost Rs 23 billion.

"So far, around 20 commercial banks have showed interest to invest in the project," said Lal Krishna KC, vice-chairman of the company. "We have also provided options to the government to take the tunnel highway along the Bagmati River eliminating the confusion over the alignment overlapping."

The Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Transport Entrepreneurs' Federation, Hotel Association of Nepal, Federation of Contractors' Association of Nepal, Non-resident Nepalese Association and Nepal Association of Foreign Employment Agencies, among others, have also committed investment in the project. Moreover, over 50,000 locals from 26 VDCs in Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Makwanpur districts are investing in the project as shareholders.

Source: [www.ekantipur.com](http://www.ekantipur.com) February 24, 2013

## Alarm Bell Against Valley's Air Quality

The residents of Kathmandu Valley face health hazard risks due to the deteriorating air quality caused by rapid urbanization and rise in the number of vehicles, a new report of International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) points out.

'Rapid urban assessment for air quality in Nepal', published by ICIMOD last week, stresses on the need of a thorough study on the subject citing increasing cases of the valley residents suffering from irritation and difficulty in breathing followed by chronic effects such as emphysema, bronchitis, cough, asthma and skin problems.

Referring to the data of the World Health Organization (WHO), which states that more than half a million premature deaths every year in urban areas of Asia are linked with degrading air quality, the report says that air pollution has emerged as one of the biggest threats to Kathmandu residents as there is an extremely high level of particulate matter in the air.

The air pollution has been attributed mainly to the unchecked rise in the number of low standard vehicles. "The Kathmandu Valley, Nepal's major urban center, now has air pollution that is comparable to that of other industrialized cities in Asia such as Bombay,

Calcutta, Delhi and Shanghai," the report says.

The report calls for widespread and effective monitoring of air quality. Though air quality management programs have been in place for decades in developed countries, it was only in the 1990s that the ministry of population and environment started to investigate air quality in the country.

Source: [www.myrepublica.com](http://www.myrepublica.com) February 19, 2013

## Air Pollution 5th Leading Cause of Death in India: Study

Air pollution is the fifth leading cause of death in India after high blood pressure, indoor air pollution, tobacco smoking and poor nutrition, with about 620,000 premature deaths occurring from air pollution-related diseases. Like China, India faces an unprecedented public health crisis due to air pollution, the Centre for Science and Environment's (CSE) analysis of government data and the Global Burden of Disease report's data on India has shown.

The green think tank released its own assessment and the global study's India specific data on Wednesday warning that the number of premature deaths due to air pollution had increased six fold over the last 10 years.

Air pollution is now the seventh leading cause behind the loss of about 18 million healthy years of life in India due to illness. It comes after indoor air pollution, tobacco smoking, high blood pressure, childhood underweight, low nutritional status, and alcohol use.

CSE's own assessment of the air pollution data generated by the government painted the grim facts that are leading to the public health crisis.

"Close to half of cities are reeling under se-

vere particulate pollution while newer pollutants like nitrogen oxides, ozone and air toxics are worsening the public health challenge," CSE estimates say. Half of the urban population breathes air laced with particulate pollution that has exceeded the safety standards. As much as one third of urban population is exposed to critical level of particulate pollution. Smaller cities are among the most polluted in the country.

The data is a damning indictment of India's supposed growing urban regions. Out of the 180 cities that are monitored for only two towns " Malapuram and Pathanamthitta " in Kerala meet the low pollution norms (pollution levels remaining at 50% below the standard) for all pollutants.

About 78% cities (141 cities) exceed the standard set for particulate matter of size below 10 microns (PM10). As many as 90 cities have critical levels of PM10 and of this, 26 cities have most critical levels of PM10, exceed the standard by more than 3 times. Gwalior, West Singbhum, Ghaziabad, Raipur, and Delhi are top five critically polluted cities.

The data analysis shows the situation is only

getting worse with time. "The PM10 monitoring network has doubled between 2005 and 2010 - it has increased from 96 to 180 cities. During this period the cities with low level of pollution has fallen from 10 to 2 and the number of critically polluted cities have increased from 49 to 89 cities. In 2005 about 75% of cities exceeded the standard. In 2010, a total of 78% of cities are exceeding the standard," CSE said.

Warning that vehicular pollution will continue to be the most important reason for concern in coming years as cities grow and get more densely populated, CSE has advocated that the National Ambient Air Quality Standards should be made legally binding. It has criticized the new Auto Fuel Policy Committee that is to set the benchmarks for up to 2025 for fuel quality used by vehicles. It has warned that the committee is not mandated to link the fuel standards to air pollution levels and keep public health as a parameter when setting the schedule for improvement in technology.

Source: [www.indiatimes.com](http://www.indiatimes.com) February 14, 2013

## Traffic Police to Teach Bus Drivers Politeness

With a mind to address the massive number of complaints about service delivery and the behavioral aspects of public transport drivers and their help and minimize the accident rate, the Metropolitan Traffic Police Division (MTPD) plans to hold a nationwide training program for drivers and helpers from mid-February.

According to DSP Pawan Kumar Giri, spokesperson at MTPD, traffic police have been consulting transportation entrepreneurs and vehicle labor associations in this connection.

"We are discussing various aspects of the training but entrepreneurs have raised serious concerns over the schedule, training mechanisms and training shifts," he said. They are soon to figure out the appropriate mechanisms so that 25 to 30 persons can participate

in one training shift, he added. A meeting among representatives of the transportation ministry, MTPD, entrepreneurs and transport laborers held at the Prime Minister's Office on Sunday decided to create a monitoring committee for a nationwide training mechanism. The committee will design training for drivers and their help to improve their behavior and encourage polite service delivery to passengers, said DoI Nath Khanal, general secretary of the Federation of National Transport Entrepreneurs.

He said, "We hope the training will be fruitful in minimizing accidents caused by human error and nature." Because of the cold the country saw several fatal accidents in the Valley in recent weeks. General Secretary Khanal further said, "We have difficulty man-

aging training schedules as drivers and helpers are busy at work also, but we will find the best way to involve them in the training." Meanwhile, MTPD on Monday completed a month-long 'Service with Smile' training focused on behavioral improvement among traffic police.

Addressing a closing ceremony, IGP Kuber Singh Rana said, "I am hopeful about the impact of the training. I am ready to support MTPD with other training and awareness programs." According to DSP Giri, about 975 traffic police of different ranks participated in the training imparted by professors, artists, writers and poets, human right activists, legal experts and journalists.

Source: [www.myrepublica.com](http://www.myrepublica.com) February 29, 2013

# Traffic Bid to Rein in Public Transporters

The Metropolitan Traffic Police Division (MTPD) has launched a monitoring campaign to ensure reservation of seats for women, people living with disabilities and senior citizens in all kind of public vehicles.

The Motor Vehicles and Transport Management Act 1993 makes

it mandatory for public transport entrepreneurs to reserve a certain number of seats for women, disabled and elderly people.

Traffic police started monitoring public vehicles from Friday following an increasing outcry from the general public over the plight of women, elders and people with disabilities. The initiative is also aims at controlling the use of vulgar words and pictures that are aimed at harassing women. The Act says each of the buses and minibuses plying on short routes should allocate six and two seats respectively.

According MTPD spokesperson DSP Pawan

Giri, out of 860 monitored vehicles, only 340 had the signs, while remaining 520 were openly flouting the rules. "Even those who had the signs had not allocated seats to the needy people," he said. Police have seized blue books of 520 vehicles and said the legal documents would be returned once they put up the required signs. "There will be no action in the first phase. However, they will be booked if caught again," Giri added. The rule has it that two seats should be reserved for the people from these three groups in each long route vehicles and all public vehicle should have visible signs reading "reserved for women, people with disability and senior citizens".

The monitoring started after a meeting among stakeholders, including Department of Transport Management and trade unions, on January 20.

Source: [www.ekantipur.com](http://www.ekantipur.com) February 10, 2013

## News Video

### Air Pollution Causes More than 6 Million Deaths Worldwide

Video Link: [www.abcnews.go.com](http://www.abcnews.go.com)



## Good Reads:

1. [Large Study Finds Link Between Air Pollution and Lower Birth Weight](#) - Vanessa Evans, Yahoo! News, February 7, 2013
2. [Promotion of Public Transport](#) - Ashish Gajurel, The Himalayan Times, February 14, 2013
3. [No Right of Passage](#) - Sulaiman Daud, Nepali Times, February 2013
4. [None for The Road](#) - Editorial, The Kathmandu Post, February 6, 2013
5. [Shrouded in Smog](#) - Pragati Shahi, The Kathmandu Post, February 8, 2013
6. [Valley's Air Quality Deteriorating](#) - Anjali Subedi, Republica, February 26, 2013
7. [Learning a Little](#) - Prayash Raj Koirala, The Kathmandu Post, February 22, 2013
8. [Transforming Kitchens](#) - Bidya Banmali Pradhan, Republica, February 11, 2013
9. [Prepare for Disruptions](#) - Anil Bhattarai, The Kathmandu Post, February 10, 2013

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**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 Asia and hosted by Clean Energy Nepal.

For more information: [www.cen.org.np](http://www.cen.org.np)

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