

Clean Air News

VOLUME 8 ISSUE 10 OCTOBER 2014 (OCT1-OCT31)

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Kathmandu Durbar Square to be No-vehicle Zone from Nov 1

In what has been dubbed as a move to protect heritage sites, the Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) is all set to reintroduce a ban on vehicular movement inside the historical Basantapur Durbar Square from November 1.

However, locals say the ban, as in the past, will not last long as the authorities are simply attempting to impose it without making alternative vehicle parking arrangement.

In 2010, the KMC had declared that no vehicles would be permitted except for emergency vehicles like ambulances inside the Durbar Square, which has been listed as UNESCO World Heritage site.

But the ban soon became ineffective after the KMC could not manage alternative routes for the vehicles owned by the locals and parking space for visitors to the Durbar Square area and Metropolitan Police Range Office (MPRO) inside the heritage area.

“It is really good that the municipal authority is planning to prohibit vehicular movement in the heritage site. But they are repeating the same mistake as in the past because they have not made arrangement for parking space before imposing the ban,” said Ganapati Lal Shrestha, a local who is also a member of a locals’ struggle committee formed a year ago to mount pressure on KMC to protect the heritage site.

He said the KMC officials were not serious toward implementing the ban effectively in

the past. “Parking lots outside the Basantapur area are always packed. This is also a reason why many people park their vehicles inside the heritage site,” added he.

Hari Kumar Shrestha, chief of Basantapur Durbar Area Conservation Program under the KMC, however, claimed that the ban will be effectively enforced this time. “We will not allow vehicles inside Durbar square area at any cost from November. Any vehicle entering the restricted zone will be fined up to Rs 1,000,” he said.

Dhan Bahadur Shrestha, chief of the KMC, however, said that the KMC is looking for alternative parking spaces to make the ban effective and sustainable. “Otherwise, the ban will indeed be ineffective. Locals are ready to support us. We will impose ban and gradually work to manage parking facilities,” added he.

Source: www.myrepublica.com, October 29, 2014

Two-Lane Bridges Hindering City Traffic

Roads may have been widened in the capital city of late, which have helped ease traffic congestion up to some extent, but the two bottlenecks on the Maitighar-Tinkune road section, one of the busiest in Kathmandu, continue to remain as one of the most hindering factors for the law enforcement agency to manage traffic movement.

Almost a year has gone by since the government expanded the 2.66-km Maitighar-Tinkune road, making it an eight-lane road, but the bridges over Dhobi Khola in Bijuli Bazaar and the Bagmati River in Tinkune are yet to be made compatible with the road. The bridges are yet to be expanded, as a result of which the smooth flow of traffic along the eight-lane road ultimately gets stuck at these bridges.

DIG Keshav Adhikari, in-charge of the Metropolitan Traffic Police Division, said on-duty cops are facing a tough time to regulate the traffic on the road stretch, thanks to the two bottlenecks created by the old two-lane bridges.

The Office of the Auditor General in its 51st annual report had also drawn the government's attention to this matter and criticised the authorities for failing to make the bridges compatible with the widened road.

"Though the Maitighar-Tinkune stretch has now become an eight-lane road, bridges above Dhobi Khola and

the Bagmati River have not been widened. Upgradation of the road and bridges should have been carried out simultaneously. The entry of vehicles from the eight-lane road and their exit from the two-lane bridges does not only cause traffic snarls, but also increases the risk of accidents," says the report. Traffic snarl in one place has its chain effect across the core area of the city.

Recently, the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers had directed the concerned authorities under the Kathmandu Valley Road Improvement Project to expand the two-lane bridges in Bijuli Bazaar and Tinkune without further delay.

An official at the KVRIP said an estimated budget of Rs 450 million was presented before the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport for the construction/widening of the bridges. However, the line ministry has asked the KVRIP to cut down the budget as much as possible.

According to the MTPD, haphazard parking on either sides of the Ring Road, piling up of construction materials on footpaths and roads, delay in reconstruction of Battispatali-Maitidevi road section, lack of adequate parking spaces and bus pockets, willful pick-up and drop of passengers, lack of overhead bridges and sub-ways for pedestrians and footpath encroachment by street vendors were adding to the problems of effective

traffic management in the city.

Source: www.thehimalayantimes.com,
October 7, 2014

Dust Particles Found in Excess in Mornings, Evenings

A recent survey conducted by Nepal Health Research Council showed that people of Kathmandu Valley are more vulnerable to tiny dust particles excessively found in air during morning and evening hours.

The research was conducted on air pollution in the valley from mid February. The report said, "The amount of dust particles in Kathmandu is twice the National Outdoor Air Quality Standard between 6 am to 9 am."

According to the report, intensity of outdoor dust particles smaller than 2.5 micrometre starts to increase in air from 5 am and reaches its highest at 9 am. After 9 am, the particles recede which again rises from 6 pm to 9 pm in

the evening.

The tiny dust particles hamper breathing, heart, eyes and increase skin diseases. Nepal Health Research Council has advised public to schedule their outdoor activities likewise to prevent health hazards induced by tiny dust particles.

The study was conducted in several areas of the valley like Putalisadak of Kathmandu, Jagati and Bhimsensthan of Bhaktapur and Mahalaxmishan of Lalitpur, with light scatter real time aerosol monitoring device, which is based on E-sampler technology.

According to Nepal Health Research Council, this is the first research done

in Nepal to measure PM 2.5 (fine Particulate Matter) for 24 hours with highly technical device.

Source: www.thehimalayantimes.com, October 8, 2014

Jagadamba Installs Device to Cut Pollution

Jagadamba Steel Industries has installed modern equipment at its manufacturing facility in Simara in a bid to lessen environmental pollution. The management claimed that this was the first such machinery imported into Nepal.

The high-tech pollution control measure was taken as per an agreement with the locals who had been complaining about the pollution being caused by the factory. As per the deal, the company had agreed to bring such machinery by mid-October 2014.

According to Jagadamba, the Japanese-made equipment has been installed at a cost of Rs 200 million. Locals had been complaining that the gas produced by the factory was causing them health problems. The factory had also received complaints that the gas was affecting the flight of aircraft passing over Simara.

"The new machine will address these concerns," said Pawan Gupta, director of the factory. The locals who had lodged a protest against the industry have also called off their agitation. "The modern plant will control 70 percent of the pollution," said Gupta. "We will complete the remaining 10 percent of the task and resume production at the factory."

The newly-installed equipment will collect the gas produced by the factory and stop dust particles and black gas from circulating outside and release only pure air into the atmosphere. Kishore Tripathi, coordinator of the Jagadamba Steel Pollution Prevention Struggle Committee, said that the installation of the new plant had reduced the health risks of the general people. Likewise, airport staff said that the machine would make aircraft take-offs and

landings easier.

"The gas produced by the factory used to make the sky dark," said the official. "We are hopeful that the situation will change once the machine comes into operation."

Source: www.ekantipur.com, October 7, 2014

Experts Call for Proper Investigation to Curb Road Accidents

Whenever a road accident takes place, authorities are quick to point out that it is the result of the driver's negligence. And the investigation into the accident is instantly wrapped up.

For instance, as many as three people were killed and eight injured in a road accident involving a bus and four motorcycles at Babarmahal on October 14. Metropolitan Traffic Police Division (MTPD) promptly said the deadly accident occurred due to over-speeding of the bus. And the investigation into the incident was soon wrapped up. But there may be many other possible factors involved in accidents.

"Probably, the eight-lane road at Babarmahal might have influenced the driver's behavior for aggressive driving. Or the poor lighting system might be causing poor visibility. Or the accident might have occurred due to another motorist's fault. There may be many such pos-

sible factors," said Mukunda Raj Satyal, a transportation specialist.

"An investigation into a single accident would have helped adopt various counter measures for avoiding road accidents in future," said Satyal, who is also the president of Road Safety Forum-Nepal.

He said only reporting the number of road accidents is unlikely to minimize road accidents, which have been increasing annually. Around 1,700 road fatalities are reported annually on an average, according to a study conducted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in collaboration with the government in 2012. "So, time has come to deal with road accidents more strategically. As road networks are ever expanding and the number of vehicles rapidly increasing, we also need to focus on taking post-accident initiatives like road crash investigation, crash data collection," said Kali Prasad Nepal, another traffic engi-

neer at a program organized by Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport (MoPIT) on Friday to discuss road safety management in Nepal.

Nepal, who is also a senior lecturer of traffic and transportation engineering at an Australian University, said, "Post-crash initiatives would reduce road accidents remarkably from 50 to 60 per cent in the long-run. Likewise, it would also be instrumental in formulating necessary action plan and policies, and allocate resources to avoid road crashes." Saroj Kumar Pradhan, an engineer at Department of Roads (DoR), said the government should develop an integrated system involving all concerned authorities and stakeholders to take road safety initiatives."

Source: www.myrepublica.com, October 31, 2014

Construction of Modern Bus Park Begins

Construction of a permanent bus park at Bardibas, a major trade centre of Mahottari district, has been begun.

The bus park is being constructed in five katthas of land worth Rs 20 million. The land was provided by a local Janata Higher Secondary School.

The present bus park is quite unmanaged and at a sorry state. The bus park construction and management committee chairman Baburam Adhikari informed that there was encouraging assistance from the local people for the

construction of the permanent bus park.

The modern bus park will also have the facilities of drinking water, toilet, electricity and street light.

Currently, the leveling of earth is going on for the construction.

The government bodies, bus entrepreneurs and local people jointly took the initiative for the construction of the modern bus park.

After the completion of the new bus

park, the district would see less number of road accidents, expected the office of district traffic police..

Source: www.myrepublica.com, October 20, 2014

Air Pollution Slows Growth of Children's Lungs, says UK Study

Medical experts are urging the government to take more effective action to clear the city's air after a new study found that air pollution restricts the growth of children's lungs.

The preliminary analysis of a six-year study done in Britain indicates that children exposed to nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter have slower lung growth.

Professor Frank Kelly, an environmental health expert at King's College, London, said a child could lose as much as 165ml of lung volume under high-level exposure to nitrogen dioxide.

The professor said the impact of a smaller lung was lifelong and could "contribute to the development of chronic lung diseases such as asthma".

Studies in Hong Kong have found similar results. Dr Alfred Tam Yat-cheung of the Hong Kong Society of Paediatric Respiriology said that children living in

polluted districts suffered from restricted lung growth, while girls had a more significant decline in lung volume than boys.

A weaker and smaller lung means children might have more difficulty doing exercise and a lower resistance to respiratory diseases, said Tam.

But the specifics of how pollutants restrict the development of lungs is still being studied. "Perhaps children have smaller lungs than adults, and therefore they inhale more air pollutants. However, this is still just speculation," Kelly said.

Ruby Tse, 24, a long-term rhinitis patient, started to suffer from asthma three years ago when she was studying in the UK. The problem persisted when she returned to Hong Kong in 2012.

She says her health improves when she avoids crowded areas such as Mong Kok or Causeway Bay on heavily polluted days. She also exercises indoors to

strengthen her respiratory system and has reduced her reliance on an asthma inhaler from six times to twice a day.

To improve lung function and build defences against pollution, medical experts recommended a diet rich in antioxidants, Vitamin C and E, and urged the government to take more action to improve air quality.

Undersecretary for the Environment Christine Loh Kung-wai said major steps were being taken, including the replacement of catalytic converters in minibuses and taxis, and the replacement of more than 80,000 diesel vehicles by 2019.

Source: www.scmp.co, October 6, 2014

Good Reads

1. [Why cycling is great for everyone – not just cyclists: the guardian.com](http://the-guardian.com), October 16, 2014

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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; www.cleanairinitiative.org

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 rassu@cen.org.np

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