

# Clean Air News

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## Government Blocks Purchase of 300 Electric Bus



Accusing Sajha Yatayat of changing the specifications document provided by the government for the procurement of electric buses, the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport (MoPIT) has blocked the purchase of a fleet of the clean-mode vehicles.

A directive from the ministry to put the procurement process on hold has rendered the

procurement uncertain.

Back in July, the government had provided Rs 3 billion to Sajha Yatayat for the purchase and operation of 300 electric buses in Kathmandu Valley.

But, the ministry has suddenly intervened, stating that Sajha had altered the specifications provided by the government for the procurement.

“The government had provided specifications approved by a cabinet meeting . However, after three months of the release of the funds, they altered the specifications,” said Rajeshwor Gyawali, a joint secretary at MoPIT.

“Since Sajha Yatayat has changed the specifications approved by the cabinet for the purchase , the changes first need to be approved by the

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government.

However, senior officials at Sajha Yatayat deny having really altered the specifications.

“The government has provided a one-page document containing specifications for the electric buses, and we were told that this was just a framework. If it is a framework, we have to make some adjustments to the specifications as per our requirements,” Bhusan Tuladhar, executive director of Sajha Yatayat, told Republica.

“It cannot be the same as the government's specifications A to Z as these constituted just an outline of what type of electric buses the government wanted. We have taken nearly 90 percent from the specifications document. Changes were made to the remaining 10 percent on the basis of past experience, the suggestions of experts, the experience of other countries including India, and a literature review,” he added.

According to Tuladhar, a high-level committee formed by Sajha and comprising representatives from the ministry, the Department of Transportation Management and other agencies has prepared the bid document and the evaluation criteria for suppliers,

along with specifications for the buses.

“Some changes in the specification document are related to the capacity of the buses, the size of seats and legroom. Also, the framework document might not have mentioned whether we needed AC buses or non-AC. The changes were not a big deviation from the framework provided by the government,” he added.

However, Joint Secretary Gyawali said Sajha Yatayat cannot change anything on its own. “It's government funds. There are oversight agencies that will later question the changes made to the specifications. It's our responsibility to stop such changes,” he added.

Rajeshwor Gyawali, Joint Secretary-MoPIT- Sajha Yatayat cannot change the specifications approved by the cabinet. If there is any revision, the government must approve it. Instead of purchasing electric buses as soon as possible, they parked the Rs 3 billion in a bank account for three months without even reporting progress to the government. They went on a foreign visit and saw buses that were different than the specifications. Who will be responsible if an audit or any oversight agency later faults the changes to the specifications? We will decide later what to do after studying

the changes in the specifications.

Bhusan Tuladhar, Executive Director at Sajha Yatayat- The ministry has provided a framework for the specifications. 90 percent of the specifications were taken just as they were in the government's directive. A high-level committee including representatives from the government made changes to 10 percent. These were minor changes made on the basis of experience, a literature review and the suggestions of experts. There were statements from government officials that the electric buses should be purchased before Dashain. However, we had already made it clear to the government that the procurement of quality electric buses could take at least 7/8 months.

Source:

[www.myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com](http://www.myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com), 22 October, 2019

## Air Quality May Get Worse In December To January: Experts

Experts have warned that country might experience worse air condition in December and January.

The extreme form of air pollution in north India, including capital New Delhi in recent times, may affect the air quality of Nepal minimally, environment experts warned.

However, the air condition in Nepal is seemed to have improved over the months. According to a report of the Department of Environment a week ago, only the air condition of Nepalgunj was worse and the air quality of other parts looked good and moderate. However, air pollution in Kathmandu is a bit worse than the air of other parts.

Air pollution normally begins to increase from November and will reach its peak in December or January every year due to various reasons, environmentalists said.

But the impact of Indian pollution in Nepal will be minimal, they further said.

Due to long spell of dry condition, our polluted air cannot get washed and the air gets polluted for long, Bhushan Tuladhar, an environmentalist, said.

Likewise, brick kilns that came into operation from October after remaining closed during the rainy season contribute to air pollution as they use firewood to bake the bricks.

Govinda Lamichhane, an environmental-

ist at the Department of Environment, said pollution level during winter months may depend on rains and wind flow.

If it rains in time and wind blows frequently sweeping away the impure air somewhere during winter, the pollution cannot get to extreme level, he said.

It would be difficult to predict the exact level of pollution now. But it is sure that the level of pollution during winter will be higher than in other seasons, Lamichhane added.

In Nepal, the level of air pollution is measured by different bodies, mainly by the government, the US Embassy and at citizens' level. The pollution level measured by the Department Of Environment on Sunday recorded Nepalgunj as the most polluted city of the country with 161 pm. Likewise, Bhainsepati station recorded the 115 PM, Jhumka, Sunsari station recorded 112 PM, Dang 112 PM, Ratnapark 102 PM, Sauraha 95 PM, GBS, Pokhara 54 PM, PU Pokhara 52 PM, Pulchowk 43PM, Simara 43 PM and Shankapark 31 PM.

According to the department, air pollution level below 50 PM is good and greenery friendly, 51 to100 PM is moderate, 100-150 PM is regarded as unhealthy.

During the last week, the pollution level in India reached about 500 PM which is

highly hazardous. According to the World Air Quality Report, Kathmandu is the seventh most polluted capital city in the world, based on its average yearly PM 2.5 level. The same report had ranked Nepal the eighth most polluted country in the world.

The government has been launching different programmes like awareness generating campaigns, and tree plantation to keep the environment clean, Laamichhane said.

However, environmentalist Tuladhar stated that in lack of proper planning the country seemed to have failed to minimise air pollution quality. Almost 50 per cent of pollution could be minimised by controlling the man-made pollution, he added.

Tuladhar claimed 20 per cent of means of transport has been contributing for 50 per cent pollution in the Kathmandu Valley. If the green sticker scheme of the government becomes effective, pollution in the valley can be reduced considerably, he said.

Promoting the use of electric vehicles, making bicycle lanes in cities and suburban areas, encouraging people for walking may help make the environment clean, he added.

Source: [www.risingnepaldaily.com](http://www.risingnepaldaily.com), 11 November, 2019

## Electric Vehicles Likely to Replace Tempos, Micro-buses



Kathmandu Metropolitan City is likely to replace existing three-wheeler tempos and micro-buses that operate as public vehicles with electric buses.

KMC, in a bid to reduce pollution in the city and make public transportation more reliable has been mulling over the issue for some time now. KMC's Department of Urban Management is set to present a proposal to introduce electric public vehicles at the metropolis' board meeting tomorrow.

Hari Kunwar, head of DoUM at KMC said, "We had been carrying out feasibility study for introducing electric vehicles in the city." KMC officials are mulling over a compensation scheme for tempos and micro bus operators, who

have been providing public transport service inside Kathmandu.

KMC Spokesperson Ishwor Man Dangol said though smaller vehicles proved to be fast, reliable and efficient in the past, it was time for the local government to upgrade the public mode of transport. "Preferably larger electric vehicles will help curb ever growing need of public vehicles, which will also play important role in reducing urban pollution." He added they were holding talks with Sajha Yatayat, a semi-government public transport company.

A KMC source said the board meeting would deliberate on how to manage existing vehicles and their operators.

Dangol said until the new provision was enacted, KMC would monitor such public vehicles and urge vehicle owners to improve their condition. "Most of the smaller means of public transportation like tempos and blue-micros were old enough to be operated as public vehicles," Dangol said, adding, smaller vehicles also contributed to traffic congestion and were difficult to manage.

Source: [www.thehimalayantimes.com](http://www.thehimalayantimes.com),  
20 November, 2019

## South Asia Should Make Concrete Plan, Says Nepal Judge



Air pollution concerns of the South Asian nations are aggravating over the period and it's time for a collective action, says Nepal Supreme Court Judge Anand Mohan.

Addressing the Global Law Conference in Chandigarh University, Justice Mohan said rising pollution levels in New Delhi has caused concerns if the same would spread to Nepal, especially Kathmandu.

“The threat was diffused when the department of meteorology stated that the mountains should prevent it, but others of different opinion said, it actually depends on the direction that the winds take and their intensity,” Mohan said in a statement.

Speaking on the regional scenario, Mohan said Nepal is currently operating

without any thermal power. Whereas, Indian Punjab High Court Judge Ajay Tewari said India is far from that and has 70% dependence on coal for power generation.

“South Asia has the darkest spots of air pollution and air quality in cities in India, Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh is lower than WHO standards,” says Mohan, urging South Asian nations to come together for a concrete action plan.

He said Nepal has been facing severe air pollution since years and it has worsened in the last couple of years.

“Last week when air quality caused a panic there was concern in Kathmandu as to whether the polluted air from Delhi would flow over to Nepal,” he added, citing intensity of the scenario.

Addressing the large gathering of national and international delegates, Justice Mohan said the Nepal Supreme Court had made many decisions pertaining to environmental degradation.

“However, it is a matter of concern that those orders are not making any impact on the ground. I think the time has come for us to break the narrow domestic wall and enforce partnership in the neighborhood for sustained and long-term action,” he suggested.

“The judiciary or government cannot do it by themselves without public participation,” says Tewari.

Source: [www.nepalisansar.com](http://www.nepalisansar.com), 19 November, 2019

## India Says It Plans to Use Hydrogen-Based Fuel to Tackle Air

The Indian government has said it intends to use hydrogen-based fuel technology to help combat pollution, as Delhi was once again enveloped in “severe emergency” levels of smog.

Pollution levels in the capital peaked to dangerously high levels just over a week after the city endured its longest spell of hazardous air quality since public records began. The overall air quality index in the city was 494 on Wednesday morning, according to the monitoring agency Safar, almost 10 times the level deemed safe by the World Health Organization (WHO).

It prompted judges at India’s supreme court to once again criticise the government for failing to prevent noxious conditions in the capital and surrounding

states. “In our view, little constructive efforts have been made by the government and other stakeholders to find solutions to the problem,” said the supreme court judges Ranjan Gogoi and SA Bobde. “The whole of north India is suffering from the issue of air pollution.”

However, the solicitor general, Tushar Mehta, told the supreme court that the central government was exploring the introduction of hydrogen fuel technology – to be specially developed by Japanese experts – across the capital as an alternative to some of the polluting fuels used in factories, cars and public transport.

Hydrogen fuel, which produces only water as a byproduct, is increasingly

used in China, Japan and Germany as a clean energy alternative in public transport. The government will submit a full report on the hydrogen fuel proposal to the supreme court by early December. One of the biggest causes of pollution, farmers in the nearby states of Punjab and Haryana burning their crop stubble, has carried on unabated, despite warnings by the supreme court. So far this year, Punjab has registered 48,683 crop fires and it is the smoke from these flames alongside colder weather conditions that lock in the fumes that have been a key contributor to northern India’s pollution.

Source: [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com), 13 November, 2019

## Good Reads

1. [Pollution from India Unlikely to Reach Kathmandu But Nepal Needs to Deal With Its Own Toxic Air](http://www.kathmandupost.com), Chandan Kumar Mandal, [www.kathmandupost.com](http://www.kathmandupost.com), 8 November, 2019
2. [Mounting Pollution in Kathmandu: Draw Lessons From Delhi](http://www.thehimalayantimes.com), Jiba Raj Pokhrel, [www.thehimalayantimes.com](http://www.thehimalayantimes.com), 8 November, 2019
3. [China’s Effort Against Pollution](http://www.cnn.com), Jack Guy, [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com), 19 November, 2019
4. [More than 90% of the world’s children breath toxic air every day](https://bit.ly/2rxbNgT), <https://bit.ly/2rxbNgT>, 29 October, 2019

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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); [www.cleanairinitiative.org](http://www.cleanairinitiative.org)

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