

Our Concern

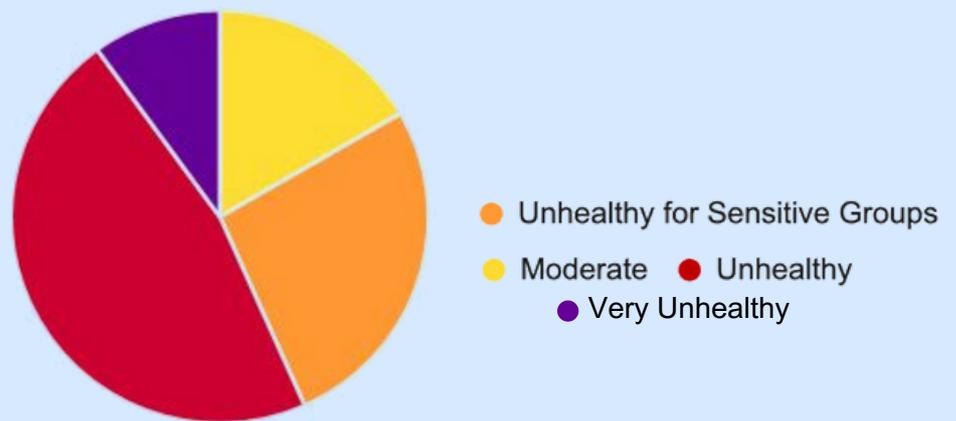
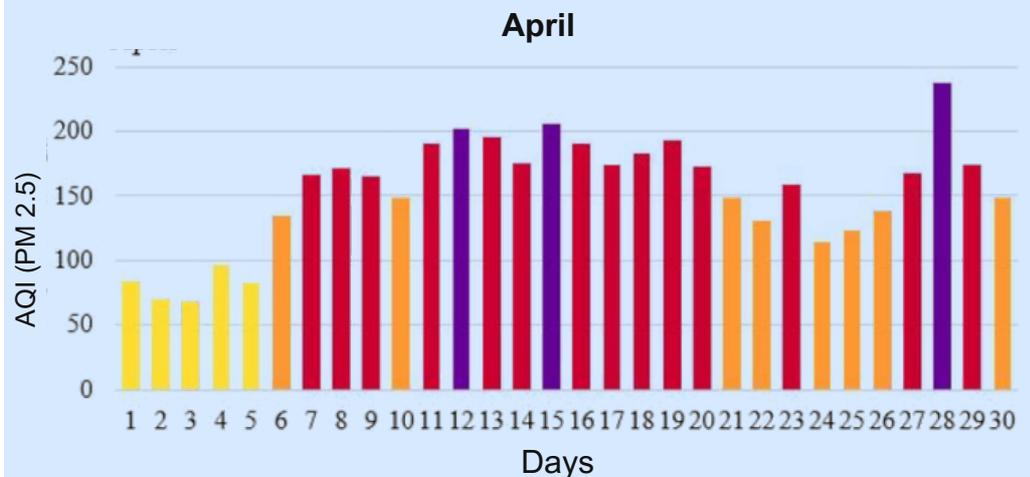


E-Newsletter April 2023

Our Concern, a monthly e-newsletter, is a compilation of news and views from local, and international, media coverage as an attempt to keep our readers abreast on the recent happenings on clean air, energy, and urban mobility and climate change issues.

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- For the month of April, 5 days were moderate with AQI values ranging from 51 to 100, indicating that air quality is acceptable.
- 8 days were unhealthy for sensitive group with AQI values ranging from 101 to 150. During such periods, active children and adults, as well as people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should limit prolonged outdoor exertion during such period.
- 14 days were unhealthy, with AQI values ranging from 151-200, indicating that everyone may begin to experience health effects and members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
- 3 days were very unhealthy, with AQI values ranging from 201-300, indicating health warnings of emergency conditions. It is more likely that the entire population will be affected.

Air pollution risk: Pollution tax goes unused, the government lacks a solid plan



The Government of Nepal has been collecting pollution tax from consumers under pollution control heading for more than a decade. From a tax of NPR 1.5 levied in every litre of petrol and diesel imported, more than 16 billion has been collected in the past 12 years. However, without proper strategies, programs and mechanism, the fund collected have remained unspent over the years.

Kathmandu valley is one of the 10 most polluted cities in the world. One million vehicles, 1/3rd of which do not pass the pollution test, plying through the roads of Valley are the main source of pollution. Kathmandu Valley Air Quality Management Action Plan endorsed in 2020, has specified 137 activities for air pollution control. 75 of which are related to the local government. Further investments can be made in programs such as improving public transport, building parks, and promoting electric vehicles. However, neither the policy nor the intention of the government is clear. When 42100 human death every year in Nepal is attributed to air pollution, according 'State of Global Air 2020'. It is necessary for all three levels of government to take priority to prevent pollution and make proper use of the tax collected.

Source | April 17, 2023

Forest fires in surrounding districts make Kathmandu world's most polluted city

Air quality in Nepal has been declining. According to IQ Air, Kathmandu remained to be the most polluted city in the world on 15 & 16th April, with smoke and haze blanketing the Valley. At these time, Valley's air quality reached very unhealthy levels, with the Air Quality Index (AQI) reading 216. Experts blamed incidents of massive forest fires incidents witnessed across the country for the deteriorating air quality. With no visible systems of rainfall to wash away the pollution, the smoke and haze will persist in the coming days.

For the past few days, there have been around 600 daily forest fires incidents. Most national parks and protected areas across the country have been burning, threatening wild and endangered species. During the dry season, wildfires are common in Nepal. They can occur naturally or as a result of human activities and errors, but in hotter and drier conditions, they become fierce and uncontrollable.



Source | April 17, 2023

The artificial lungs kept in the Ministry of Health turned black just in 15 days due to air pollution



A pair of artificial lungs made of Hepa filters installed at the Ministry of Health and Population's gate on the occasion of World Health Day on 24th of Chaitra 2079, to raise public awareness about the effects of air pollution on human health. However, they turned black in just 15 days, illustrating the severity of the problem. Air pollution causes respiratory health problems as well as heart attack, stroke, eye, skin diseases and cancer. Air pollution in Nepal is caused by vehicle emissions, industrial emissions, forest fires, and household energy use. "Air pollution is a silent killer. It cannot be seen. However, it has a significant impact. It affects every part of our body," says Dr. Raju Pangeni, a chest specialist. According to the ministry, immediate actions should be taken, such as wearing masks, avoiding highly polluted areas, using electric stoves and vehicles, and not burning garbage. Long-term systematic urbanization, the use of renewable energy, and tree planting can all help to reduce air pollution.

Source | April 21, 2023

The number of electric taxis in the valley is growing

The number of electric taxis in Kathmandu Valley is increasing, with 17 currently registered. Bagmati province has mandated that all new and replacement taxis registered in the province be electric. Taxi owners have begun purchasing electric taxis, according to the "Standards for Quality Operation and Management of Public Passenger Taxi Service 2078" issued by the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Transport, Bagmati. Electric taxis are classified as standard or special (deluxe) taxis. Taxis that have reached the age of 20 years' operating within the Kathmandu valley have to buy electric ones in new taxis. Although the government is supposed to set separate taxi fares for ordinary (standard) and deluxe taxis, the rates have not been changed so far. According to the new regulations, if someone wants to register a taxi before 20 years, the taxi's production period must have reached 15 years.



Source | April 26, 2023

37 Sajha electric buses have been stranded for four months due to a lack of charging space.



Sajha Transport's 37 electric buses have been out of service for 4 months due to a lack of charging stations. Although 3 of the 40 buses have been operational for about 8 months by charging in their own premises, the rest remain unused. "All the electric buses brought by Sajha Transport have been successfully tested, there is no problem in running", Kanakamani Dixit, president of the Sajha Transport Cooperative told Nepalkhabar, "When there are many buses, charging depots are needed instead of charging points. Large buses take 5-6 hours to charge, requiring a significant amount of land for charging depots. Sajha Transport has repeatedly requested the Prime Minister's and Council of Ministers' Office, the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport, the Ministry of Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation for an electric bus charging depot, but to no avail. The Nepal Electricity Authority is willing to provide transformers and lines for the charging station once Sajha Transport is given a charging location.

Source | April 26, 2023

"Heat wave" in Nepal, why has the heat increased?

'Heat wave' (extreme heat) has been reported in several parts of Nepal, including Kathmandu, Pokhara, and Janakpur. According to the Department of Hydrology & Meteorology (DHM), the heat wave has lasted several days, particularly in some areas of the eastern and central Terai as well as the central hills. DHM that has been providing three-day weather forecasts and estimated weather information for up to one week, currently lacks the technology and resources to forecast Heatwaves.

Nepal generally witnesses heatwaves during May and June. However, recently it is being observed even in April. Experts claim the low winter and pre-monsoon rainfall to be the reason behind the heightening temperatures resulting to the heatwaves.



Source | April 18, 2023

Warning after sweltering heat causes distress across Tarai



Nepal has witnessed mild to moderate heatwaves in different terai districts including Kapilvastu, Rupandehi, Parsa, Bara, and Sarlahi. Maximum temperatures in the region has risen by 3 degree Celsius than average for this time of year and has surpassed 38-40 degree Celsius. The Lumbini provincial authorities have advised residents not to leave their homes in the afternoon and to drink plenty of fluids and water to stay hydrated in order to avoid the harmful effects of the scorching heat. Locals, on the other hand, complained that these suggestions are only useful for those who can afford to stay at home.

Source | April 19, 2023

Met Office predicts rainfall across the country today

According to the Meteorological Forecasting Division, rain is expected across the nation on Sunday as a westerly wind system approaches the nation from Sudurpaschim Province. The country's highest rainfall, 31.5 mm, was recorded on Saturday in the Kathmandu Valley. Waterlogging from the downpour affected both pedestrians and traffic in a number of locations, including Sundhara and Tripureshwar, among others. Meanwhile, Pokhara received 23.2 mm of rain, Taplejung 22.9 mm, and Lumle 19.6 mm. The pre-monsoon rainfall has helped to cool the Tarai region, which had reached 40 degrees Celsius about two weeks ago. In most areas of the nation, the maximum temperature had increased by 3 degrees Celsius, making it warmer than usual for this time of year. Prolonged lack of rainfall triggered incidents of forest fires across the country, resulting in a general deterioration in air quality. Smoke and haze blanketed Kathmandu Valley and a few other locations, disrupting many domestic flights. The rainfall that began on Saturday is expected to help reduce the number of forest fire incidents.



Source | April 30, 2023

Good Reads

Some supplemental readings if you are interested in diving deeper into contemporary environmental issues in Nepal and beyond. Take a peek for a broader array of topics.

Global EV Outlook 2023

Climate Change Is Rolling Back American Progress on Air Pollution



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