

Our Concern

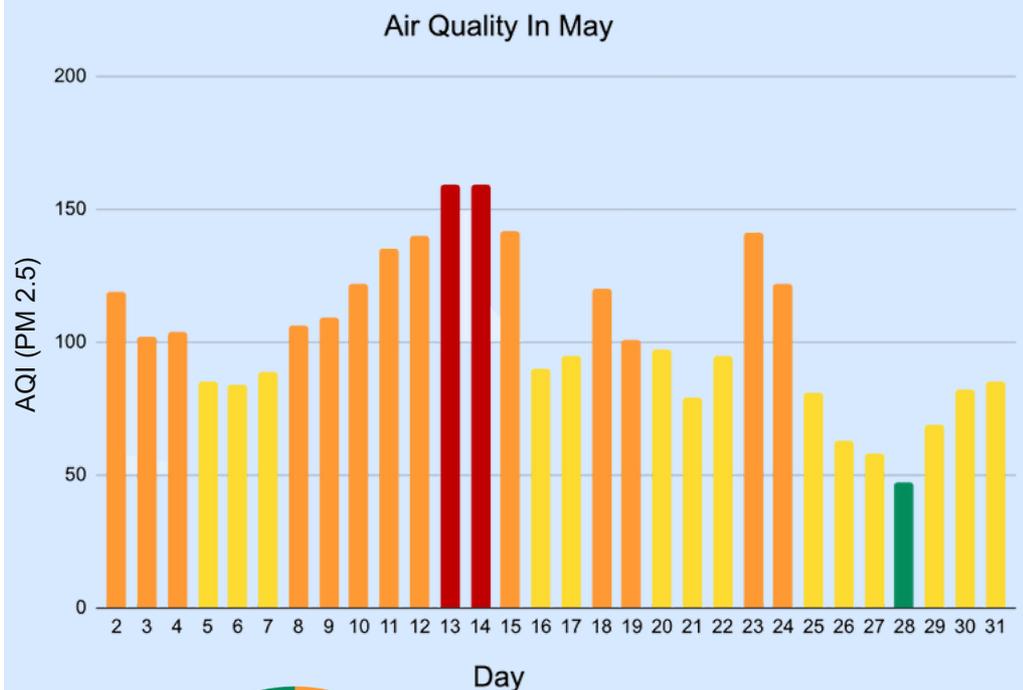


E-Newsletter May 2023

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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- There was 1 day when the AQI value was below 50 and the air quality posed little to no risk.
- There were 14 days with moderate air quality with AQI values between 51-100, which is acceptable but can cause moderate health issues for a very small number of people.
- There were 13 days with unhealthy air quality for sensitive groups with AQI values between 101-150. Active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should limit prolonged outdoor exertion during such period.
- There were 2 days with unhealthy air quality with AQI values between 151-200 in which everyone may experience health impacts and should avoid or limit prolonged outdoor exertion.
- Data for 1 day was missing.

Air pollution sees a rise across Nepal



Recent data has demonstrated a dangerous rise in air pollution. On May 12th, Republica reported that air quality index levels reached 176 in Lalitpur, Kirtipur, Kathmandu hit an AQI of 163, Narayani reached 171 and Dhankuta hit 155. When air quality index levels reach above 150, experts advise wearing masks outside. Pollution is especially dangerous for the elderly and children, with the potential of creating chronic illness. This recent rise in air pollution is attributed to the lack of rain and the morning haze comes from exhaust emissions.

Source | May 12th

Changing policy is hurting the electric vehicle transition

While Nepal has made various commitments to transition to clean energy, policy instability is a core challenge to this transition, experts argued at the “EV Dialogue 2023” conference. For example, taxation policies relating to electric vehicles have changed four times in the last two years which disincentivizes the public to buy EVs. Nepal has committed to reaching 25 percent EV usage by 2025 and 90 percent by 2030. However, unstable policies and EV tax increases challenge these targets, even though, as the experts point out, EVs can reduce consumers’ expenses significantly. Switching to clean EVs can also help reduce air pollution and its consequences which the World Bank estimates cost Nepal \$3.1 billion every year. EVs have already seen a great rise in past years (15% annually) such that there are now 15,000 EVs across Nepal according to Nepal Automobile Dealers’ Association. However, the EV share is still less than 1% and more stable policy support and subsidies from the government is needed to facilitate the transition.



Source | May 15th

The government's contradictory policy on electric vehicle taxation



The government has increased the customs duty on entry-level electric cars, jeeps, and vans. The government has raised the customs duty and excise tax on entry-level electric vehicles, which are in high demand and widely used in Nepal, by up to 15 percent. In contrast, the government has implemented a contradictory policy by reducing the tax on the import of medium-range electric vehicles to promote affordable electric vehicles. There hasn't been a significant increase in taxes on high-priced electric vehicles.

The government has now implemented a provision where only a 10 percent excise tax will be levied on electric vehicles up to 50 kilowatts. Now, the government has introduced varying tax slabs for electric vehicles based on their power capacity. Vehicles with a capacity of up to 100 kilowatts will be subject to a 15 percent excise tax and a 10 percent customs duty.

[Source](#) | May 15th

Climate change and increased lightning

What started as a peaceful night for a family of four in Dailekh, ended in an explosion when lightning struck the family home on Monday, May 19th. Within the last ten years, lightning has proven to be the third most deadly natural phenomenon in Nepal. Although 90 percent of lightning strikes occur above the earth's surface, the ten percent that do make contact with earth can be deadly. Within a period of 30 days in March and May, 42 individuals were injured, and five were killed in Nepal. In the last decade, 905 individuals have died from lightning strikes. However, lightning hasn't always been this prominent. Recent studies have demonstrated correlation between changing climatic conditions, and an increase in lightning storms. What should you do if you find yourself in a potential lightning storm? The National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Authority advises taking shelter in a low location, when lightning strikes and thunder claps are within 30 seconds of each other, as these strikes are more likely to reach the ground.



[Source](#) | May 19th

South Asian youths united in conference on climate change



South Asian youths took the lead and demanded unity amongst South Asian states at a recent conference for climate resilience in Kathmandu. The SHAPE conference or “Shaping Climate Resiliency towards a Great Himalayan Future for All” boasted 100 youth participants from 14 different countries. The conference brought to light the need for intergovernmental collaboration in the face of the climate crisis. At the conference, inspiration was drawn from regional organizations of the world, including the European Union, which demonstrate the potential for regional integration and economic development, as well as climate policy collaboration. Attention was brought to the failures of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) which has not been able to effectively implement regional climate policy.

[Source](#) | May 21st

34,166 kgs of waste collected in mountain clean up

How can you find a mountain climber? Just follow their trail of trash. Recently the Nepali Army has embarked on an expedition to clean up this trash trail, with a whopping 34,166 kg of waste cleared from the mountains by May 25th. The Mountain Clean-up Campaign 2023 is working at four main critical sites, Mt. Everest, Annapurna, Lhotse, and Mt. Baruntse. Although the climbing industry is now integral to the Nepali economy, non-biodegradable waste is a byproduct of the industry. The team of 97 Sherpas and Nepali Army personnel have made an incredible dent in the mountain of empty oxygen canisters, abandoned tents, food containers, plastics, glass, aluminum, and electronic gadgets.



[Source](#) | May 25th

Monsoon likely to be delayed this year



The monsoon rains in Kathmandu are critical to agricultural production, and hence economic output. Indispensable paddy farmers rely on the 80 percent of annual rainfall that occurs in the monsoon season over a period of just 105 days. However, the Meteorological Forecasting Division of the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology states that the weather isn't quite on schedule again this year. Although last year the usually predictable monsoon rains missed the clock, and arrived a full eight days early, it seems as though this year the clouds are running behind schedule. This is attributed to the El Niño climatic conditions, which are also predicted to bring hotter than average temperatures and below average rainfall. Furthermore, Nepal is highly susceptible to extreme weather events attributed to climate change. Climate change is likely to foster days of intense rainfall past the monsoon period, as well as droughts, and abnormally high temperatures in winter months coming this year.

[Source](#) | May 29th

Government unveils NPR 1.75 trillion budget for upcoming fiscal year

Finance Minister Prakash Sharan Mahat announced the government's budget estimate for the upcoming fiscal year. The overall budget estimate is set to NPR1.75 Trillion, which is slightly lower than last year's budget estimate. Of the whole budget, NPR15.56 billion has been allocated for the forest and environment sector. Dr Prakash Sharan Mahat said that environmental balance will be supported through forest management, biological diversity, and watershed management. The government also aims to expand renewable energy, such as hydropower and wind and solar energy, to remote areas that lack national transmission. The budget includes plans to conduct the Nepal Climate Model Project at 43 local levels providing coordinated support of climate adaptation and mitigation.



[Source 1](#) [Source 2](#) | May 29th/May 30th

Mountain communities urge world leaders to decarbonise Everest



Rising temperatures are threatening the environment across the whole Hindu Kush Himalaya mountain range which stretches across eight countries. According to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), scientists predict that 2/3 of glaciers in the region will vanish in the next 70 years with the current emissions scenario. And the impacts can already be seen now as 79 glaciers have thinned by more than 100 meters the past 60 years and adverse weather effects, including heat waves, droughts, natural disasters, and unpredictable snowfall, have increased. The mountain range is home to 240 million people and the region provides water flows to hundreds of millions more. Mountain communities, research institutes, and climbers have come together to decarbonise. On May 29th people took part in a rally for the mountain and to commemorate the climbers that have summited.

Source | May 29th

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.

[Gulf workers need protection from the heat](#)

[Hundreds of thousands to be evacuated as Bangladesh and Myanmar brace for severe cyclone](#)

[UN: 258 million people faced acute food insecurity in 2022](#)

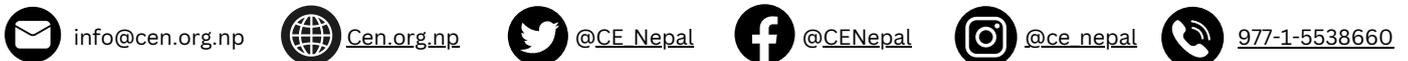
[SC orders govt to investigate and confiscate private possession of illegal wildlife parts](#)

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