

Our Concern



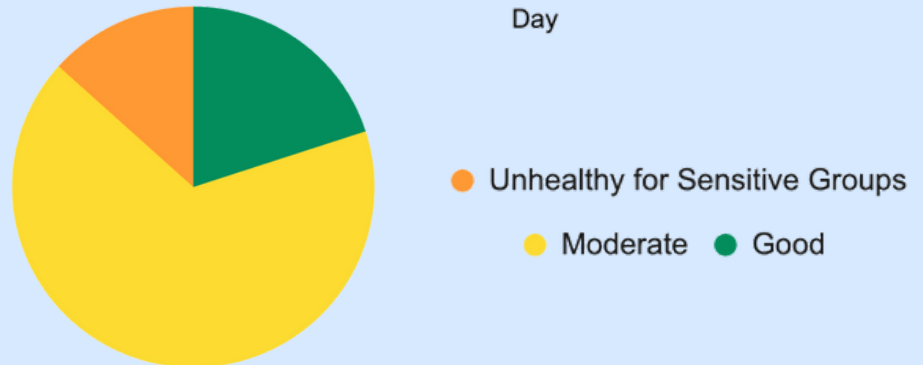
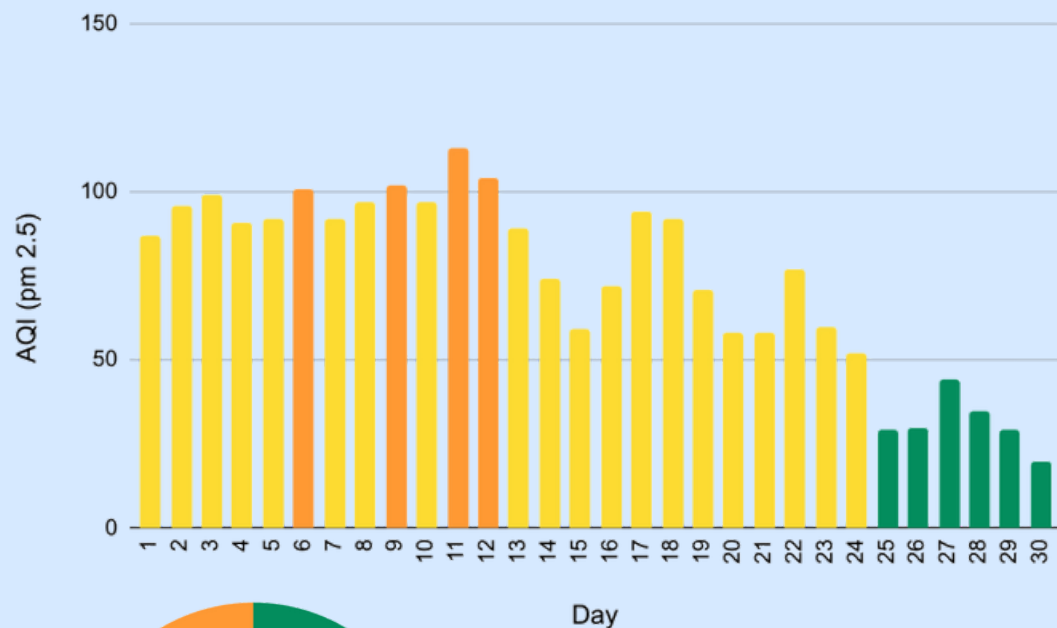
E-Newsletter June 2023

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.

Table of Contents

- 1- Air Quality Index
- 2- Nepal's environmental budget
- 2- In many cities, bad air is inescapable
- 3- Nepali cities must champion climate action
- 3- Bonn climate talks
- 4- Nepal's changing monsoon
- 4- Solar energy in Madhesh
- 5- Shrinking Himalayan glaciers
- 5- EVs in Nepal - 1 step forward, 2 steps back
- 6- Nepal imported 3870 EVs in the first 11 months of the current fiscal year

Air Quality Index in June



- There was 6 day when the AQI value was below 50 and the air quality posed little to no risk.
- There were 20 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 4 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 0 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.

Nepal's environmental budget: Is it sufficient to tackle the urgent pollution crisis?



The recently published budget for the upcoming fiscal year has been praised for prioritizing environmental efforts. More than Rs 15 billion has been allocated for the forestry and environment sector - most of which seems to be going toward conservation, biodiversity, and resource management. However, this might still not be enough. The Kathmandu Valley has a severe air pollution issue. Kathmandu frequently ranks as the most polluted city in the world causing respiratory diseases, lung cancer, heart problems, hypertension, and stroke cases. Using electric buses, such as the ones bought by Sajha Yatayat, is a great way to reduce pollution. More such initiatives along with government commitment to e-mobility, including buying e-buses and building charging stations, are needed to tackle the pollution problem. Overall, the government budget allocation for environmental conservation is a step in the right direction, but a sustained effort to enhance the electric bus system is needed to fight pollution.

Source | June 5th

For many cities around the world, bad air is an inescapable part of life

At the start of June, wildfires caused thick, dark smoke and hazardous levels of air pollution in eastern parts of Canada and the United States. This is dangerous. But for most of the world, particularly in the global South, exposure to such levels of air pollution is not uncommon. The air pollution was shocking to NYC, but many people in urban centers in developing countries experience similar conditions frequently. Nine of the ten cities with the worst annual air quality are located in Asia - six of which are in India. In Lahore, eye infections, breathing problems, and chest congestions are common. In New Dehli, a thick haze frequently limits visibility enough to obscure landmarks. In Northern Africa, many cities reached the same air quality index levels as New York City. Air pollution kills across the globe, but many places in the Global South feel the effects disproportionately, including Kathmandu.



Source | June 9th

Nepali cities must champion climate action



In 2020, Mumbai joined C40 Cities Network; a network of cities across the globe working together to act on climate change at the city level. While the focus is often on international and federal legislation, cities play a key role in combatting climate change, with the majority of the world's population and CO2 emissions. Mumbai's climate action plan focuses on urban mitigation, adaption, and resource management, and other cities in the network, such as Lisbon, Cape Town, and Nur Sultan take similar actions. Having adopted ambitious climate targets and recognizing the importance of local governance, this conversation is highly important for Nepal. And while current local actions have been convincing, there are challenges remaining. The main focus has been forestry, which means little to the majority of the Nepali population which resides in the cities. And there is a lack of coordination between federal and city-level governance. Financing from public, private, and international sources is key to climate action, but such a task can be difficult for cities that might need help from federal approaches. Therefore, federal financing strategies, such as green bonds, are needed and should be planned and implemented in partnership with cities.

Source

June 5th

Bonn climate talks hear crowded Dhaka's plea on human cost of climate change

Preparing for COP28, climate talks are happening at the Bonn Climate Conference. There was a large focus from developing countries on implementing the “loss and damage fund” from COP27 as fast as possible as harsh climate effects are already felt now. Bangladesh's mayor highlighted the public health risks in Dhaka, such as extreme floods and heat caused by climate change. Furthermore, rural communities in Bangladesh are threatened as they lose farmland due to erosion and salinity, spurring climate migration. The World Bank estimates that Bangladesh could see upwards of 13 million climate migrants. Communities of the Global South are on the frontlines of climate change, and financing local resilience, through the loss and damage fund for example, is urgently needed.



Source

June 9th

Nepal bracing for a drier, hotter and more unpredictable monsoon



On June 11, Diktel, Khotang in eastern Nepal recorded 162 mm of rainfall in a mere three hours. Such severe rainfall is considered an extreme weather event - even 100 mm in three hours would be out of the ordinary. In fear of water damage and rainfall disasters, people were worried and came out of their houses. 162 mm of rainfall in three hours increases the chances of landslides and other dangerous events significantly. Such extreme weather events are concerning to see at the start of the monsoon. Generally, the monsoon starts around the 13th in Nepal, however, last year the monsoon began as early as June 5th. This year the monsoon is likely to be warmer and drier due to El Nino conditions in which the tropical Pacific Ocean is heated up. However, climate change also plays a role and is likely to make the weather warmer and extreme events more unpredictable. Nepal is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, and experts have already started to notice more extreme rain events and droughts in parts of the country are becoming more likely, affecting hydropower and agriculture.

Source | June 13th

11,000 residents in Madhesh gain access to clean water irrigation through solar energy

A new solar energy project helps 11,000 people in the Sarlahi and Siraha districts of Madhesh gain access to clean water. Sponsored by the Government of Japan, the Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEPIC), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), these projects use solar-powered pumps to irrigate the water, ultimately enabling clean water to reach the districts. The Chure hill region often struggles with access to clean water as they rely on seasonal streams and waterholes and struggle with unclean development - all of which is worsened by climate change. Solar-pump irrigation projects like these can help such regions. The Government of Japan also helped set up a solar electricity backup system along with solar training for community members, ensuring uninterrupted electricity to critical medical facilities along with computer equipment to local schools.



Source | June 19th

Himalayan glaciers could lose 80% of their volume if global warming isn't controlled



The climate is warming and Nepal is one of the countries that will feel the effects most significantly. Glaciers are already melting today, and a new report finds that if greenhouse gas emissions are reduced sharply, Himalayan glaciers can lose up to 80% of their volume within this century. The report also finds that glaciers shrunk 65% faster this decade compared to the last decade. This causes more avalanches and flash floods and will have devastating effects on the 2 billion people living downstream who depend on water from the glaciers. These changes are largely irreversible and will impact communities for generations to come. Not nearly enough is being done to reverse climate change at the needed rate. Communities in the Himalayan regions have contributed virtually nothing to climate change, yet they are some of the most exposed to climate change.

[Source](#) | June 13th

Banning the use of plastic in Kathmandu since Shrawan 1st

Kathmandu Metropolitan City prohibits single-use plastic from July 1st, including the production, sale, and distribution of plastic flower bouquets as well as the use of plastic bags thinner than 40 microns, aiming for effective implementation. KMC has also adopted a policy to determine the quality and standards of construction materials used. During any construction work, they aimed to ensure reduced environmental pollution, adequate safety measures for workers, maximum utilization of local labor's knowledge, skills, and capacity, promoting indigenous workforce, and effective implementation.



[Source](#) | June 22nd

1 step forward, 2 steps back in Nepal



Nepal has yet again changed its EV import taxation policy - now five times in two years. These frequent changes have harmed smaller 50-100kw two-wheelers and helped larger luxury electric vehicles raise suspicions that the rates are adjusted based on political patronage of power lobbies among car importers. Now Import tariffs are up to 15% on electric vehicles between 50-100KW. Among activists, this has caused a wave of frustration. Environmentalist Bhushan Tuladhar states “This is a blatant disregard for the country’s environmental policies because the government has significantly increased the tax on more affordable EV options.”

Source | June 9th

Nepal imported 3870 EVs in the first 11 months of the current fiscal year

During the first 11 months of the fiscal year, Nepal imported 3,870 electric vehicles, which according to the Department of Customs, is equivalent to Rs 11.23 billion. The government collected Rs 3.05 billion in customs duties. The vast majority of the electric vehicles were below 100 kW. The low-capacity EVs have increased significantly this year after the government reduced their taxes. Recently, the government reduced taxes on vehicles of 100-200 kW capacity, which has led to an import increase of these vehicles - demonstrating the power of tax rates. However, while tax rates on larger EVs have been reduced in the recent budget year, the government increased the taxes on entry-level electric vehicles, which will likely cause a decrease in the import of these.



Source | June 25th

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.

Nepal, India agree on long-term power trade

५ दिनसम्म तराईमा तातो हावा चल्ने पूर्वानुमान, बच्ने कसरी?

सहर सफा राख्ने 'इन्दौर' सूत्र

Canadian wildfire smoke has given New York the worst air quality of any major city

Fighting climate change







Rain-induced disasters in the east and heat waves in west

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