

NATIONAL POLICY ON AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Recognizing the growing problem of air pollution in Colombo, the Cabinet of Ministers, at its meeting held on 17th February 1993 approved the implementation of the “Clean Air 2000 Action Plan” (CA2AP) for air quality management in the Colombo Metropolitan Area (Cabinet Paper 93/250/024). Out of fifty Actions proposed in the Plan, only a fraction of actions (07) could be implemented fully or partly. Although the lack of funds was considered the reason for this situation, it was understood at the Progress Review meeting of the Cabinet appointed Clean Air 2000 Action Plan Implementation Committee that the unavailability of a clean policy on air quality management is a major hindrance for the slow progress.

Rapid urbanization has placed additional demands on road transport systems. In addition improvements to the national and city road networks have not been responsive to the increased number of road vehicles resulting in urban congestion leading to wastage of fuel and consequent air pollution.

With the GOSL looking towards accelerated industrial expansion as the main engine of future economic growth, maintenance of good air quality would be an added attraction for both foreign investors and tourists to consider Sri Lanka.

The transport sector accounts for nearly two thirds of the country’s fossil fuel consumption and is the main cause of urban air pollution. There is good evidence to show that the main emissions of concern with respect to air pollution are particulate and sulfur dioxide (mainly from diesel) and lead from leaded gasoline Hence, the national policy on air pollution abatement focuses mainly on Vehicle Inspection and Maintenance; Fuel Reformulation, Pricing and Fleet Mix; Emission Inventory, Monitoring and Reduction; Standard Setting; Institutional Framework and Regulatory Compliance; Economic Instruments; Transport Planning and Traffic Management and Public Awareness.

The National Policy on focused areas on Air Quality Management prepared by the National Experts of the said Clean Air 2000 Action Plan Implementation Committee is given below. This Committee comprises all agencies that would be responsible for implementing this policy.

OBJECTIVES

- To maintain good air quality to reduce morbidity due to air pollution and in turn reduce national health expenditures.
- To increase the national income from industries and tourism

1. VEHICLE INSPECTIONS AND MAINTENANCE

The GOSL will encourage private sector participation in inspection and maintenance programs for motor vehicles with a view to improving vehicle emission standards. A program will be developed by the Commissioner of Motor Traffic (CMT) to demonstrate the actual cost and pollution reduction that could be achieved through engine tune up. Engine tune-up will be mandated under the issue of fitness certificate. The CMT along with the Traffic Police will establish a program to identify and induce owners to repair polluting vehicles through visual inspection and the imposition of spot fines. Repeat offenders will be prosecuted. Necessary amendments will be made to the laws early.

The Department of Motor Traffic, Traffic Police and Ceylon Motor Traders' Association with the assistance of the Central Environmental Authority and the Ministry in charge of the subject of Environment will organize programs to create awareness among owners and drivers on maintaining vehicles in sound mechanical condition with a view to avoid air pollution. In addition, the department will organize to train garage owners who issue annual certificate of fitness for vehicles prior to issuing the Annual Revenue License.

The central Environmental Authority (CEA) will prescribe maximum permissible emission level applicable to different categories of motor vehicles. Depending on the usage, periodical inspection ranging from 6 months to 1 year will be made mandatory for all types of vehicles.

Duty price reductions on spare parts that are vital to control vehicular emissions will be granted by GOSL.

2. FUEL REFORMULATION, PRICING AND FLEET MIX

The ministry in charge of the subject of Environment in consultation with the ministry in charge of the subject of Power and Energy will develop a policy and a time bound action program to introduce low sulphur diesel and unleaded petrol island wide immediately and make its complete use mandatory by the year 2010. As already decided by the Cabinet of Ministers on 26.03.97, the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation should implement the production of Lead free petrol by year 2005 and the termination of the use of Leaded petrol completely by the year 2010.

Pricing Policy of fuel should support application of price incentives in favors of less polluting fuel use and should extend to vehicle import regimes and vehicle taxes.

Two-Stroke engines, which are generally inefficient users of fuel, will be discouraged as far as possible to minimize emissions. The use of Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) driven vehicles will be promoted once legalized under the Motor Traffic Act.

3. EMISSION INVENTORY AND MONITORING AND REDUCTION

The present air quality monitoring programs in Colombo will be further expended to other cities. Air Quality Monitoring will be carried out by a competent research organization such as the National Building Research Organization (NBRO) for ambient air quality while the Industrial Technology Institute (ITI) former Ceylon institute of Scientific and Industrial Research (CISIR) will undertake monitoring of air quality from stationary sources. The CEA will be adequately equipped to be a referral laboratory.

The data collected from these programs will be analyzed and published by the CEA and used to assist future decision-making. An air pollution index will be developed and published by the CEA for Colombo and will be given adequate exposure through the media thereby increasing public awareness.

The contribution to the air pollution by the industrial emissions and the power sector emissions has become significant. The Central Environmental Authority will develop regulatory measures to reduce the air pollution from stationary Sources especially from power sector.

4. STANDARD SETTING

The ministry in charge of the subject Environment together with the CEA enacted the national ambient air quality regulations in 1994. Standards for industrial and vehicular emissions will be gazetted in early 2000.

5. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

The success in maintenance of good air quality in Sri Lanka will largely be dependent upon the enforcement of the standards and laws that prevent air pollution. The Secretary to the Ministry in charge of the subject of Environment would continue to chair the CA2AP Implementation Committee and coordinate the implementation of the various actions listed in the Action Plan. Institutional Strengthening of the CMT, Traffic Police, NBRO, CEA and ITI will be a priority for the GOSL. In conjunction with the CEA, the Traffic Police and CMT will carry out enforcement of law. Enactment of the proposed changes to the Motor Traffic Act will be completed by the year 2000 by the Ministry in-charge of Transport. However, introduction of amendments to laws regulations to impose spot fines on vehicles on visual evidence will be done with immediate effect.

6. ECONOMIC INSTRUMENTS

Lack of information on the economic and environmental costs related to air pollution has been their priority reason behind the relatively scarce use of economic instruments such as the introduction of higher penalties for polluting vehicles and lower duties for importation of essential equipment for vehicle inspection and maintenance and equipment for research and monitoring. A review of the possible use of different forms of duty and taxes for importation of new and reconditioned Vehicles and engines linked to their polluting potential will be carried out.

7. TRANSPORT PLANNING AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

With the rapid increase, in the past few decades, of the population of Colombo and its surrounding urban areas, the number of vehicles on the road has also greatly increased leading to growing traffic congestion problems. The Ministry in charge of Transport and the Urban Development Authority (UDA) will consider the recently completed studies on improving traffic flow and improved transportation planning and formulate and implement a transport policy that will improve air quality. Ministry in charge of the subject of Transport will take action to improve the public transportation system to reduce the use of private vehicles. Improvements will also be made on the railway transport system to reduce the road traffic.

8. PUBLIC AWARENESS, PARTNERSHIPS AND GOVERNMENT INTERACTIONS

Management of air quality is a collective responsibility and obligation of all sectors, including the state agencies, private sector and citizens groups. The public, as the ultimate beneficiaries and custodians of the environment, play a pivotal role in implementing this policy. All the relevant agencies should continue to promote awareness so that the interests of all stakeholders can be met.

9. FUNDING

The GOSL will allocate funds to the relevant institutions for implementation of the actions proposed in the CA2AP and for the implementation of the proposed actions mentioned in this policy as a matter of priority.

Approval of the Cabinet of ministers is sought for

- (a). The acceptance of the National Policy on Air Quality Management and,
- (b). Directing responsible agencies to initiate action to implement the above policy