

Thimphu electric vehicle incentives

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Loan equity for EVs increased to 50% and 23 quick EV charging stations to be installed between 2019-21

To promote low emission vehicles and Electric Vehicles (EVs) in the country, 23 quick EV charging stations will be installed over the course of three years.

This is part of the Global Environmental Facility's (GEF) three-year US\$ 3mn project (2019-21), "Bhutan Sustainable Low-emission Urban Transport System" which offers incentives to taxi drivers who switch to EVs and tax waivers to the general population who do the same.

The Road Safety and Transport Authority (RSTA) is planning to change the country's urban transport sector by promoting EVs for cabbies.

"We are focusing on taxi drivers registered in Thimphu because the number of taxis registered in Thimphu is large and we have found out that the taxis cause the most carbon emission," said RSTA Director General, Pemba Wangchuk.

As of 2018, there are around 4,170 registered taxis in the country of which 1,885 taxis are registered in Thimphu alone.

On an average, taxis travel about 75,000 km a year.

The RSTA Director General said the project will fund 20% of the cost or will provide a subsidy of US\$ 5,500 to about 300 taxi operators as incentive. "Those interested would be able to get 50% loan as the Royal Monetary Authority has approved to increase the loan equity to 50% from the existing 30%," he said. "We are hopeful that this will reduce the import of fuels as a huge amount goes into the import of fuels."

According to RSTA record, the number of vehicles in the country has increased almost four times from slightly less than 25,000 in 2000 to over 100,544 as of December 31, 2018.

Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the Bhutanese transport sector is projected to more than double from a value of 177,000 tCO₂ in 2005 to 376,000 tCO₂ in 2020.

Pemba Wangchuk said that the project is feasible in the country as Bhutan is rich in hydropower resources and thus, using hydro-based electricity in the transportation sector will benefit the country in the long run. "We are exporting electricity to other countries as we have rich hydropower resources so the project is sustainable in our country," he said. "We are not only importing fuel which is not eco-friendly but it also removes a huge burden off our economy."

Pemba Wangchuk said that to make it convenient for EV users, RSTA is planning to spread the quick charging stations over different locations in case the EVs have to travel to longer distances. "We will be installing quick charging stations in places like Paro, Haa, Lamperi, Wangduephodrang, Punakha, Gedu and at Wangkha on the way to Phuentsholing."

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