

CTC switches to green fuel

To shift 35% of bus fleet to bio-diesel mode in eco-friendly as well as pocket-friendly move

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kolkata: In the first voluntary step towards lowering vehicular pollution in the city, Calcutta Tramways Co. (CTC) has started using bio-diesel in its bus fleet from February 2. Though 25% of the vehicles have already switched to the green fuel, CTC officials are keen to gradually hike it to 35% over the next few months.

On Tuesday, CTC chairman Raideo Goala and managing director P K Chattopadhyay signed the pact with Emami group directors Aditya V Agarwal and Manish Goenka for regular procurement of bio-diesel. While CTC's 300-bus fleet consumed 5.4 lakh litre diesel a month till Jan-

REDUCING EMISSION

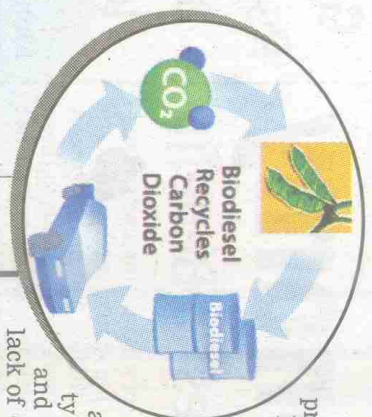
uary, the pact with Emami will reduce its diesel consumption by 1.35 lakh litre.

Instead, an equal quantum of bio-diesel will be used in its fleet. With Emami offering bio-diesel at Rs 1.44 less than the price of diesel, it will lead to savings of around Rs 2 lakh per month.

"The primary reason for going for bio-diesel is to make our fleet an environment-friendly mode of transport. The financial benefits are secondary. During trials conducted in January, we have seen a 35% improvement in smoke value. That means, emissions from buses, which use a mix of diesel and bio-diesel, emit 35% less pollutants than those using only diesel," explained Chattopadhyay.

CTC, which began operating buses in November 1992, carries 0.16 million passengers per day or 58 million passengers per annum in the 250-odd buses that it plies daily.

Emami will be able to meet CTC's monthly requirement with less than a day's



production at the Haldia plant that has a daily capacity of 300 tonne. Though it is in talks with several other institutions — including other transport corporations in the state, Kolkata Police, Kolkata Municipal Corporation, power utilities CESC and West Bengal State Electricity Board as well as coal, iron ore and other mineral mining firms — lack of environmental concern has led to poor response.

Praising the CTC management for accepting the fuel within a month of conducting trials, Goenka hoped others would be as proactive. "Unfortunately, all that the organizations are concerned of is mileage and whether it will harm their engine. No one is bothered about environment and how much the vehicles are polluting right now," he said, a hint of frustration unmistakable in his voice.

Despite the fuel being tested and approved by SGS of Singapore to be of European Union standard, which is far more stringent than the Bureau of Indian Standard norms, companies insist on conducting field trials, thereby delaying the process. Against the BIS sulphur limit of 50 mg/kg, EU has a limit of 10 mg/kg. The bio-diesel manufactured by Emami has a sulphur count of 0.83 mg/kg. CSTC has already conducted trials. Others, too, insist on testing the fuel before agreeing to use.

Indian Oil Corporation has inspected the facility and is likely to begin purchasing bio-diesel from May for pre-mixing with diesel sold through its retail outlets in the city. "If it happens, we will be able to sell our entire stock and go in for capacity expansion," said Agarwal. Meanwhile, the company plans to set up two dispensing stations at Haldia and Balasore in a month and a half.

Two more companies have bio-diesel manufacturing facility in the state. While Coastal Energy has a 200-tonne plant at Falta, Air Bridge Greens has set up a 30,000-litre-a-day plant at Domjur in Howrah.



Graphics: Rita Bhardan