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NMC plans biogas, biodiesel buses

NAGPUR: On the lines of ethanol, Nagpur Municipal Corporation (NMC) has started the process to launch the nation's first biogas and biodiesel city buses. The two new biofuel buses will also be introduced on pilot basis in line with a concept mooted by city MP and union minister of road transport and highways Nitin Gadkari.

In association with Swedish-bus maker Scania Commercial Vehicles India Limited, NMC has successfully launched the pilot project of ethanol-run bus on August 22. It was the initiative of Gadkari to boost sugar industries, farmers, environment and also to reduce dependency on imported fuels to some extent.

Along similar lines, Gadkari had directed mayor Pravin Datke, municipal commissioner Shyam Wardhane and chairman of city transport committee Sudhir Raut to launch buses run totally on biogas and biodiesel.

"The plan is in very initial stage. The idea is to launch pilot project of all three biofuels — ethanol, biogas and biodiesel.

NMC administration has started the process to prepare detailed project report. Experts like Urban Mass Transit Company (UMTC) or any private consultant will be roped in to prepare the report. Funds for procurement of buses is a major issue and talks are going on with the central government. The state government's contribution will also be taken," Datke said.

TOI had highlighted Gadkari's plan to set up a biogas plant at Bhandewadi dumping yard. Gadkari had directed the NMC administration to utilize methane being generated from treatment of solid waste and sewage water to produce the biogas. He had also revealed Scania's plan to set up a biogas plant.

Earlier too Gadkari had many times asked NMC office bearers and officials not to waste methane generated at Bhandewadi dumping yard. He went on to say that NMC office bearers and officials should run official vehicles on biogas generated from the dumping yard.

Scania is manufacturing and also operating buses run on biogas and biodiesel in foreign countries. NMC sources told TOI Scania is likely to bring buses run on biogas and biodiesel on the lines of ethanol. It even had plans to set up a biogas plant near Bengaluru in Karnataka.

Sources added that Wardhane is holding talks with UMTC and ministries of urban development and road transport and highways for launch of biogas and biodiesel buses.

"Wardhane went to New Delhi on Tuesday in relation to the

proposed project. NMC's City Transport Committee will take up the project once the concept is cleared," the sources said.

The city may hope to see all types of biofuel-run eco-friendly buses in coming days. Gadkari has already assured to approve additional buses to meet the city mobility plan target of 1,200 buses in city bus service. Currently, city bus service comprises 470 buses, of which hardly 210-220 are operational.