

Differences arise over cement quality standards

The government's plan to start grading Nepali cement brands on the basis of their quality has been delayed following a spat between the government and cement manufacturers over the draft of quality standards for cement prepared by the government.

Though the Nepal Bureau of Standards and Metrology (NBSM) has prepared a draft of the quality standards for cement allowing domestic cement manufacturers five per cent magnesium oxide (MGO) in 43-grade and 53-grade cement, manufacturers are seeking up to six per cent MGO use in both grades of cement.

Cement manufactures have been saying that the government should allow six per cent MGO use in 43-grade and 53-grade cement citing that other nations like India have been allowing MGO volume to this extent in cement.

"We have only asked the government to make a draft of the quality standards as per international standards, which allows six per cent MGO in 43-grade and 53-grade cement," said a cement manufacturer seeking anonymity.

However, Bishwo Babu Pudasaini, director general of the NBSM, said that the government is not in a position to increase the MGO use in cement citing that excessive use of MGO affects the quality of cement.

"The context of the Nepali cement industry is different than in other countries. The quality standards have been set as per domestic context," he stated.

Citing that MGO often has the quality to expand, Pudasaini said that higher use of MGO can affect the physical structure of a building in the long run.

However, Pudasaini is optimistic that the issue will be resolved soon and the government will start providing quality certification to Nepali cement brands.

The government earlier planned to start issuing quality certification and effective grading to Nepali cement brands after domestic cement brands found it difficult to compete with Indian cement brands. As big projects seek quality certification of cement, such projects have been using Indian cement brands as Nepali cement brands lack internationally acclaimed quality certification system.

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