

# Illumination of Bishkek city: out of sight

Often usual lamps are used for the street lamps, and of questionable quality. Because of the bad lighting, citizens rarely go outdoors in the evening.

“It is very dark in the evening even in the center of the city. There have been some incidents, when young girls got in to troubles in the unlit streets,” complains one citizen. “Only main streets are more or less lighted. Others are so dark, so it is frightful to walk,” points out another inhabitant of Bishkek. “Central streets are lighted, but the district of livestock market, where I live, is dark,” complains pensioner. “I have visited other countries’ capitals, they have got such lighting, so there is no need to lights on at night time,” says another citizen of Bishkek. The lightning of Bishkek city is dim. Probably, they point in papers, they have established good lamps, but in fact, even functioning street lamps do not lighten the space around.”

Absence of light does not help law enforcement agencies in crime prevention. “People of no fixed abode gather in bad lighted streets. “Besides, it is easier to commit an assault upon victim and disappear in the dark,” tells Timur Kaunash, Deputy Chief of the Public Security Department, Main Department of Internal Affairs in Bishkek city. – “Though, it is impossible to identify a person by given information without light”.

## **Got responsibility, but no money**

Emil Tulkiev, Chief of the municipal enterprise “Bishkekvet” explains bad electrification of city’s streets is a result of lack of funding.

“30 thousands of spot lights are on balance. It is required 104 millions KGS to maintain them, - tells Tulkiev. - Present time, it has been allocated money to maintain circuits of outside lighting in the city. Naturally, money is in short supply. How to solve the problems, having only 50% of the whole amount of financing? We understand, the Republic budget is limited and the biggest part of resources comes for social problems solution”.

Furthermore, Tulkiev pointed out the absence of our own overhaul shop and equipment. Due to the lack of money, there is no our own production centre. Though, there is a big territory in the enterprise.

“Having our own production centre, we can repair brackets, illuminating attachments, and so on, explains Tulkiev, - We could solve many maintenance problems independently. But due to the absence of machines and equipment, we have to buy everything on the market”.

Let’s point, the enterprise fleet has not been updated since the USSR period. The latest elevated work platform was supplied on the balance 23 years ago. The old equipment needs much financial investments.

“We are content with that what we have,” - says Chief of “Bishkekvet”. - Currently, there are eight elevated work platforms, only four of them are in working condition. The machines often fail, because they are already worn out and served their time.”

## **“Night Watch”**

The journalist of “Vecherniy Bishkek” went together with the duty team to connect the urban outdoor lighting.

“Our job is to turn off or on the street lighting in the city, said Birimkul Dotaliev, Driver of “Bishkeksvet” - We want to have new and good circuits that would facilitate the work, but, unfortunately, all circuits are old and we have to work in difficult conditions.”

The so-called switch of street lighting of the city - central point # 254 is next to the building of the Main Control Room of “Bishkeksvet.”

From the moment of switching on the point, there will be lighting on half of the city, says Lenilbek Eshimbekov, Head of the Emergency Dispatch Service of the municipal enterprise “Bishkeksvet”. – The switching is based on a cascade system, i.e. on the chain. Now we turn on the circuit breaker and then go on cascade to check the street lighting.”

Whether street lamps in city streets are on, workers can determine only visually, as the equipment and circuits are not automated.

The duty team drives 150 km per shift. Two teams serve the city daily. There are 400 special boxes, which supplies electricity for street lighting around the city. Frequently, the team has to turn on the circuit breakers manually. During the fulfillment of tasks, experts try to eliminate minor damages and malfunctions.

“Mostly, protective device are combusted and wires are blown, says Eshimbekov. In such cases, the duty team efficiently eliminates breakdowns. Dealing with short-circuits and more complex accidents information is reported to the monitoring service. The maintenance personnel shall deal with it next day.”

### **Looks like lamp but does not burn**

During the replacement of lamps at Molodaya Gvardiya Ave. the journalist of “Vecherniy Bishkek” was surprised to find that weak incandescent electric lamps are established, that are not intended for street lighting. This type of lamps is used for the table lamps in apartments and offices.

“We have tried to replace the lamp, it was of poor quality, of Chinese origin, says Kubanych Ibraev, Electrician of “Bishkeksvet” – Lamp socket has come off, that has been fixed not on bolts but on clinchers. These lamps with low-quality sockets, after some time, start to corrode so lose their properties quickly.”

“Why poor quality lamps are installed on street lights?” asked “Vecherniy Bishkek” Emil Tulkiev, Chief of “Bishkeksvet”.

“There are energy-saving lamps in all parks and squares, which consume two to three times less energy than incandescent bulbs, says Tulkiev. - Another issue is the quality of lamps. I will show you a mercury lamp of Chinese origin, that are supplied by suppliers according tender. They are relevant for all technical parameters and passport data to lamps of Russia origin. But the lamp of Chinese origin is on at best for a month, but the lamp of Russian origin for a year. The tenders are held by the Department for Competition Policy of the Mayor’s Office. We present conditions only on technical parameters, and these lamps are gained in price. Therefore, in accordance with the law they are preferable.

According to Uluk Kydyrbaev's meaning, Executive Director of the Bishkek Business Club, the tenders for the purchases of lamps held by the Mayor's Office of Bishkek are uncertain and cause a lot of complaints.

"On the first place, lamps shall be energy-efficient", says Kydyrbaev. - "The second criterion is the expiration date. The lamps must serve at least for a year, not like now - for a month or even a couple of weeks."

"I think that the present huge problem of the city is poor street lighting," emphasizes Kydyrbaev. - "In my opinion, how to solve (or rather, not solve) this issue affects the Mayor's Office work, lack of good governance in general. And of course, unequivocally raises the question to Tender Commission. How the tender has been held? What were the technical conditions? Why 40 W lamps are screwed in street lamps that can not be used for street lighting?"

### **"Confidential" tender**

The journalist of "Vecherniy Bishkek" has made a request for supplying of information and documents of "Bishkeksvet" tenders. The officials have promised to assist in this issue. However, one month has passed by. The correspondent did not have the copies of tender documents. All that has been provided by the Mayor's Office, - Certificate of goods purchased on the tenders.

Emil Tulkiev, Chief of "Bishkeksvet" kindly provided the copy of notification about tender purchases of the Department for Competition Policy of the Mayor's Office of Bishkek signed by the Chief Alexander Baguta. Baguta has explained himself that "the tender has been held by request of structural subdivision, particularly "Bishkeksvet". We try to appoint the Tender Commission from competent officers in relevant field. There are the officers of "Bishkeksvet" in the commission of this tender. According to legislation the officers has the right to individual opinion in the case of doubt in the quality of the purposed goods or prerequisites for these doubts. It is reflected in the Minutes and there may be subsequently made a different decision on the bid. In this case, the individual opinion about the quality of the goods by the officers of "Bishkeksvet" has not been received.

We emphasize that to date, "Bishkeksvet" has large debts for consumed energy. This information was confirmed by Maksatbek Musurali, Acting Deputy Chief of Electricity Supply Service in Bishkek "Severelektro". The debt of "Bishkeksvet" owned to "Severelektro" as of November 1 is 9 millions 778 thousands KGS, says Musuraliev. But in July of 2012 a three-party agreement was made between the "Severelektro", the Mayor's Office of Bishkek and "Bishkeksvet". In this agreement, they are obliged to repay the debt until the end of this year".

### **A cheapskate pays twice. A miser pays twice**

The journalist of "Vecherniy Bishkek" decided to compare the market prices in the local market with the stated ones in the documents. He went to the domestic producers to get the information.

"Our plant can provide Bishkek and the whole Republic with energy-saving lamps, says Olga Bazhenova, the representative of "Mailuu-Suu lamp plant" LLC. - These lamps are not inferior in quality to those that are obtained by the Mayor's Office in Bishkek for street lighting. And the cost is cheaper than in the market.

In the Mayor's Office documents the domestic lamps have been purchased for 80 KGS per piece, and Mailuu Suu plant sells for 60 KGS. Moreover, the prices pointed in the tender are wholesale.

There is purchase of energy saving bulbs of Turkish origin at the price of 105 KGS in the notification list of tenders.

The energy bulb of European manufacturer is purchased, recommended by seller at the price of 150 KGS in the market. In a conversation with a shop assistant it has been found that the technical characteristics of the lamps are the same only on paper, in reality, the quality is directly associated with the price.

“There are the 20 W lamps, for example, for 70, 130, and 150 KGS, although the specifications are the same, said Munara Buzurmankulova, seller. – The lamp for 70 KGS will burn dimly, at the price of 130 - average, for 150 KGS will ensure the quality corresponded to the standards of the European market. The same applies to the endurance period of the lamps, the cheaper lamps can burn out faster. Minimum endurance period of lamps is 6 - 12 thousand of hours.”

### **All is not lamp that burns**

There are three lamps in my hands. I went to the experts in laboratory to test on a special stand.

“We measure the consumed power with the help of this device, applied voltage and current consumption, says Michael Toropov, professor of the department “Unconventional renewable energy sources”. - We measure the level of lighting with the help of illumination photometer”.

The experiment failed at the very beginning. The lamp, borrowed from “Bishkeksvet” was nonfunctional. We had to go back to “Bishkeksvet” to take the second specimen. We came back to the laboratory and continued to test. The experts have studied the quality of each lamp for an hour and recorded the results in a special table.

In the end it has turned out that the lamp, acquired by the Mayor’s Office does not correspond to technical characteristics specified in the manufacturer’s passport. “Now we would like to show a smaller lamp, which has the same power as the lamp of Chinese origin, says Toropov. According to the results of our experiment, we can conclude that the lamps are of different quality.”

“Technical specifications of domestic lamps and lamps of Polish origin are closer to the stated ones, said the expert. - In comparison with them, lamp of Chinese origin loses. Its power consumption and lighting is less than the stated ones.”

Moreover, according to Sergei Bunin, Head of the Laboratory, the actual price does not match the reality. “The lamp of Chinese origin is offered as of 40 W, but actually it is 9 W, evaluates Bunin. - But, if we compare this 40 W lamp with the lamp of 8 W, they show the same effect and almost identical results on the stand. But the size of the lamps and prices are essentially diverged.”

### **Alternative**

Ali Vodianov, the expert in power, Director of “Elektrosila” LLC has told about his vision of solving the problems of street lighting in Bishkek city: “It is necessary to divide the city into sections and give to private firms. And let these private firms will cooperate with the Homeowners Association, and other organizations, that would be make payment for production and control. Otherwise, the current state, as the five-year period shows, is not going to change.”

In the meantime, the city lives its life, slowly sinking into the darkness day by day.

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