



**Bank Audi**

Press Release

## **Lebanese motorists exposed to high levels of air pollution on the road**

***AUB, RYMCO-Nissan and Bank Audi jointly reveal results of year-long Moving Van Air Pollution Study***

**Beirut - 24 May, 2012** – Motorists along the Beirut-Jounieh highway are exposed to twice the acceptable levels of air pollutants set by the World Health Organization, revealed a new study conducted by the American University of Beirut in collaboration with Rasamny Younis Motor Company – RYMCO, Nissan's exclusive dealer in Lebanon, and Bank Audi s.a.l – Audi Saradar Group. Study results were announced at a joint press conference held at AUB on May 24, 2012.

Entitled the "Moving Van Monitoring Particulate Matter Pollution in Real Time on a Busy Street in Lebanon," the project was launched over a year ago. The Nissan Urvan van, which set off on its mission in December 2010, roamed the main Beirut-Jounieh freeway, collecting pollution samples for over a year. Researchers then studied the samples looking for 31 different types of air pollutants, of different sizes, focusing mainly on fine particulate matter.

"The results showed that getting stuck in traffic for hours is not only stressful, but bad for our health," said Najat Saliba, AUB associate professor of chemistry and lead investigator on the study. "Just by organizing traffic and reducing congestion, we would greatly reduce our health risk." Saliba noted that her team had measured that, on a daily basis, a commuter who spends at least one hour in traffic is exposed to 22 microgram/m<sup>3</sup> of fine particulate matter in the air. "This value is twice the amount recommended by WHO and will increase this person's probability of death by 20 percent," she warned.

"Our lives depend on maintaining a balanced ecosystem," said Fayez Rasamny, chairman of RYMCO. "Working on reducing the harmful environmental effects of their vehicles in order to hand down a healthy global environment to future generations, Nissan was a pioneer, investing billions of dollars in Research and Development to create a line of models that will serve this goal. As exclusive dealer of this automotive brand in Lebanon, we, at RYMCO, follow and support Nissan's philosophy of a 'Symbiosis of People, Vehicle and Nature' which expresses our ideal image of a sustainable mobility society; and as part of our moral responsibility towards our country, we, as automotive dealers, feel the necessity to help reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Despite the constraints in Lebanon in supporting environmentally friendly vehicles, we have found ways to support projects such as this, in order to create awareness about the severity of this problem."

Nissan has sold 27,000 Leafs worldwide since its launch in late 2010 and expects to sell 1.5 million zero-emission vehicles by 2016. The company plans to invest more than \$300 billion yen in environmentally friendly technologies by 2017 with a target to reduce its



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carbon footprint by 20 percent by 2015, and subsequently RYMCO aspires to do the same in Lebanon.

Rasamny added: "Based on the results of this study, laws and regulations should be developed to enforce CO2 emission control, encouraging sales of new cars versus used ones, given that manufacturers are obliged to control the carbon emissions of their vehicles."

The study, which also monitored the pollution levels on the sides of the road, found that shops and people along the sides of the road are exposed to 20 percent more particle pollution than those in the middle of the street. Moreover, the level of car emissions was 10 times higher than that found on the roads of most European and US countries. The culprits: old, ill-maintained cars, a large number of cars, and high levels of traffic congestion.

"We call upon governmental and non-governmental organizations to help in solving this acute air pollution problem in the city," said Saliba, who listed three important, yet practical, measures that individuals and governmental bodies can do to reduce pollution:

- 1- Drivers should avoid stopping in the middle of the road or double parking, both of which add to congestion and hence pollution levels.
- 2- Government bodies should be stricter about road-worthiness tests, or what is locally known as *mécanique*, imposing fines on old cars that have high emission levels.
- 3- Governmental and non-governmental bodies should immediately start working on enhancing existing public transportation facilities and devising new ones.

Khalil Debs, assistant general manager and head of Group Corporate Banking at Bank Audi sal - Audi Saradar Group, added: "Air pollution affects every individual living in the country, and we believe it is high time that such an environmental issue be addressed. Bank Audi's support of this initiative is in line with its *raison d'être* of raising awareness to mobilize the public sector and the business community to take important measures aimed at curbing such an environmental problem. This underscores Bank Audi's deep conviction that it owes the community the responsibility of ensuring wellbeing and development, a challenge which the Bank takes on by promoting progress in order to bequeath to future generations a lasting positive outcome."

According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, fine particles are so small that they can go deep into the lungs and cause serious health problems. Numerous scientific studies have linked particle pollution exposure to a variety of problems, including: increased respiratory symptoms, such as irritation of the airways, coughing, or difficulty breathing; decreased lung function; aggravated asthma; development of chronic bronchitis; irregular heartbeat; nonfatal heart attacks; and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.

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**About AUB:** Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 600 full-time faculty members and a student body of more than 7,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full service 420-bed hospital.

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Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/aub.edu.lb>; Twitter: [http://twitter.com/AUB\\_Lebanon](http://twitter.com/AUB_Lebanon)

**ABOUT RYMCO:** Rasamny-Younis Motor Company S.A.L. (RYMCO) is a joint stock company, ISO certified 9001:2008 that was established in 1957 in Lebanon and is the only automotive dealer to be listed on the Beirut Stock Exchange since 1998. RYMCO is one of the leading vehicle retail dealerships in Lebanon where it holds majority market share in the new vehicle retail industry, and commands a considerable portion of the used vehicle market. RYMCO operates a chain of independent showrooms and stores, a bonded warehouse as well as state-of-the-art servicing and maintenance facilities. The company has an automotive dealership arrangement with auto manufacturers in the US, Japan, Europe and China that include the likes of automotive giants Nissan Motors (Nissan, Infiniti), GM vehicles (GMC), Renault trucks, UD Trucks, and Kawasaki under the Leisure division. RYMCO marine is another unit within the RYMCO operations specialized in the servicing of boats under the brand name of RYMCO Marine. In 2009, RYMCO UK was granted the right to distribute the Infiniti brand of cars in London. It will cover distribution for the area through three SSS IREDI facilities in Reading, Chiswick and Hatfield; along with a boutique in the centre of London in Piccadilly. RYMCO SAL holds also the majority of the shareholding of free zone companies in Syria which main activity is the importation of Nissan and Infiniti vehicles and the storage of these vehicles in the free zone areas, for the purpose of reselling them to the Syrian market (mainly to a Syrian company owning the exclusive distribution for Nissan cars in Syria.)

**About Bank Audi sal - Audi Saradar Group:** Bank Audi is a regional group with a universal banking profile. The Bank offers universal financial products and services including Corporate, Commercial, Individual, Investment, and Private Banking services. As at end-March 2012, Bank Audi's consolidated assets reached US\$ 28.7 billion, principally driven by private customers' deposits of US\$ 24.4 billion, with shareholders' equity reaching US\$ 2.5 billion. Bank Audi's group staff headcount exceeds 5,000 employees and its shareholders' base encompasses more than 1,500 holders of common shares and/or holders of Global Depositary Receipts (GDRs) representing common shares. Bank Audi ranks first among Lebanese banks and is positioned in the inner circle of top regional banking groups. Its shares are listed on the Beirut Stock Exchange. Its GDRs are listed on both the Beirut Stock Exchange and the London Stock Exchange.

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