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ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

China's energy sustainability ranking drops

The mainland and Hong Kong have slipped in the energy sustainability world ranking for two years in a row because of weaker energy security, according to the World Energy Council. China's overall ranking dropped to 78 out of 129 nations graded, from 76 last year and 74 in 2011. Hong Kong's fell to 40 from 38 last year and 31 in 2011. Countries and regions are ranked on three performance criteria: energy supply security; affordability and equity of access; and environmental sustainability. The overall rankings are based on an "energy sustainability index". China saw its ranking decline in five out of six underlying indicators, including the ratio of energy production to consumption, energy distribution losses as a percentage of generation, oil product inventory and two indicators on energy imports reliance. Its ranking for diversity of energy sources in electricity generation climbed. Still, energy security is China's strong point. It ranks 101st out of 129 nations on energy affordability and access equity and 126th on environmental sustainability. Those two rankings have changed little over the past three years. "There are efforts to decrease energy and emission intensity. However, China fails to improve its ranking on the environmental sustainability dimension as peer countries improve more," the report said. Hong Kong's overall decline in ranking in the past two years was driven by a fall in its energy security ranking to 99 from 84 last year and 77 in 2011 amid reliance on energy imports. Hong Kong's environmental sustainability ranking

improved to 58 from 64 in 2011.

Local governments hindering consolidation of solar-panel makers

Local governments have hampered attempts to use market forces to encourage consolidation of loss-making manufacturers of solar panels and related parts, according to Gao Jifan, Chairman of New York-listed Trina Solar. Unless Beijing prevented the interference, the industry's restoration to sustainable development would be delayed by three to five years, he added. "If we can consolidate the industry in three years so that three to five players have a combined market share of 70%, the industry will be in a much healthier state," Gao said on the sidelines of the World Energy Congress in Daegu last month. The industry has several hundred players, and many of them are small manufacturers supported by their local government. Gao said some local government-backed firms' losses were much bigger than their books indicated because they were propped up by opaque subsidies. "There are major problems with the completeness of information with some of these firms," Gao said. "The result is that these poorly run firms end up being rescued by or merged with other poorly run firms, or firms that are not in the industry. This means the acquired firms merely operate under a different name and continue to operate in an undisciplined way." Gao said the fiscal independence of local governments meant that unless Beijing intervened, healthy consolidation would be hard to achieve. Trina, based in Changzhou, Jiangsu province, booked a narrower net loss of USD33.7 million in the second quarter of this year, compared with USD63.7 million in the first, as production costs fell and product prices stabilized.

Polysilicon recovery to be slow and painful

The loss-making polysilicon industry, responsible for supplying the raw material for solar power panels, will gradually recover, but consolidation will be achieved through attrition rather than mergers and acquisitions (M&As), according to Shu Hua, Executive President of GCL-Poly Energy. Troubled players had unsuitable equipment because of their small production scale, low product quality and high operating costs, he added. "Since the industry downturn, no maker has been acquired. They are basically mothballed, shut down or in bankruptcy", Shu said. Hong Kong-listed, Jiangsu province-based GCL-Poly Energy is the world's largest maker of polysilicon and solar wafers, which are used to make solar panels. Controlled by industrialist Zhu Gongshan, whose family owns a 32.4% stake, it also operates power plants that contributed about 30% of sales in the first half of the year. Polysilicon fetched as much as USD450 a kilogram in 2008, luring huge capital investment in the nascent industry, but it has since slumped to USD18 because of oversupply, while declines in production costs failed to keep pace, resulting in steep losses. Lu Jinbiao, Deputy General Manager of subsidiary Jiangsu Zhongneng Polysilicon Technology Development, said a market price of USD20 a kilo was required for GCL to break even. It posted a first-half operating loss of HKD1.4 billion on its solar business and a profit of HKD240 million on its power business. Price recovery in the short term would be supported by rising demand in China, Japan, the U.S. and emerging markets, although prices would fall in the long term in tandem with declining production costs, he added. GCL's top rivals are Hemlock Semiconductor of the U.S., Germany's Wacker Chemie and South Korea's OCI, which has the capacity to produce 30,000 to 50,000 tons a year, the South China Morning Post reports. GCL-Poly Energy's first-half output of 21,980 tons accounted for about 80% of that of China and more than 20% of global output.

Shunfeng to buy solar rival Suntech's unit

Shunfeng Photovoltaic International has signed a framework agreement to buy the main Chinese unit of Suntech Power. It brings the restructuring of the firm's USD1.75 billion debt closer to completion after Suntech Power defaulted on a USD541 million convertible bond in March. Wuxi Suntech filed for bankruptcy protection five days after its parent company's default – one of the biggest by a Chinese company. Creditors of Wuxi Suntech will vote on the restructuring proposal at a meeting this month. Under the framework deal, Shunfeng was expected to pump about CNY3 billion into Wuxi Suntech as initial investment, and a further CNY2 billion to CNY3 billion to sustain its operation. Analysts say creditors for Suntech's domestic debt are likely to recover only a fraction of their capital. At the end of March last year, New York-listed Suntech Power had total debt of USD2.2 billion, including the convertible bond, loans from China Development Bank, and a USD50 million convertible loan from the International Finance Corp (IFC), the private sector arm of the World Bank. The company has yet to publish its annual report for last year and disclose its overall debt situation. Wuxi Guolian Development Group, backed by the government of Suntech's home city Wuxi, also

agreed to invest at least USD150 million in the company.

Shortage of natural gas prolongs reliance on coal

A chronic shortage of natural gas is hurting China's plan to move away from burning coal to heat homes and offices, raising the prospect of more choking air pollution this winter and beyond. Authorities have said Beijing's urban core should use only gas for heating, but domestic output cannot keep up with demand. "With the current natural gas situation, maybe you can guarantee supply to big cities like Beijing, but if you want to expand to the cities of northern China that need it, I think that's still quite difficult," said Tao Guangyuan, a renewable energy expert and columnist based in Beijing. The shortage has forced the government to ration gas supplies, even banning construction of new natural gas-fired power stations. It also said it would control the increase in new gas users, prioritizing supplies to residential consumers and public transport during the winter. Nevertheless, the gas shortage may still be 10% higher this winter than last year because more users have switched over. The government has said it would raise natural gas use to 230 billion cubic meters by 2015, more than double the 2010 rate, but disappointing domestic production growth coupled with insufficient pipeline and storage capacity has left it increasingly reliant on imports and prone to shortages. Importers also risk losses because the government keeps the price of gas low to curb inflation and ease the impact on consumers, although recent incremental price hikes have helped. Despite China's rush to gas, coal still supplies the bulk of the country's total electricity needs. Under a new plan to tackle air pollution, China would cut consumption of the fossil fuel to below 65% of primary energy use by 2017, down from 66.8% last year, the South China Morning Post reports. Natural gas demand rose 13.5% in the first nine months of this year for example, 4.3 percentage points faster than production, the government said.

Solar industry rebounding from slump

Solar industry manufacturers are rebounding from a two-year slump. The benchmark BI Global Large Solar Energy Index of 15 manufacturers, which slumped 87% from a February 2011 peak to November 2012, has regained 55% of its value in the past year. The Nasdaq Composite Index reached its post-bubble low in October 2002 and regained 37% of its March 2000 peak value in the following year. Suppliers including California's SunPower, which has gained more than fivefold this year, and China's Yingli Green Energy, are driving the rally as panel prices stabilize. Installations at power plants and on roofs will increase 40% this year from a 6.1% pace last year. "The worst is probably behind us," said Jenny Chase, Solar Analyst at Bloomberg New Energy Finance. "We've just gone through a big trough in solar supply. Yingli was the biggest panel maker last year based on 2.3 gigawatts (GW) of shipments, and the company expects that figure to increase as much as 43% this year. The global photovoltaic industry may install as much as 42.7 GW of panels this year, 40% more than in 2012, according to New Energy Finance. Demand is climbing in China, where the installed capacity is expected to double this year, as well as in Japan. The two countries will be the top solar markets this year, according to New Energy Finance.

- Wind-turbine manufacturer Sinovel Wind Group Co plans to dispose some of its domestic fixed assets and close four more subsidiaries abroad. Sinovel will only retain five or six units overseas. Sinovel, which used to be China's top player with the biggest share of 25% of wind installations, saw its share fall to 9.3% in 2012. The company reported a loss of CNY582 million in 2012. In the first half of this year, the net loss was CNY458 million. China's wind power market peaked in 2010, with the addition of 18.9 GW of installed capacity. The main reasons for the slowdown are inadequate grid access and technical challenges. Wang Jun, Director of the New and Renewable Energy Division of the National Energy Administration (NEA), said that the next priority is to deal with the issue of grid access within the next two to three years.
- China Solar Energy, a Hong Kong-based solar panel maker, said Chairman Yeung Ngo and two Directors have been detained by mainland authorities on allegations of fraud. Subsidiary Dali Stream Solar failed to pay up its registered capital of USD49.5 million.
- A team from China, the world's biggest maker of solar panels, has made its debut in the world's biggest event for solar powered vehicles, the World Solar Challenge in Australia. Sun Shuttle finished a modest 19th out of 23 teams in its category tackling the 3,000 kilometer-course from Darwin to Adelaide over eight days. Designed by the

Beijing Institute of Technology, the single-seat, four-wheeled Sun Shuttle was made of carbon fibre and cost CNY1 million. Sun Shuttle drove at an average speed of 60 km/h during the competition, compared to 90 km/h by the champion team, Nuon from the Netherlands.

- ASB Biodiesel, the developer of Hong Kong's largest biodiesel plant, has renewed its call for the mandatory blending of biodiesel into diesel products sold in the city as a means to jump-start a market for the cleaner burning fuel. Chief Executive Anthony Dixon said Hong Kong had lagged behind some of its regional neighbors that had implemented mandatory blending, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, South Korea and Taiwan. "The start of production at our plant will raise awareness of what is possible in Hong Kong", Dixon said. Without policy support, ASB, one of three biodiesel producers in Hong Kong, will see its output consumed mostly in Europe. Blending 20% of biodiesel into fossil fuel diesel would cut carbon monoxide and particulate matter emissions by about 12%, with no reduction in nitrogen oxide emission.
- Scientists in China said they had designed a "smart" window that can both save and generate energy by adapting to weather conditions, and may ultimately reduce heating and cooling costs for buildings. Vanadium oxide (VO₂) can be used as a transparent coating to regulate infrared radiation from the sun. VO₂ changes its properties based on temperature. Below a certain level it is insulating and lets through infrared light, while at another temperature it becomes reflective.
- China will extend its anti-dumping investigation on European polysilicon by six months, forestalling an immediate imposition of tariffs on imports, the Ministry of Commerce said. The investigation will go on until May 1, 2014 because the circumstances of the case are "special and complicated," the Ministry said.
- Silex Systems, an Australian solar energy and nuclear fuel enrichment technology firm, is in talks with Chinese state-backed power generators to invest in its major solar farm project in Australia and buy its equipment to develop projects in China. The company, listed in Australia and the United States, commissioned a 1.5 megawatt (MW) solar farm in Victoria in July, and plans to build a 100 MW expansion project on the same site late next year. Its 1.5 MW plant is Australia's first grid-connected solar farm based on so-called concentrated photovoltaic (CPV) technology.

POLLUTION

Pollution hurts effort to recruit foreign talent

The Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) said a potential recruit working in the U.S. has declined a job offer due to air pollution, bolstering concerns that the capital's worsening smog problem is scaring away more overseas job prospects. The position was offered at the Academy's Institute of Genetics and Developmental Biology. A study by the U.S.-based Health Effects Institute in April said that air pollution led to 1.2 million early deaths in China in 2010. Earlier, a joint study by Greenpeace and Peking University estimated that the tiny particulate pollutants that cause smog resulted in 8,572 deaths in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Xian that year. Authorities said lingering smog last winter covered nearly a quarter of the country's territory and affected about 600 million people. Public grievances over poor air quality have prompted the central government to release new plans to tackle air pollution over the next five years. From January to June, foreign visitors to China fell 5% compared with last year, according to the China National Tourism Administration, a drop partly attributed to the worsening air.

Hong Kong to collaborate with WHO to measure success in pollution fight

Hong Kong is to work closely with the World Health Organization (WHO) to monitor the success of clean air policies in the city. The aim is to develop a mechanism to measure changes in air quality and the public's health. The idea comes as the city plans to introduce what could be the world's biggest diesel vehicle replacement scheme to improve roadside pollution at a cost of nearly HKD12 billion. It is one of a series of measures included in a comprehensive seven-year blueprint to tackle Hong Kong's environmental problems that was launched in March. Dr Carlos Dora, Coordinator at the WHO's Department of Public Health and Environment, said: "We are interested in documenting what policy measures are introduced and what follows in terms of changes in air quality. It is about creating a system to

track changes in policy and improvements in the quality of the air and people's health." Dora said the clean air plan rolled out by the government was a "very good" one as it clearly identified problems. He also suggested that the wider benefits of some clean air policies be taken into account in evaluating new policies. The city's Air Quality Objectives were updated this summer to tighten air quality standards first agreed in 1987 and will become effective next year. WHO targets, which were updated in 2005, are included in the new objectives, most significantly those measuring and reporting the type and concentration of pollutants. Estimates by Hong Kong's Environmental Protection Department show the number of days when a very high pollution level is indicated will increase several times under the new system.

CNY5 billion to fight smog in North China

China will spend CNY5 billion to curb severe air pollution in north China (Beijing, Tianjin, Inner Mongolia, Hebei, Shanxi and Shandong) and aims to slash the PM2.5 density by 25% in the region within five years, the Ministry of Finance announced. Hebei – China's largest steel-producing province and the most severely polluted area – will be a major target of the campaign. The clean-up fund will be distributed as awards depending on how the cities and provinces achieve pollution reduction targets, their investment in pollution treatment and the reductions in levels of PM2.5. Monitoring by environmental authorities shows that in the first half of this year, seven out of the 10 worst polluted cities were in Hebei province. Ma Yufeng, Mayor of Baoding in Hebei, said the city would strive to move out of the top 10 list as soon as November. The provincial capital Shijiazhuang has ordered most of the city's cement grinding mills to suspend production starting mid-October. Lin Boqiang, Director of the China Center for Energy Economics Research at Xiamen University, said the government fund would be far from sufficient to cover the total clean-up cost, but it would send a signal to the market and lead to further investment. State media said in July that total investment to fight air pollution would reach CNY1.7 trillion over the next five years. "Even that amount will not be sufficient for China to regain blue skies," Lin said, adding that most of the bill would be footed by the public, for example through paying higher prices for cleaner fuel. In August, Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei recorded only 30% normal air quality days. China's supreme court and procuratorate jointly issued a new judicial explanation, effective from June, listing 14 sorts of environmental pollution that will be considered crimes in an effort to curb pollution. New Chinese standards require concentrations of PM2.5 to be kept below daily averages of 75 micrograms per cubic meter, more than twice as lenient as the U.S. standard of 35.

Cooking also source of PM2.5 pollution

Fumes let off during cooking at home can be linked with respiratory issues, including cancer, but more research needs to be done to determine the effect on air pollution levels, according to Chen Jingyu, a lung surgeon and Vice President of Wuxi People's Hospital in Jiangsu province. At present, vehicle exhaust emissions, coal combustion and industrial dust remain the biggest sources of PM2.5 pollution, he said. Xie Xinyuan, Researcher from Nature University, a non-profit environmental protection organization in Beijing, said PM2.5 levels rose when frying in the kitchen. Zhao Huimin, Director of Beijing's Municipal Foreign Affairs Office, said that the amount of emissions from cooking activities contributed considerably to the city's fine particulate matter pollution. A report published in the Modern Express newspaper said fumes from cooking Cantonese dishes are limited due to their light, non-greasy flavors, while smoke from Hunan and Sichuan cuisine with stir fries and peppers is always heavy.

Beijing and Shanghai unveil plans to control air pollution

Beijing said it will pull half of private vehicles and 80% of official cars off the road and suspend schools during lingering smog in its latest effort to battle air pollution. Every time the city issues a red alert for air pollution – a forecast that implies three straight days of heavy pollution with the air quality index over 300 – the capital will enforce an emergency response program that will require alternate driving days for cars with even and odd-numbered license plates. The plan includes a four-tier alert system according to the severity of pollution, namely blue, yellow, orange and red. Shanghai has a similar plan. Shanghai aims to reduce the concentration of PM2.5 by 20% to the 2012 level by 2017. More than 2,500 boilers and 300 industrial furnaces that use coal will be closed down or shifted to clean energy by 2015. Coal firing will be completely banned in 2017, the plan said. Projects in the areas of construction materials, coking and non-ferrous metals that cause high pollution will also be banned. A green traffic system that gives priority to public transport will be implemented. Research by the Shanghai Environmental Protection Bureau showed that traffic contributes to 25% of nitrogen dioxide

and PM2.5 pollution in the municipality.

Pollution “to ease in five to 10 years”, says climate change negotiator

China's air pollution problem will be alleviated in five to 10 years, Xie Zhenhua, China's top climate change negotiator and Vice Chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) said. “The cause of air pollution and climate change is the same – the burning of fossil fuel. Many of the policies and measures to solve the two issues are also the same, such as reducing coal consumption and controlling the number of motor vehicles,” Xie said. In 2012, consumption of standard coal equivalent in China was 3.62 billion metric tons, with coal accounting for 67.1%, a fall of 1.3 percentage points compared with 2011, according to the report “China's Policies and Actions for Addressing Climate Change”. Experts see funding as a priority issue at this month's United Nations climate change conference in Warsaw. “Developed countries should promise no less than the USD30 billion pledged in fast-start funding between 2013 and 2015, chart a clear course for meeting the funding pledge of USD100 billion by 2020 and invest in the Green Climate Fund as soon as possible”, Xie Zhenhua said. He added that despite the absence of financial or technological support by developed countries, developing countries, including China, have managed to reduce emissions on their own. He said China reduced carbon dioxide emissions by 1.5 billion tons between 2006 and 2010, and by 300 million to 400 million tons from 2011 to 2012, the China Daily reports. Xie said funding was critical to solving the disputes, with richer countries still not having released funds promised in 2009 to help poorer nations adapt to climate change and to cut emissions. Xie confirmed that three regions – Beijing, Guangdong and Shanghai – would launch emissions-trading markets before the end of the year, adding to a carbon-trading scheme introduced in Shenzhen in June.

- Individuals who don't sort out their garbage under related rules will be fined up to CNY200 in Shanghai, according to a draft regulation which aims to cut waste to create a greener city. Under the draft regulation, domestic garbage will be divided into four categories – recyclable garbage, harmful garbage, wet garbage and dry garbage – at residential communities. Each community must be equipped with four respective kinds of garbage cans. Public places should be equipped with two kinds of garbage cans for recyclable garbage and other garbage.
- Beijing Mayor Wang Anshun and his London counterpart Boris Johnson signed a special memorandum of understanding, including the exchange of information on environmental issues. Shared areas of interest include greener electric bus fleets, energy efficiency programs and measures to improve air quality. Beijing will analyze steps London has taken to deal with air pollution and learn from its experience.
- Grammy winner Patti Austin was forced to cancel her performance in Beijing on October 18 after she suffered an asthma attack, as the city was shrouded in smog for the whole day. The 63-year-old singer was treated for severe asthma in combination with a respiratory infection at the Peking Union Medical College Hospital. Last month, Swedish tennis player Robert Lindstedt also criticized Beijing's air quality.
- Chinese governments at all levels will be given more responsibility for improving the environment, a draft amendment to the environmental protection law, which got its third reading by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), revealed. The draft amendment also increases the role of environmental protection in evaluating a government's performance. The law has not been revised since it took effect in 1989. If the amendment is adopted, 13 organizations would be qualified to file environmental protection lawsuits. They must be national-level environmental groups legally registered with the Ministry of Civil Affairs, active for at least the past five years, and possessing a “good reputation”. The draft amendment was slated for a fourth review in December to be followed by a vote.
- Harbin and other parts of Heilongjiang province suffered from heavy air pollution last month. The PM2.5 index reached a record reading of 1,000 in some parts of Harbin, home to some 11 million people. The smog not only forced all primary and middle schools to suspend classes, but also shut the airport, highways and some public bus routes. The pollution occurred on the first day when the heating was turned on in the city and lasted for three days. Visibility was reportedly reduced to 10 meters in some parts of the city. A top-level red alert for “thick smog or fog” was issued for Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning provinces.

- In Shanghai 13 factories have been penalized over liquid ammonia safety, in checks that followed a leak that killed 15 people in August. By September 27, 145 plants using liquid ammonia had undergone checks, said the Shanghai Administration of Work Safety, with 997 safety risks uncovered. Five factories were each fined CNY70,000 and a further eight ordered to stop using equipment linked to safety risks.
- The Environment Ministry said it would send inspection teams to provinces and cities most seriously affected by smog in the coming six months to ensure rules on fighting air pollution are being enforced. The teams will ensure that factories have installed the correct equipment to cut emissions of sulphur dioxide, that plants previously closed remain shut and that local governments are enforcing clean air policies, the Ministry added. Regional environment inspection teams who do not do their jobs properly will be prosecuted and the media will be used to name and shame the most egregious polluters.
- Hong Kong's waste collection and disposal network and operation will undergo an overhaul to prepare for a proposed ban on smelly household waste at the Tseung Kwan O landfill. Under the plan, only construction refuse will be dumped there with all other waste being sent to tips in Tuen Mun and Ta Kwu Ling. The Environmental Protection Department said the diversion of an estimated 2,000 tons of waste a day would require the creation of about 30 new collection routes and would also push up costs. The Tseung Kwan O landfill is due to reach capacity in 2015. At the same time, the government plans to spend about HKD18 million to help private operators fit tailgate covers and wastewater tanks to their trucks to reduce nuisance.
- Last month, Sanya in Hainan province, widely regarded as having some of the country's clearest skies, experienced six consecutive days of smog, although much less severe as in North China. For all of last month, Sanya's API rating was below 50, which is considered "excellent". The Sanya Land Resources and Environment Bureau said a combination of weather patterns, emissions from vehicles and pollution wafting from Guangdong and other neighboring regions was to blame for the smog.
- A recent study by Chinese scientists shows a strong link between smaller air pollution particles and a range of serious health conditions. Scientists said the smaller the airborne particles, the more likely they are to cause illness, suggesting the need for monitoring of particulate matter of 1 micron or less in diameter (PM1). Fine particles measuring between 0.25 to 0.5 microns in diameter accounted for about 90% of the total number of particles found in the air during the study. In Shanghai about 80% to 90% of the mass concentration of the city's PM2.5 is PM1, so it would be more effective to carry out studies on PM1 than PM2.5, said Yang Xin, Professor at the Department of Environmental Science and Engineering at Fudan University.
- Hong Kong and its neighbors in the Pearl River Delta should establish a "regional think tank" and work closely together to tackle air pollution in the region, Professor Zhu Tong, Dean of Peking University's College of Environmental Sciences and Engineering, said. "We need to find a way of institutionalizing the research conducted in the region to provide systematic and consistent support for air quality policy," said Zhu. Its first initiative could be a cost-benefit analysis on existing measures in Hong Kong to see if they could be replicated elsewhere.
- China's Health Ministry will set up a national network within five years to monitor the long-term impact of chronic air pollution on human health. The network will gather data on PM2.5 in different locations around the country. The network will first cover cities where smog is most prevalent.
- Chinese scientists are researching how to forecast the intensity of smog more precisely. Technological support is required in tracking down the sources of pollutants and the causes of how pollution is formed, Wang Zifa, Researcher with the Institute of Atmospheric Physics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), said. The National Meteorological Center's smog forecasting system, which began operation in 2012, can forecast smog three days in advance.
- The five-year legislative agenda revealed by the Standing Committee of the 12th National People's Congress (NPC) shows that the legislature wants to review 11 environment-related draft laws and amendments. In the legislative plan drafted five years ago, only seven fell in this category. "The rise of draft laws in this category shows the top legislature's great concern for environmental protection and resource management," said Zhai Yong, Director of the Legislation Department of the NPC's Environment and Resources Protection Committee.

- This year has seen the highest number of smoggy days since 1961. The China News Service reported that there had been 2.3 times more smoggy days than average.
- To the Chinese government, the smog that often blankets the country is not just a health hazard, but also a threat to national security. Last month visibility in Harbin dropped to below three meters because of heavy smog. On days like these, no surveillance camera can see through the thick layers of particles, say scientists and engineers. The National Natural Science Foundation of China funded two teams, one civilian and one military, to study the issue and has told the scientists involved to find solutions within four years.
- An eight-year-old girl has become China's youngest lung cancer patient, with her illness blamed directly on environment factors. The girl from Jiangsu lived by a busy road where she inhaled all kinds of dust and particles, Dr Feng Dongjie of the Jiangsu Cancer Hospital said. In Beijing, which has frequently suffered severe smog in recent years, deaths from lung cancer rose by 56% from 2001 to 2010. A fifth of all cancer patients suffer from lung cancer.
- Beijing is to reduce the number of vehicle license plates it issues each year through a lottery system in the hope of reducing air pollution. Starting in 2014, the number of plates issued each year will be reduced from 240,000 to 150,000, with the hope of cutting vehicle exhaust. The aim is to contain the number of motor vehicles within 6 million by the end of 2017.
- South Korea and Japan have sounded the alarm about potentially hazardous air pollution from northern China, which is expected to worsen this winter. Japanese media have also reported that Japanese working in major cities in China are so concerned about the impact of air pollution that they are sending their families back to Japan. The Japanese Embassy in Beijing held a meeting for Japanese residents on October 28, with a doctor telling those present, "the options are to go on vacation, change your residence or find a new job somewhere free from the pollution".
- China has demanded that Japan provide "accurate" information on how it is handling new fallout from the Fukushima nuclear disaster. China told the United Nations General Assembly it was worried about radioactive water leaks from the Japanese plant that went into meltdown after being hit by a tsunami in March 2011.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

CASS advocates low-carbon urbanization

China should manage its massive urbanization plan in a low-carbon way to alleviate growing pressures on the environment and resources, a report by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) said. "Low-carbon urbanization is an effective way to control greenhouse gas emissions, which will be the major task for the country in the coming decades," Wang Weiguang, Chief Editor of the report "Green Book of Climate Change", said. China plans to cut carbon emissions relative to GDP by 40% to 45% by 2020, compared with 2005 levels. In order to reach the target, low-carbon development is necessary, said Wang, who is also Dean of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). China emitted more than 9.2 billion tons of carbon dioxide in 2012, nearly 27% of the world's total. The figure may continue to grow in the coming years due to the country's massive urbanization, said Zhuang Guiyang, Researcher at the Institute for Urban and Environmental Studies under CASS. He quoted a report from McKinsey & Co saying that China's urban population will hit nearly one billion by 2025, which means the country will have 221 cities with at least one million inhabitants and 23 cities with more than five million. "Without proper management, such booming urbanization will be a disaster," Zhuang warned, adding that the country has already paid a high cost for its quick economic development. In the past three decades, the country's urban population has soared to more than 700 million from less than 200 million, causing severe problems such as water shortages, more smoggy days and shrinking arable land, the China Daily reports.

- The International Air Transport Association (ICAO), the United Nations body in charge of civil aviation, has reached a consensus on a market-based system to curb carbon emissions. Market-based measures will be implemented by 2020, ICAO Secretary General Raymond Benjamin said. He added that the climate resolution was a "major step forward" for the aviation sector and a "world first for any major industry." According to a policy draft, the European Union would still require foreign airlines

using its airports to pay for carbon dioxide emissions in the 2014 to 2020 period, a measure which could still lead to trade frictions.

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) called on China and Japan to work together in fighting the disastrous effects of climate change, despite their diplomatic hostilities. Along with neighbors South Korea and Mongolia, the Manila-based ADB urged them to set up a climate research network and an emissions trading scheme. A carbon trading market could see the countries hit their greenhouse gas emission targets at a “significantly lower cost than acting alone”, it said in a report. The East Asia region accounts for 30% of the world’s total energy-related greenhouse gas emissions. The ADB called for a total annual combined investment by the four countries of about USD37 billion.

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