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ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

EU imposes tariffs on Chinese solar panels

The European Commission imposed anti-dumping duties on imports of Chinese solar panels, defying opposition from Germany and other countries, including Belgium and the UK. European Union Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht said the 27-nation bloc would impose an immediate tariff of around 12% on the import of panels, cells and wafers, increasing it to an average of 47% starting in August unless a settlement is reached with China. China is the world's largest producer of solar panels and is accused by the EU of selling them below-cost to corner the market. Its exports of solar panels to Europe totaled €21 billion in 2011. De Gucht said the price at which Chinese solar panels are sold in Europe should be 88% higher according to the Commission's calculations. Chinese solar panels' market share in the EU has risen to 80% over recent years. China rejects the EU's price-dumping allegations and Premier Li Keqiang warned last month that imposing punitive tariffs would hurt European consumers and could encourage trade protectionism. "The ball is now in China's court," De Gucht said. "This is a one-time offer to the Chinese side to negotiate." The trade row between the EU and China on solar panels is the world's biggest anti-dumping case by sales volume. If a

settlement can't be reached, permanent tariffs would require approval by a majority of the EU's 27 member states six months from now. Germany has led growing opposition to the move, winning the support of 16 other member nations. The case was initially brought by EU ProSun, which groups European solar panel makers, but member companies of the Alliance of Affordable Solar Energy, relying on imported components from China, have lobbied against tariffs. Critics say the subsidies – in the form of cheap land, loans and tax incentives – encouraged the overbuilding of production capacity, which led to losses and bankruptcies of producers in Western nations that used to dominate the industry. Following the imposition by the EU of import tariffs on Chinese solar panels, China launched its own anti-dumping and anti-subsidy investigations of wines imported from Europe, and also threatened to extend the trade dispute with the EU to luxury cars.

Beijing to eliminate coal-fired boilers

Beijing has vowed to eliminate most coal-fired boilers in the city center by the end of 2015 to reduce pollution from fine particulate matter, especially during the heating season. After reducing coal use by 700,000 metric tons last year, the capital plans to cut another 1.4 million tons this year and use no more than 21.5 million tons, according to the 2013 coal consumption reduction plan released by the city's Environmental Protection Bureau and the Commission of Development and Reform. The capital used 26.35 million tons of coal in 2010, the Environmental Bureau said. Beijing still has a large number of coal-fired central heating boilers that give off large amounts of coal dust and noise during the heating season. The Environmental Bureau said it will replace coal-fired boilers with a capacity of generating 20 tons of steam per hour and above within the Fourth Ring Road with clean energy by the end of 2015. Shijingshan district in March became the third city district without coal-powered heating, after Xicheng and Dongcheng districts.

GCL-Poly Energy mulls offshore move to escape EU duties

GCL-Poly Energy Holdings, the world's largest maker of polysilicon, may partner with Chinese firms to establish offshore plants and circumvent EU anti-dumping duties. "We do not rule out forming strategic alliances with our downstream customers to set up overseas production capacities so as to keep up our sales," Executive President Shu Hua said after the Jiangsu province-based firm's annual general meeting of shareholders. The company, which also makes solar wafers, sells its products to makers of solar cells, which are then packaged into panels. GCL-Poly said some 25% of its wafer sales are now destined for Taiwan and Southeast Asia, with the rest to mainland customers. GCL-Poly posted a net loss of HKD3.52 billion last year, compared to a profit of HKD4.27 billion in 2011, amid industry over-capacity and a marked slow-down in sales growth. Shu said profit margins this year had improved compared with last year's fourth quarter. The firm was expected to remain loss-making this year, to the tune of CNY480 million, according to the average estimate of 25 analysts polled by Thomson Reuters. Despite the industry downturn that has forced some peers into bankruptcy, Shu said GCL-Poly had not missed any of its loan repayment obligations. The firm cut its managers' salaries 30% to 50% last year.

- The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) plans to release a new subsidy policy for energy-saving cars in the first half of this year. Li Weili, Director of the Manufacturing Division under the State Information Center, said subsidies for electric cars will likely be implemented before the end of June, although provisions related to hybrid vehicles may come out later, as standards for the evaluation of their energy consumption have yet to be formulated.
- Suntech Power Holdings Co agreed to sell a project and discounted panels worth a total of nearly CNY93 million to Shunfeng Photovoltaic International, based in Changzhou, Jiangsu province. The project, valued at CNY3.96 million, is to build the Kumul solar plant in Xinjiang. Wuxi Suntech, the biggest subsidiary of New York-listed Suntech Power, filed for bankruptcy protection in China in March, five days after its parent defaulted on a USD541 million convertible bond. Wuxi Suntech is seeking to restructure its debts, a process which is expected to last months. The restructuring team of Wuxi Suntech, a subsidiary of global solar equipment manufacturer Suntech Power Holdings Co, said Wuxi Suntech's debts totaled CNY17.396 billion. Twelve banks registered outstanding loans of CNY7.651 billion, according to sources at the first creditors' meeting held in May.

- Shanghai plans to turn recycled cooking oil, some of it seized by authorities, into an environmental asset by cooperating with six companies to convert it into fuel for the city's buses, taxis and trucks. Tongji University has been experimenting for the last three years to create the ideal mix. In 2010, experts estimated that China consumed two to three million tons of the illegally recycled oil every year.
- The Shanghai Disneyland theme park will adopt green technologies to generate some of its energy, the Shanghai Disney Resort Management Co announced. The theme park will use natural gas as its primary energy source. A combined cooling and heating plant will be built and operated on site by the Shanghai International Tourism and Resort Zone New Energy Co. The plant will cost about CNY520 million and be connected to the city's power grid. The plant is expected to generate 170 million kilowatt-hours of on-grid energy annually, which can save about 20,000 tons of standard coal and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 75,000 tons.

POLLUTION

Shanghai battery maker shelves factory plans

Battery maker Shanghai Guoxuan New Energy, a subsidiary of Hefei Guoxuan High-tech Power Energy Co, has given in to public pressure and canceled its plans for a new lithium battery factory in Shanghai's Songjiang district. It said it would return the planned factory site to the local government, without claiming any compensation. The company gave in after hundreds of residents of Songjiang held three protests against the planned factory out of concern about potential wastewater and gas emissions from the plant. Plans for the factory on a 23-acre plot in the Songjiang Industrial Park were first announced in a joint news conference in August. Despite an official environmental evaluation that claimed the project would cause little air or water pollution, residents were still concerned and started organizing protests in April. Songjiang government officials tried to persuade residents to accept the project, saying the plant would only be allowed to produce lithium cells and conduct final assembly of the batteries, but the company was finally forced to scrap the project. An evaluation by a government institute claimed that a total of 34 residential communities, a kindergarten and three rivers were found to be within 3 kilometers of the factory site. But the report also claimed that the factory would not cause much pollution. The company planned to produce 31,500 batteries a year.

Red tides threaten Guangdong's marine ecology

The red tides that frequently plague Guangdong's waters are threatening the province's marine ecology and aquatic product cultivation. Li Lei, Deputy Inspector at the Guangdong Provincial Administration of Ocean and Fisheries, said large-scale red tides struck the province 16 times in 2012, covering an area of more than 741 square kilometers. "Both the number of red tides that struck the province last year and the scale of the affected water were the largest in five years," Li told a news conference. Guangdong reported an average of 10 red tides annually in previous years. The red tide first hit the province in 1998. The red tides have killed a large number of fish and other marine organisms. Red tide is a discoloration of seawater caused by a large number of single-celled organisms known as red dinoflagellates. The poison they release kills fish and other organisms. Consuming sea creatures affected by red tide will result in severe food poisoning. Worsening ocean pollution has been cited as the main cause of the red tides, which has also been aggravated by recent extreme weather. Last year, more than 91 metric tons of pollutants were poured into the ocean from the province's 28 estuaries, Li Lei said. Xie Enyi, Professor at the Fisheries College of the Guangdong Ocean University in Zhanjiang, said the growing number of red tides in Guangdong's waters were mainly caused by the increasing number of aquatic farms. "Coastal cities and counties should reduce the number of farms cultivating fish and other marine creatures. Instead, more farms for seaweed, kelp, laver and other marine plants should be built to help improve the marine environment," he said. Guangdong's ocean economy was worth more than CNY1.1 trillion last year, up 12.3% year-on-year, the China Daily reports.

No decision yet on Kunming PX project

After two street protests in Kunming in May against a controversial petroleum refinery and a related chemical plant producing paraxylene (PX), the Kunming government on the one hand promised to heed public opinion, but simultaneously increased its crackdown on the protests.

A final decision on the fate of the project has not been made. Since 2007, all previous protests against PX plants in cities of Xiamen, Dalian and Ningbo ended with local governments backtracking and agreeing to either cancel or relocate the projects, as the public feared pollution from producing the chemical – used in making fabrics and plastic bottles – could cause cancer. Two other industrial projects – a wastewater pipeline and a heavy-metal smelting plant – were also called off following demonstrations last year. With environmental protests becoming a major cause of social unrest, the decisions were once hailed as indicators of governments' increasing willingness to heed the public voice, but local governments in less-developed western cities have a strong urge to increase GDP. In July feasibility studies for the Kunming PX project are scheduled to be completed. A recent survey conducted by the Public Opinion Research Center found that 80% of the 3,400 people surveyed believed environmental protection should have a higher priority than economic development.

Plastic foam dinnerware contains toxics

Plastic foam dinnerware, allowed to be used again after a 14-year ban was lifted recently, is being made from industrial waste and toxic chemicals in a city in Guangdong province, according to an investigation by the Hangzhou-based City Express newspaper. More than 10 million plastic foam disposable food containers are made each month in one small factory in Guangdong's Dongguan, where most of the plastic foam products are made. The products are made from industrial waste and phosphor powder, a toxic substance which can make the items look whiter but may also cause cancer. The lifting of a ban on the sale and use of disposable food containers made of plastic foam on May 1 sparked controversy. However, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) said the ban had ended as plastic foam could now be recycled to become raw materials in construction, paints and stationery. A decision to ban plastic foam dinnerware was imposed in 1999 over pollution concerns, but production had never stopped in a number of small factories after they bribed inspectors. There are up to 200 companies in China allowed to make plastic foam products and 10 of them are located in Dongguan, which produce over 70% of such products on the market. The factories could triple their earnings by using industrial waste. It is estimated that companies in China have an annual capacity of 14 billion dinnerware items made of plastic foam.

Many air purifiers found to perform poorly

There are no national or local standards for air purifiers, leading to false and misleading advertisements in the market, the Shanghai Consumer Rights Protection Commission said. The Commission conducted a comparative test on the performance of air purifiers and found many perform poorly. Tests included purifying efficiency of particulate matter, formaldehyde, the clean air delivery rate (CADR) and energy efficiency. In terms of particulate matter and formaldehyde, there are no standards, said Shen Hao, Director of the Shanghai Quality Supervision and Test Center of Environmental Protection Products. The Commission tested 22 air purifiers with prices ranging between CNY1,488 and CNY9,300. It found eight had a formaldehyde purifying efficiency below 20%. They included a sample of famous brands such as Electrolux (Z9123), LG (PH-U450WN), and Honeywell (18400). A Samsung air purifier had a formaldehyde purifying efficiency of 50% and a Sharp one reached 61%. The Commission called on authorities to draft more industry standards, the Shanghai Daily reports.

Due to the soaring demand for cleaner air, air purifiers will become the new growth driver for the country's sluggish home appliance industry, according to the China Household Electrical Appliances Association. Sales of air cleaners reached 3 million units last year, a year-on-year surge of nearly 50%, while in 2011, sales stood at 1.94 million units, up more than 20% year-on-year. According to the London-based BSRIA Business Consulting Co, China now has more than 200 foreign and domestic air purifier brands. "Philips, Panasonic, Yadu and Sharp are the favorite brands in Suning stores, and consumers usually buy machines that cost around CNY2,500 to CNY3,000 per unit," according to Suning.

PM2.5 particles become major pollutant in Shanghai

PM2.5 particles are becoming a major pollutant in Shanghai, surpassing sulfur and nitrogen dioxides, Shanghai officials said. Between January and May, the city recorded 42 heavily polluted days with the PM2.5 density reaching the highest 200 micrograms per cubic meter on May 11. "Sulfur and nitrogen dioxides have been decreasing since 2008, but the PM2.5 density has been rising," said Bai Guoqiang, Deputy Chief Engineer with the Shanghai Environmental Protection Bureau. The average density of PM2.5 is 56 microgram per cubic

meter, some 60% over the national standard. "Some 80% of the PM2.5 pollution comes from the city, especially from traffic and heavy industries," Bai said. Other pollution comes from flying dust, power plants and agricultural produce. Shanghai will start issuing PM2.5 forecasts later this year, initially offering 24-hour predictions before going to 48-hour forecasts, Zhang Quan, Director of the Shanghai Environmental Protection Bureau, said. Only 59 days, or 65%, in the first quarter this year were not polluted. Air quality in January was the lowest since Shanghai introduced PM2.5 air quality monitoring, mainly due to smog and haze that smothered a large part of China. "Shanghai will also enact measures to cut PM2.5 emissions, including adopting the National Emission Standard V, for new cars this year and stepping up control of vehicles with high emissions," Zhang said.

Atmospheric pollution law to be tightened

Environmental experts are calling for a newly amended version of the nation's Atmospheric Pollution Prevention Law to have greater teeth to curb serious atmospheric pollution. Chai Fahe, Vice President of the Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences, called for the revision of the law to be accelerated as this would help to reduce the thick haze in many urban areas. He expected the amended law to be published by the end of the year. The law was last updated 13 years ago. Chai said higher fines should be a key element of the amended law, as the current financial penalties fail to deter polluting companies. Yang Zhaofei, Deputy Director General of the Chinese Society for Environmental Sciences, said this illegal behavior would only thrive as it costs more to obey the laws than break them. In May, the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) revealed that several state-owned enterprises had failed to reach their 2012 emission reduction requirements. Chai said there should be no ceiling on fines for causing pollution in the new version of the legislation. The law was initially formulated in 1987 and revised in 1995 and 2000. "The upper limit for fines on polluters is CNY500,000, under the law, while many developed economies have no such limits," he said. Chai also called for fines to be levied on a daily rather than case-by-case basis, and suggested that serious lawbreakers should even face punishment under criminal laws. "Pollution from illegal discharges can cause cancer, which is no different from being a murderer. Therefore, these cases should be treated the same way," he said. At present, lawbreakers face fines of less than 50% of the direct economic losses caused, the China Daily reports.

Environment Ministry to transfer authority to local governments

The Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) is planning to hand many of its approval powers over industrial projects to local governments, a move it says is aimed at reducing regulatory interference, but some experts fear the plan could lead to further environmental degradation. "The Ministry of Environmental Protection has been working on a list of 'approval items' that will be passed on to local governments since the beginning of this year," said Beijing-based lawyer Xia Jun, adding that he expected the change to be "quite significant". The law stipulates that an environmental impact assessment report is required before construction of any industrial project can start. The Environment Ministry is now responsible for reviewing such reports on nuclear projects, those involving large investments and those deemed ecologically sensitive. The mechanism, even though it has some flaws such as poor transparency, has carried some weight in the Ministry's struggle to put the brakes on local governments' pursuit of economic growth at all costs. Minister Zhou Shengxian said in February that his Ministry would "transfer approval power for environmental reviews to lower-level governments and simplify procedures, in a bid to cut red tape and improve efficiency". Deputy Minister Wu Xiaoqing told a conference in April that the MEP would in future focus on "setting environmental thresholds" for regional development plans and strategies, and "let local governments make decisions on some individual projects". Calling the plan a "pollution formula", Li Bo, Senior Adviser to the environmental advocacy group Friends of Nature, said it could eventually lead to a loosening of environmental supervision, with growth-obsessed local governments likely to authorize projects that they viewed as economically viable while disregarding environmental concerns, further exacerbating pollution. "At a time when the country is in desperate need of tightened environmental supervision, such a change could only be disastrous," Li said.

Pollution worsens in the countryside

Pollution in China's vast countryside worsened further in 2012 as a result of the encroachment of industry and mining on farmland and an expansion of animal husbandry, the Ministry of

Environmental Protection (MEP) said. Experts say China's rural areas are now a bigger source of pollution than cities. "With industrialization, urbanization and the modernization of agriculture, the situation for the rural environment has become grim," the Ministry said in its annual report for last year. Air quality in cities remained "generally stable" in 2012, with emissions of sulphur dioxide falling 4.52% to 21.18 million tons. The Ministry did not provide data for PM2.5. Wan Bentai, Chief Engineer at the MEP, said air quality in China had been improving steadily for at least a decade. Water quality also saw a slight improvement in 2012, with 68.9% of samples found suitable for human consumption, up from 61% in the previous year. It said 10.2% of sampled water was below grade V and unsuitable even for industry or irrigation, down from 13.7% in 2011. Only 27 out of 113 major cities recorded cumulative air quality that was deemed safe by national standards for all of last year, according to an annual update on China's environment status. The Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) said the overall pollution problems still remained grave last year, as 30% of the country's major rivers were "polluted" or "severely polluted", while the quality of almost 60% of tested groundwater was deemed to be "bad" or "extremely bad". More than half of underground water monitored in China last year was low quality, based on data from 4,929 monitoring stations in 198 prefecture-level areas. Underground water quality at 1,999 stations – 40.5% – was "bad", while the quality at 826 stations – 16.8% – was graded "worst". Problems found included excessive levels of chemicals, such as fluoride, ammonia nitrogen and chloride. Water quality at 793 stations was improving, while it was becoming worse at 910 stations, the report said.

Shanghai aims to reach higher sewage discharge standards

Shanghai's rivers are expected to be cleaner after a higher standard of sewage discharge is achieved, but there is no timetable yet. Currently, the city reaches level 2 of a national standard, where chemical oxygen demand, a measure of water quality, is below 100 milligrams per liter. Shanghai is aiming to reach level 1B, where the figure is reduced to 60 milligrams per liter. Sun Mingyao, Deputy Director of the Shanghai Drainage Administration, said that upgrading the city's entire sewage network to achieve the higher standard would be expensive and experts were still studying how to implement it. "We have some plants that can reach the highest standard, A of level 1, with the chemical oxygen demand (COD) of the processed water lowered to 50 milligrams per liter. But the citywide standard is still level 2," Sun said. "Upgrading sewage plants is more difficult than building new ones because we need to maintain the current service while improving treatment", he added. The government is encouraging plants to raise their standards with subsidies. Last year it paid out CNY147 million in such subsidies, Sun said. Meanwhile, Shanghai's sewage disposal capacity is to increase by 800,000 cubic meters per day, the equivalent of 355 standard swimming pools or more than 10% of the city's current capacity, with the second phase of the Bailonggang Sewage Plant due to start operations later this year, the Shanghai Chengtou Waste Water Treatment Co announced. The increase will bring the capacity of Bailonggang up to 2,800,000 cubic meters per day. Shanghai currently handles more than 7 million cu m of sewage every day at 53 plants across the city, the Shanghai Water Authority said. Most of the sewage from urban areas is treated before being discharged into rivers but nearly 14% of the city's sewage, mostly from suburban areas, is dumped without any treatment, the Shanghai Daily reports.

- A policeman who braved sewage and bile to rescue a 14-year old girl from a river in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, ended being hospitalized due to the heavily polluted water. He started coughing and vomiting, and later suffered from burning eyes, skin irritations and dizziness. Doctors diagnosed him as having a severe lung infection, most likely contracted from the bacteria-infested river.
- Hong Kong would be swamped with rubbish if its three landfills were not expanded, the government said, as Tseung Kwan O residents took to the streets to oppose a HKD8.9 billion project to expand the landfill. The landfills at Ta Kwu Ling, Tuen Mun and Tseung Kwan O are expected to hit capacity by 2019. The government argues there is no alternative to expanding them until a planned incinerator, tied up in a legal challenge, can be built. On average, each Hong Kong person generates 1.36 kg of waste a day, compared to 0.77 kg in Tokyo and 1 kg in Taipei.
- Shanghai plans to set up a collection and recycling network for small electronics. Residents would be able to deliver old cell phones, batteries and used light bulbs at intelligent collection bins that would then give them a bonus such as gift cards or points on their bank card, city officials said ahead of World Environment Day. Government and licensed e-waste collection companies will set up collection spots in supermarkets, neighborhoods and government offices.

- The draft of a coordinated mechanism for Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei province to cooperate in air pollution control has been sent to the central government for further review. A united organization composed of leaders from the three governments will be set up once the draft receives approval, which will help officials release early warnings on smog and allow for concerted actions to curb air pollution.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Chinese airlines defy Europe over emissions rules

Chinese airlines will continue to defy the European Commission's order to comply with its carbon emissions trading scheme and provide data on flights to and within Europe. An executive from China Southern, who did not want to be named, said: "We will strictly go by what the State Council and Civil Aviation Administration of China has told us to do, that is, not to comply with the European Commission's emissions trading scheme. We have no say on this matter, as it's a diplomatic issue and beyond our reach." The EC said it could fine eight Chinese and two Indian carriers for not paying for their greenhouse gas emissions as a result of flights within the European Union. The China Air Transport Association (CATA) said the fines imposed by the EC are related to flight data that ought to have been submitted to the bloc by April. The EC's move reverses a stance in November, when it decided to keep non-EU airlines out of the European emissions trading scheme for a year. Air China, which is on the penalty list, decided to order 100 Airbus aircraft in May, ending a freezing of orders following disputes on the trading scheme. China and the EU are aiming for a negotiated solution by a September meeting of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), but the EU made it clear that non-EU airlines were still be liable to pay for pollution on flights made within the EU. Eight Chinese airlines were liable to fines of a combined €2.4 million. EU member states could fine the airlines under the terms of the EU's Emissions Trading System (ETS).

Speaking at the 2013 China Civil Aviation Development Forum in Beijing in mid-May, Yan Mingchi, Deputy Director General of the Policy, Law and Regulation Department under the CAAC, said that "airlines in developing countries should be provided with financial and technological support in their efforts at coping with the effects of climate change". Yan insisted that technology and operational improvements are the most effective methods of aviation emission reduction, rather than the carbon tax, and that developing countries should be assisted in achieving those. Statistics from the CAAC show that the Chinese civil aviation industry reduced its carbon emissions by 240,000 metric tons in 2012 compared with 2011. China Eastern Airlines last month became the first Chinese carrier to get an Airbus 320 aircraft, equipped with special wing-tip devices known as "sharklets" that cut emissions. Shu Mingjiang, Vice President of Flight Operations, said that China Eastern plans to add about 200 new aircraft between 2013 and 2015, which will improve the airlines' overall fuel efficiency. The use of advanced biofuels is also becoming a major issue for airlines and aircraft manufacturers. If all flights used it, carbon emissions could be cut by 80%, according to Guenther Matschnigg, Senior Vice President of the International Air Transport Association (IATA). Air China took its first test flight using biofuel in 2011, and China Eastern has also completed a test flight using a mix of fuels including used cooking oil and palm oil, in April. However, the high price of biofuel is still a challenge to the industry, at almost six times that of conventional fuel, the China Daily reports.

China won't sacrifice environment for economic growth

China will not sacrifice the environment for temporary economic growth. It will have to carefully balance economic development and environmental protection, President Xi Jinping said at a study session with members of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China's Central Committee. "We have to understand that to protect the environment is to preserve our productivity and to improve the environment is to develop our productivity. Such concepts should be deeply rooted," Xi said. China will promote a green, sustainable and low-carbon development pattern, he said. "We should be fully aware of the urgency and difficulty of protecting the environment and reducing pollution as well as the significance and necessity of improving the environment," he said. "We should take the responsibility for the sake of our people and our children." Xi vowed to set an ecological "red line" amid the country's rapid urbanization in order to protect the environment. China should accelerate the implementation of a functional zoning strategy, said Xi. All regions should be required to optimize, prioritize, restrict or prohibit their industrial development according to their defined nature. More space should be provided for nature to restore itself, Xi added. "On issues of ecological and environmental protection, people should not cross the red line or they will get punished," he

said. The Chinese President called for comprehensive efforts to prevent and curb pollution, urging to focus on areas surrounding rivers and lakes as well as major air-polluting industries. "A sound eco-environment is the basic foundation for the sustainable development of humans and society, our environmental protection and rehabilitation efforts should focus on solving obvious issues that harm people's health," Xi said. The President also called for a responsibility-pursuing mechanism targeting those behind irresponsible decision-making that led to severe environmental consequences, the Shanghai Daily reports.

Uncertainty when China's emissions will peak

Many variables determine when China's greenhouse gas emissions will peak, and the issue requires more in-depth analysis, Zhou Dadi, Vice Chairman of the National Energy Advisory Committee, told China Daily. Recent media reports said China's greenhouse gas emissions might peak before 2025. The Chinese government has always attached great importance to climate change issues and has actively responded, said Zhou, who is also Professor at the Energy Research Institute of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC). Many discussions have been held in China among experts and academics on the peaking issue, but it has so many uncertainties that experts cannot agree on a prediction, he said. To peak as soon as possible is not only in the interest of global climate, but also will serve as an incentive to restructure the country's economy and transform economic development. China has made strong commitments to act on emissions, including lowering emissions per unit of GDP by 40% to 50% by 2020 compared with the 2005 level; meeting 15% of its primary energy consumption through non-fossil fuels by 2020; and increasing forest coverage by 40 million hectares and the forest stock volume by 1.3 billion cubic meters by 2020 from the 2005 level. But China's energy mix is overwhelmingly dominated by coal, which cannot be changed in a short period.

- Yu Zhengsheng, Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), called for improving international cooperation to build an ecological civilization and pledged to make contributions based on the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities". He made the remarks at the opening ceremony of the second annual conference of the World Cultural Forum in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. Promotion of China's energy-saving and environmental protection industry is expected to provide more than USD315 billion in investment opportunities over the following five years.
- The world's energy-related carbon dioxide emissions rose 1.4% in 2012 to a record high of 31.6 billion tons, according to estimates from the Paris-based International Energy Agency (IEA). Although China made the largest contribution to the global rise, spewing out an additional 300 million tons, the gain was one of the lowest China has seen in a decade, reflecting its efforts to adopt renewable energy sources and improve energy efficiency, the IEA said. Scientists say the global average temperature rise needs to be limited to below 2 degrees Celsius this century to prevent devastating climate change, but the IEA said the world is on a path to an average temperature rise of between 3.6 and 5.3 degrees Celsius.
- The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) is considering an outright cap on emissions in its next five-year plan (2016-20) and is studying what level would be appropriate. This could help to break a deadlock at UN climate talks to agree to a legally-binding global deal on cutting emissions – at a 2015 meeting in Paris – that would take effect from 2020. China's Chief Climate Negotiator Su Wei however dismissed the reports in the Financial Times and the Independent that China would adopt an absolute cap on greenhouse gases.
- The most difficult section of China's so-called first low-carbon highway has been completed and the whole project is expected to be open to traffic by the end of the year. The 251 km highway that connects Chongqing and Chengdu was a pilot for low-carbon construction projects, one of six low-carbon energy-saving highways. Another in Yunnan will be 105.7 km long and is expected to be completed in 2015. Several measures, such as cutting energy use during construction, recycling waste water runoff and installing an electronic ticket-collection system to reduce tailbacks were among the green measures used.

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