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ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

Chinese government promoting distributed power generation

The Chinese government is working to improve China's photovoltaic solar industry by encouraging distributed power generation, or the use of small energy sources such as solar panels and wind turbines. To reduce the photovoltaic industry's overproduction, the government said it will place limits on projects to manufacture polysilicon and solar modules. The biggest 150 Chinese makers of photovoltaic modules had the capacity to produce 40 gigawatt (GW), but the world's demand is only 20 GW to 40 GW in 2012 and 2013, according to European Photovoltaic Industry Association estimates. "The most important thing is to expand the domestic market," said Meng Xian'gan, Deputy Director of the China Renewable Energy Society. "Distributed solar-power generation will allow the industry to develop so long as grid connection problems are solved." In November State Grid Corp started to provide a service that allows distributed photovoltaic solar power producers to connect to the national grid for free. A National Energy Administration (NEA) plan calls on China to have 15 GW of distributed solar power generation capacity by the end of 2015.

Singyes Solar aims to expand sales by a third

China Singyes Solar Technologies aims to grow sales by a third this years to more than CNY4 billion, according to Chairman Liu Hongwei. It reported sales of CNY1.29 billion in last year's first half, up 29% year-on-year. The industry has more than 60 solar power system design and engineering firms, among which Singyes claims to have the biggest market share of 10%. "As the number of [market] participants rises, profit margins will get squeezed. No industry can escape this tendency. We aim to maintain our profitability by offering more value-added services and products," Liu said. He also said Singyes, which started as a curtain wall

engineering firm in 1995 and entered the solar sector in 2004, competed by offering customers designs that maximized power output and minimized costs. It focuses on installing solar panels mounted on rooftops or embedded in buildings' curtain walls. The company had 166 megawatt (MW) of uncompleted orders at the end of June last year after completing 40 MW of projects in the first half. It received 296 MW of new orders in the second half. Solar-embedded projects accounted for 70% of gross profit from construction projects and 30% from traditional curtain wall projects.

Hanergy acquires thin film specialist MiaSolé

Hanergy Holding Group has acquired MiaSolé, based in Santa Clara, California. Hanergy already has six thin-film solar factories, plus three more under construction. The company has pursued thin film technology as a way to distinguish itself from large manufacturers like Suntech and Yingli that make crystalline silicon modules. Hanergy plans to set up a factory in China using MiaSolé's technology. The acquisition has received regulatory approval from the Chinese and U.S. governments. Hanergy has replaced First Solar to become the world's largest maker of thin film solar modules, with an annual capacity of 3 gigawatt (GW). MiaSole says it has the world's highest energy efficiency in the manufacture of thin film copper, indium, gallium and selenide (CIGS) modules. The technology makes thin film solar panels more flexible to use. The purchase marks the second overseas acquisition by the company. Hanergy last year acquired Q-Cells SE's subsidiary Solibro, a German maker of thin film solar panels. Solibro has developed CIGS technology for more than 25 years. After the completion of the acquisition, Solibro increased its yearly production capacity to 100 megawatt (MW) to supply Hanergy's customers in Europe. The lower efficiency of the thin film solar panels compared with polysilicon solar cells has long been an obstacle in the industry. Thin film solar cells' energy efficiency and lifespan still have lots of room for improvement compared with polysilicon-manufactured solar panels, Meng Xian'gan, Deputy Director of the China Renewable Energy Society, told a conference in December. MiaSole's thin film solar panel efficiency has reached 15.5%, said to be the highest in the world. The efficiency will rise to more than 17% within two years, and the production cost will drop to below USD0.50 a watt.

China retakes the lead in renewable energy investment

China has surged ahead of the U.S. to regain its title as the world's biggest investor in renewable energy, new figures showed. The amount of money put into wind farms, solar parks and other forms of green power worldwide plummeted 11% in 2012, the biggest annual fall in at least eight years, according to the Bloomberg New Energy Finance (BNEF) research group. The fall was caused by a mix of regulatory uncertainty and policy changes in big renewables markets such as the U.S., Spain, Italy and India, said BNEF, which has been tracking renewable energy deals since 2004. This took global investment down to USD268.7 billion last year, well below a revised figure of USD302.3 billion for 2011 – a record year. The fall came despite a record USD67.7 billion investment in China last year, up 20% from 2011, mostly thanks to growth in its solar power sector. China replaced the U.S. as the biggest investor in clean energy in 2009 but lost its lead in 2011 after the Obama administration introduced subsidies as part of its 2009 economic stimulus package. The U.S. is now firmly in second place after investment sank by almost a third to USD44.2 billion in 2012.

One fifth of power consumption now from clean energy

Clean energy took up more than a fifth of China's power consumption as the country boosted the use of hydro and wind power. China consumed 1.07 trillion kilowatt-hours of power generated from clean sources such as hydro, nuclear, wind and solar last year, up 28.5% from 2011, the State Electricity Regulatory Commission (SERC) said. Clean sources accounted for 21.4% of the nation's total power use last year, up from 17.5% in 2011, the SERC said. Hydro power remained the biggest clean source of energy, rising 29.3% to 864.1 billion kWh. As of the end of 2012, China's installed hydropower capacity totaled 249 million kilowatt, a rise of 6.8% from a year earlier. Meanwhile, solar power soared 414.4% to 3.5 billion kWh to be the fastest growing sector. Wind power capacity rose 31.6% to 60.83 million KW, while solar capacity surged 47.8% to 3.28 million KW as the government boosted subsidies to the solar sector. The SERC only calculated grid-connected capacity, making the figures different from those of the National Energy Administration (NEA).

- The central government has laid out broad policy directions to support the

development of the nascent domestic solar power market as part of efforts to help the troubled solar panels and components manufacturers boost sales in the face of overseas trade barriers. Beijing would encourage mergers and acquisitions (M&As), the phasing out of outdated inefficient production capacity and installation of advanced production lines. It would also tightly control the addition of new plants. Beijing planned to set subsidized solar power tariffs for solar farms, which will vary by regions depending on their solar resources.

- China has approved four major wind power projects whose investment totaled CNY57.2 billion between August and September. The projects include a wind project in Chifeng, Inner Mongolia by China Datang Corp and one windmill farm complex in Hami, Xinjiang, by 10 companies led by China Power Investment Corp, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) said. It also gave the go-ahead to China Guodian Corp and seven other companies for their project in Jiuquan, Gansu province, and to China Huadian Corp and six other firms for a project in Baotou, Inner Mongolia.
- BYD Co plans to build a 500-megawatt photovoltaic plant in Yulin, Shaanxi province. The first phase, with a capacity of 200 megawatt (MW), will be completed by the end of next year. When the third phase is built, the solar power plant will be able to generate more than 700 million kilowatt-hours per year and cut carbon dioxide emissions by 750,000 tons. The electricity will be sold at CNY1 per kilowatt hour under government subsidies. The project marks BYD's latest move to support and accelerate the solar power arm of its new energy business, which also focuses on energy storage systems and electric cars.
- A residential photovoltaic system has been connected to China's electrical grid for the first time. The system in Qingdao, Shandong province, has an installed capacity of 2 kilowatt, will generate 2,600 kilowatt-hours per year and reduce emissions of carbon dioxide by 2,592 tons a year. According to a new policy, the work to connect a private photovoltaic system with a capacity below 5 MW to the grid will be performed free of charge.
- China has increased the number of renewable power projects that qualify for state subsidies under a tariff surcharge program. Among those eligible for the grants are 62 solar power projects although wind farms account for more than three quarters of the 496 projects, according to a list posted on the Ministry of Finance website. The rest are biomass energy projects. This is the third batch of projects eligible for the subsidies. The Ministry said earlier it paid CNY8.6 billion in subsidies for renewable power under the program last year. Wind power took CNY5.85 billion, solar power CNY723 million, while CNY2.02 billion were used to subsidize electricity generated from biomass energy projects.
- China plans to more than double its installed capacity for solar electricity this year, a move that could breathe new life into Chinese solar manufacturers suffering heavy losses. Liu Tienan, Deputy Director of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) said China would add an additional 10 gigawatt (GW) of installed solar power capacity this year. China's solar power capacity rose to 7 GW in 2012. The Chinese government is considering doubling the target to 40 GW by 2015 to support local solar manufacturers, according to Meng Xian'gan, Deputy Board Chairman of the Chinese Renewable Energy Society.
- The price of PV products rebounded after falling for nine consecutive months, according to PV Insight, an international solar PV research company. The biggest gains are in the prices of silicon cells and single-crystal solar cells.
- SMA Solar Technology, Germany's biggest solar company, bought a 72.5% stake in Jiangsu Zeversolar New Energy Co on December 21. SMA Solar CEO Pierre-Pascal Urban, said the acquisition is absolutely necessary to gain access to the Chinese market as all mature markets are declining, and China is forecast to become the world's biggest market for the technology in the near future.
- The Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) will issue a preliminary ruling on its anti-dumping and anti-subsidy investigations into imported polysilicon from the United States, the European Union and South Korea on February 20. China launched an investigation on November 27 to determine whether retrospective duties should be levied on imported solar-grade polysilicon from the three areas.
- "The trade conflicts in the photovoltaic solar industry between China and Europe should end as soon as possible because it is bad for everyone," said Reinhold

Buttgereit, Secretary General of the European Photovoltaic Industry Association at the 2012 Intersolar China Conference in December, one month after Europe initiated an anti-subsidy investigation on solar panels imported from China. China launched its own investigation on November 1 into polysilicon imports from the EU and on November 5 lodged a complaint with the World Trade Organization (WTO) regarding local content requirements in some EU countries.

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has extended a USD275 million loan to China to help its bus operators shift their fleets to cleaner fuel, a move that is seen to cut growing air pollution in Chinese cities. The loan will be given to five financial leasing companies in China to fund leased buses that run on cleaner fuel such as compressed natural gas and liquefied natural gas (LNG) as well as electric and hybrid buses. The financing program will be sufficient to lease at least 5,000 clean buses by 2018.

POLLUTION

Environmental planner warns pollution still has to peak

Wang Jinnan, Deputy Director of the Chinese Academy of Environmental Planning, told a three-day conference at the Chinese University of Hong Kong that China has not yet come to grips with the amount of toxins seeping into the ground, pollution that would linger for decades to come. "China's pollution problem has yet to reach a peak," said Wang, whose institution helps draft policies for the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP). "While it is fair to say that some traditional pollutants, such as sulphur dioxide, have been put under control, other problems which pose even greater health risks to the public have yet to gain policymakers' attention." Wang cited heavy metals and other hazardous chemicals that can accumulate in the human body, causing cancer. Previously unknown chemical spills are still emerging at former industrial sites and some cities, as no clear mapping of such polluted sites has been worked out. "The toxic chemicals are far more dangerous [than organic compounds]. So the country's environmental prospects are extremely grave," he added. Other environmental experts, such as Tsinghua University air pollution specialist Hao Jiming, shared Wang's pessimism. Hao lambasted as contradictory the government's effort to control pollution while pursuing maximum economic growth. Experts said the scale of pollution accumulated during decades of breakneck growth would take years, and a huge amount of public money, to clean up. The Huai river and Dian lake, for instance, remain heavily polluted after almost two decades of clean-up work that has cost billions of yuan. Hao Jiming said China may have to wait until as late as 2050 to have air that meets World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines. "Even a 2050 deadline is considered by some environmental officials as too aggressive," he added.

Expert warns quality of tap water in Beijing is deteriorating

Beijing Healthcare Association Expert Zhao Feihong advised Beijing residents to switch to bottled water, and to stop drinking tap water. "The capital's water has gotten more polluted in recent years," she warned. The Beijing Waterworks Group, which is responsible for the water supply, assured residents that tap water is safe and meets the national water quality standard. Zhao said however that the tap water quality was deteriorating. She also found a lot of garbage in rivers and many sewage drains pouring directly into rivers. The kinds of major pollutants have changed in recent years, from heavy metals, including arsenic and lead, to volatile organic compounds, such as nitrite. The pesticide residue, excrement and landfill leachate have replaced heavy metals as the major pollutants, she said. In addition, as the pollutants in the water are getting smaller in size, the purification treatments used in the past, that utilized activated carbon and ultrafiltration membranes, hardly work. Waterwork plants have to resort to chemical treatments to further purify the water, Zhao said. Sales of barreled water have witnessed a steady increase in the past 10 years, according to Bai Yanjun, Executive Manager of Kangtai Gaoke, a water barrel company in Beijing, "More and more of the public are resorting to mineral water for daily drinking, instead of boiled tap water," he said. Water purifiers have also been gaining more popularity in the market, the China Daily reports.

Beijing suffers some of the worst air pollution on record

Beijing suffered some of the worst air pollution on record in mid January. U.S. Embassy pollution data published hourly on Twitter showed the level of health-threatening PM2.5 – particles smaller than 2.5 microns – had reached 886 micrograms per cubic meter at 8 p.m. on

January 12. Its Air Quality Index (AQI), which includes PM2.5 and ozone, had surged past the maximum rating of 500 to 993, or “beyond index” in parts of the city. Greenpeace campaigner Zhou Rong said it was the most polluted day he can remember. The Beijing Municipal Environmental Protection Bureau said its own figures showed PM2.5 levels had exceeded 700 micrograms per cu m in the early afternoon, pushing the Air Quality Index to its maximum of 500 for the first time since real-time air pollution updates began on New Year’s day. Under China’s newly revised standards, a level above 200 is considered heavy pollution and unhealthy to those with lung or heart diseases. Readings above 300 are deemed “hazardous for the entire population”.

Emergency response measures were adopted in some areas to deal with the pollution, a senior official with the Beijing Municipal Environmental Protection Bureau said. Outdoor sports activities at primary and middle schools were halted in extremely polluted areas. Work was suspended at 28 construction sites in the capital and 54 businesses reduced emissions by 30%, with Beijing Hyundai Motor Co halting production altogether, the Bureau said. Inspection teams were sent to 14 districts and counties to oversee pollution-reduction measures. Doctors at the Beijing Chaoyang Hospital and the Beijing Children’s Hospital said the number of patients with respiratory diseases had jumped sharply. Beijing issued its first-ever orange fog warning – indicating that visibility was less than 200 meters. Changsha, the capital of Hunan province, issued a red warning – the highest – as visibility dropped to less than 50 m. Zhang Dawei, Director of the Beijing Municipal Environmental Monitoring Center, blamed the pollution on vehicle emissions, industrial production and cold weather, which saw a surge in the use of coal for central heating. Beijing’s Environmental Protection Bureau has launched an eight-year plan to tackle air pollution, and claimed that pollutant levels had dropped by between 30% and 70% in the past 14 years.

Thick fog and haze shrouded central and northern parts of China on January 11 and on the following days, with Hebei and Henan provinces among the most polluted areas. An air quality report from the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) ranked Handan, Baoding and Shijiazhuang in Hebei and Zhengzhou in Henan as the top four most polluted cities among 120 monitored nationwide. The Air Pollution Index (API) in the four cities reached 500, the maximum on the index. The haze brought traffic problems in Henan, with eight expressways in the province closed because visibility was below 200 meters. Residents of Shijiazhuang reported that the air smelled like burnt coal. A report by Greenpeace and Peking University’s School of Public Health said an estimated 8,572 premature deaths occurred in Shanghai, Guangzhou, Xian and Beijing in 2012 because of high levels of PM 2.5 pollution.

The Chinese state news media published aggressive reports on what they described as the sickening and dangerous air pollution in Beijing and other parts of northern China, indicating that popular anger over air quality had reached a high level. “I’ve never seen such broad Chinese media coverage of air pollution,” said Jeremy Goldkorn, a business consultant in Beijing who tracks the Chinese news media. “From People’s Daily to China Central Television, the story is being covered thoroughly, without trying to put a positive spin on it,” he added. China Youth Daily published a scathing signed commentary under the headline “Lack of Responsive Actions More Choking Than the Haze and Fog.” The commentary questioned basic economic policies: “This choking, dirty and poisonous air forces the Chinese to rethink the widespread, messy development model,” it said.

The surge in air-pollution levels in more than 30 cities around China may boost demand for environmental and air-filtering products and spur the performances of the companies in those industries, analysts and investors said. The healthcare sub-index of China’s A-share market rose as consumers are increasingly looking at products to protect themselves against rising levels of PM2.5. Investors also believe that tighter policies against air pollution will be introduced soon. A Gome Spokesman said air purifier sales increased at least 700% compared with the same period in previous years, with Beijing residents placing the most orders. It is also reported that more and more foreigners are considering relocating because of chronic air pollution. A survey by the American Chamber of Commerce in China last year showed 36% of 244 companies experienced difficulties recruiting senior executives because of air quality issues – up from 19% in 2010.

Beijing is to unveil unprecedented new rules governing how China’s capital reacts to hazardous air pollution. The rules will formalize previous ad-hoc measures, including shutting down factories, cutting back on burning coal and taking certain vehicle classes off the roads on days when pollution hits unacceptable levels. Vice Premier Li Keqiang said it would take time for the government to tackle air pollution. He called for a change in industrial production and consumption patterns. A report by Tsinghua University and the Asian Development Bank

(ADB) said fewer than five out of 500 Chinese cities have PM 2.5 counts that meet the World Health Organization's standard of a mean level of 25 mcg per cubic meter per 24 hours. It said economic losses from pollution were equal to 1.2% of the nation's GDP.

Vehicle exhaust biggest culprit of worsening air pollution

Vehicle exhaust fumes have replaced industrial pollution as the biggest contributor to the worsening air quality in major Chinese cities, according to Zhuang Guoshun, an expert who has been studying trends in pollution levels since 1998. Together with his team, he has collected 20,000 samples of atmospheric aerosol using monitoring stations. "Pollution from nitrogen oxide has increased sharply, mainly caused by car emissions." PM2.5 can be manmade or natural, and consists mainly of sulfate, nitrate, ammonium salt and organic carbon compounds. Zhuang, Professor at Fudan University's Atmospheric Chemistry Research Center, said his team found an increasing amount of sulfur dioxide flowing from Xinjiang to more industrial coastal regions. Sulfur dioxide is mainly produced by coal ash, a component of industrial dust that poses severe harm to human health. However, Zhuang said sulfur dioxide has been released at a slower rate in recent years owing to the desulfurization of fuels and relocation of polluting industries. Instead, vehicle exhaust fumes are playing a larger part in changes to the Air Quality Index (AQI). According to Zhuang's research, among manmade sources of PM2.5 in 2000, the ratio of industrial production to vehicle emissions was 7-to-3, but recent figures show the ratio is now 50-50. "The government needs to put more effort into developing public transport, which saves energy and is good for the environment," said Zhuang.

China missed chance to avoid pollution 30 years ago

Professor Qu Geping, 83, who was China's first environmental protection administrator between 1987 and 1993, said pollution had run wild as a result of unchecked economic growth under a "rule of men", as opposed to the rule of law. Their rule imposed no checks on power and allowed governments to ignore environmental protection laws and regulations. "I would not call the past 40 years' efforts of environmental protection a total failure," he said. "But I have to admit that governments have done far from enough to rein in the wild pursuit of economic growth... and failed to avoid some of the worst pollution scenarios we, as policymakers, had predicted." After three decades of worsening industrial pollution resulting from rapid urbanization and industrialization, China has accumulated huge environmental debts that will have to be paid back, Qu added. He said recently he regretted that some of the very forward-looking strategies – emphasizing a more balanced and coordinated approach to development and conservation that were worked out as early as 1983 – were never put into serious practice when China was still at an early stage of industrialization. Qu said that if the central government had respected a policy that it released in 1983, China could have been in a much better position now. "The State Council published a document that year, stipulating that economic and urban construction should synchronize with environmental protection, so that the three legs of social development could reach a coordinated benefit. It was a pragmatic and feasible strategy, even more approachable than the notion of 'sustainable development' enshrined by the United Nations years later," Qu said. However, China has witnessed at least three waves of pollution since then. The first was caused by the boom in so-called township enterprises – businesses run by farmers in the countryside – that started 1984. The second was the rush to develop infrastructure and industrial projects after Deng Xiaoping's southern tour in 1992, followed by a renewed wave of building of energy-intensive and highly polluting heavy industries under Hu Jintao. "Why was the strategy never properly implemented?" he said. "I think it is because there was no supervision of governments. It is because the power is still above the law," Qu concluded, as reported in the South China Morning Post.

- The health risks of PM2.5 air pollutants have been grossly underestimated in China, with nearly 8,600 premature deaths expected last year in four major cities, a study by Greenpeace East Asia and Peking University's School of Public Health said. Environmentalists have hailed the study as ground-breaking, with data linking poor air quality to deadly diseases. The study showed a more than 10% rise in premature deaths caused by PM2.5 pollution in the four cities over the past two years. More than two-thirds of the 8,572 premature deaths last year caused by the microscopic pollutant occurred in Beijing and Shanghai.
- A circle of suburban parks built in the past five years are providing a "green shield" for Beijing. There are now 81 parks along the capital's Fifth Ring Road, occupying an

area of 5,406 hectares, according to the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Landscape and Forestry. But Lan Bincai, Director of Greenbelt Construction with the Bureau said infrastructure had to be improved to make the parks more attractive to visitors. Beijing has covered 166,000 hectares of barren ground with trees and grass last year, and it is considering extending the greenbelt to 664,000 hectares in the next five years.

- Beijing's initiative to rid the city of polluting vehicles has taken 458,000 old cars off the road, and the government is providing more benefits for scrapping aging vehicles. The policy offers people who get rid of cars made in 1995 or earlier subsidies of CNY2,500 to CNY14,500. Sellers who buy a new car from qualified dealers can receive up to CNY10,000. Although only 22% of cars on the road are more than 8 years old, they produce more than 50% of the automobile pollution. Beijing has 5.19 million vehicles, contributing 86% of the capital's carbon monoxide emissions, 40% of the hydrocarbon emissions and 56% of the nitric oxide emissions.
- China's coral reefs have shrunk by at least 80% over the past 30 years, according to scientists from the Australian Research Council Center of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies and the South China Sea Institute of Oceanology. Coastal development, pollution and overfishing linked to the country's aggressive economic expansion were the major drivers, the authors said, describing a "grim picture of decline, degradation and destruction".
- Environmental experts say real-time air quality updates launched in 74 cities on New Year's day will leave local officials less room to manipulate data and hide the country's worsening pollution problem. They said hourly readings were a first step towards improving transparency and holding the government accountable for promises to clean up the air. Data will not only be released more frequently but will cover three more pollutants than at present, including ozone and smog-causing fine particles, and set tougher standards for the existing three pollutants – sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and large particulate matter.
- Guangzhou will require all 36 of its townships to sort rubbish for recycling starting this year. Mayor Chen Jianhua told a municipal conference that he hoped 75% of the city's residents would be sorting through their trash and that 40% of all city rubbish would be recycled by the end of next year.
- Only five of 120 Chinese cities logged "blue-sky days" on New Year's day as the first up-to-the-hour air quality readings were reported under tougher pollution standards. The 74 biggest cities started publishing hourly and daily pollution readings on their websites on January 1. Wan Bentai, Chief Engineer at the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP), said that authorities were focused on ensuring minimum interference from local governments in the release of pollution readings.
- Four officials at a chemical plant in Shanxi province have been sacked and 122 chemical companies along the Zhuozhang river ordered to suspend operations after the plant leaked nearly 9 tons of aniline into the river, affecting downstream cities in neighboring Hebei and Henan provinces. Water in the Yuecheng reservoir and the Red Flag Canal in Anyang, Henan province, had been tested for excessive aniline and volatile phenol after the pollution in Shanxi. An initial investigation revealed that a loose drainage valve in the plant owned by the Tianji Coal Chemical Industry Group in Lucheng was to blame for the leak. Zhang Bao, Mayor of Changzhi, issued a public apology for waiting days to report the toxic spill.
- Tianjin plans to burn all non-recyclable rubbish by the end of 2015, and construction of three large incinerators will soon begin to help meet the target. Local authorities claimed that, compared with traditional dumping that may pollute underground water, burning rubbish was relatively harmless.
- The Winter Swimming Association in Handan, Hebei province, is suing Tianji Coal Chemical Industry Co, a chemical company in neighboring Shanxi province, over the cost of cleaning up a toxic spill and the delay in issuing a warning. It is asking compensation of CNY20 million – CNY10 million for the Handan city government's clean-up effort and CNY10 million for moral suffering by hundreds of thousands of Handan residents. The Association cut its compensation demand from CNY160 million to meet the limit for civil lawsuits. Nearly nine tons of the toxic chemical leaked into the river from a loose drainage valve at the factory in Changzhi on December 31.
- Zhao Xi, a CCTV reporter, was attacked and received head injuries covering a story on illegal sewage treatment at a paper mill in Hunan. The Pingjiang government said two men suspected of the assault had been detained.

- The Beijing municipal government has set less ambitious targets for pollution reduction this year compared with 2012 and said the rapidly increasing urban population has made environmental protection more difficult. Nitrogen oxides – found in car exhaust, cigarette smoke and smog – are expected to be cut by 2% this year, while last year's target was 3%. Beijing's population has risen by 400,000 people annually in recent years, officials said.
- The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) has extended from January 1 its requirement for the installation of nitrogen oxides reduction facilities to coal-fired power plants in the entire country, from 14 provinces and autonomous regions under a November 2011 directive.
- Thousands of woks are made from illegally recycled iron drums that once held toxic chemicals, in small workshops in Jiangxi province, China Central Television reported. The iron drums are “cleaned” by being burned and then bathed in pools of sulfuric and hydrochloric acid. Samples of the woks were found to contain excessive levels of heavy metals, including lead.
- Heavy smog has been smothering the Pearl River Delta for the past week, with air pollution readings in the region hitting their highest levels of the year. The lingering haze prompted the Guangzhou Central Meteorological Observatory to issue its first “heavy fog” warning of 2013 as visibility in Guangzhou fell to 700 meters.
- A crude oil leak occurred in a burst pipe which is part of the 115 km long Zhanjiang-Maoming oil pipeline owned by Maoming Petrochemical, a subsidiary of Sinopec. More than 15 tons of crude oil leaked into the Nanxi river, about 350 meters from the Chikan Reservoir, an alternate source for drinking water in Zhanjiang. The Zhanjiang government said the leak has been contained and drinking water in the city is not contaminated. More than 11,000 people from nine villages in Mazhang and Chikan districts were affected by the leak.
- Hong Kong will spend at least HKD31 billion building infrastructure to handle waste through 2021, as it seeks to alleviate a space shortage at landfills. The government is considering facilities treating food waste, expanding landfills and building incinerators. Existing landfills will be full within seven years. Food leftovers represent about 40% of the city's trash going into dumps.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Greenhouses gases reach record high

Levels of greenhouse gases in China's atmosphere hit a record high in 2011 because of the rising effect of human activities, according to the annual China Greenhouse Gas Bulletin, released by the China Meteorological Administration. Carbon dioxide levels measured 392.2 parts per million (ppm) at Waliguan station in Qinghai province, the highest since the station began operation in 1990. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) global atmospheric background station is one of 28 nationwide. The average carbon dioxide level in 1990 was less than 350 ppm, according to Zhou Lingxi, Professor at the Chinese Academy of Meteorological Sciences. The WMO's annual Greenhouse Gas Bulletin, released in November, estimated that carbon dioxide accounts for 85% of radiative forcing, defined by scientists as the difference between radiant energy received by the earth and energy radiated back to space, which causes global temperature rises. Carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and halogenated greenhouse gases are also covered in the China Meteorological Administration report, which found that many had reached record levels. “The problem is not the shocking numbers, but how to deal with them after we know,” said Li Shuo, Climate and Energy Expert at Greenpeace. China's 12th Five Year Plan (2011-15) aims to reduce the amount of carbon emitted per unit of gross domestic product (GDP) by 17% by 2015, compared with 2010 levels.

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