

China's air quality worsens in first two months

China's air quality worsened year on year in the first two months of 2017 mainly due to unfavorable weather conditions and a warming economy, official data showed.

In the first two months, 338 major cities around China enjoyed good air quality on 64.6 percent of days, down 4.8 percentage points from a year earlier, the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) said in a statement.

The average density of fine particulate matter PM2.5 in those cities rose 12.7 percent to 71 micrograms per cubic meter.

In the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, the share of days with good air quality was down by 19 percentage points to 44.7 percent in the same period, and PM2.5 density surged 48 percent from a year ago, MEP said.

The share of good air days for Beijing plunged 22.5 percentage points to 54.2 percent.

The city of Haikou in southern China's Hainan Province had the cleanest air out of the nation's 74 major cities, while Hebei's capital city Shijiazhuang was the worst polluted.

Chai Fahe, expert with the Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences, attributed the deterioration partly to unfavorable meteorological conditions for pollutants to disperse, including lighter wind and higher humidity in some regions.

The warming economy also weighed on air quality, Chai said.

With recovering production and demand since the latter half of last year, both output and pollutant emissions from high-polluting sectors were on the rise, he said.

China is heading in the right direction for tackling air pollution, head of MEP Chen Jining said earlier this month.

In the past three years, days of good air quality increased in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, the Yangtze River Delta and the Pearl River Delta, Chen said.

However, the campaign against air pollution cannot be completed in a short period of two or three years, but will need a relatively long time, he added.

"We will make our skies blue again," according to this year's government work report.

In 2017, China will cut the emissions of both sulfur dioxide and nitrogen

oxide by 3 percent, and reduce PM2.5 density in key areas markedly, the report said.

Equipment collapse kills 9 at China power plant

Nine people died and two others were injured when an operation platform collapsed at a power plant in south China's Guangdong Province Saturday, local authorities said.

The accident happened at around 8 a.m. at No. 7 Thermal Power Plant in the provincial capital Guangzhou, said sources with the local government of the outer Conghua District.

The plant, located in Conghua, is still under construction.

The government has launched an investigation.

Xi calls for officials to boldly push reform

President Xi Jinping urged major officials on Friday to play a leading and responsible role in pushing forward the deepening of reform to ensure that the people will benefit.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks while presiding over the 33rd meeting of the Central Leading Group for Deepening Overall Reform.

Major officials at all levels should map out and push forward reform, be realistic and persistent, aim in the right direction, be courageous in taking responsibility and do a solid job in a hands-on manner, Xi said.

During the meeting, some officials, including leaders of special groups of overall reform deepening and chief officials of provincial Party authorities, reported on their work in deepening reform.

Vice-Premier Ma Kai reported about research on the reform of State-owned enterprises, while State Councilor Meng Jianzhu reported on the

implementation of judicial system reform and Han Zheng, Party secretary of Shanghai, reported on the reform of the Shanghai Pilot Free Trade Zone.

Some ministers and provincial Party secretaries also reported on reforms in areas including environmental protection, agriculture, medical care, poverty reduction and the deepening of supply-side structural reform in scientific innovation.

Those in attendance reviewed and passed the plan for overall deepening of reform and further opening-up of the China (Shanghai) Pilot Free Trade Zone and the plan for deepening reform in the science and technology award system. They also reviewed reports on such issues as improving education in poverty-stricken regions and the registration of people without hukou, or household registration.

During the meeting, leading officials were urged to keep in mind the overall situation while pushing forward reform.

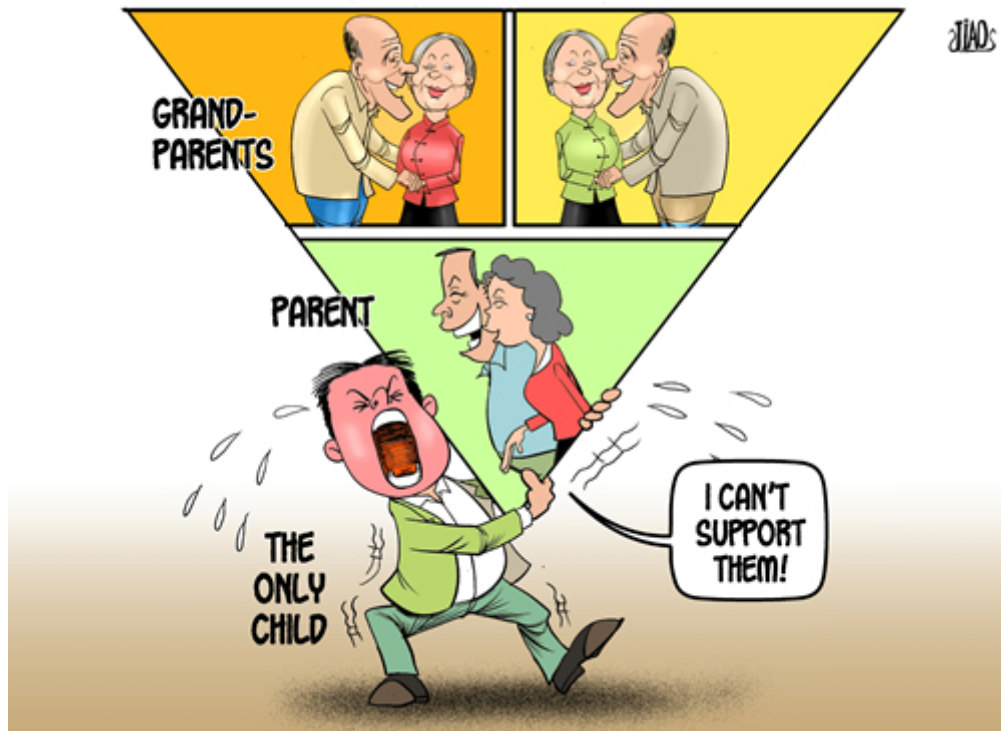
They are now required to take a leading and responsible role in reforms that are closely related to the people.

Major officials were encouraged at the meeting to be bold in pilot projects while deepening reform. Those who fail to fulfill their reform duties will face punishment.

Leading officials are also required to take specific measures to push forward reform, focus on key issues and implement reform tasks in a flexible manner. Chief officials are urged to pay more attention to reform tasks that could enhance the people's sense of gain.

Meeting participants noted that in past years, the CPC Central Committee has put forward a number of reform measures to improve the people's livelihood, which have been welcomed by the people. They urged implementation of such measures to benefit the people.

[China's aging population will reach 255m by 2020](#)



Inverted pyramid [By Jiao Haiyang/China.org.cn]

Chinese authorities are projecting the country's aged population (above 60 years old) will reach 255 million by 2020, but the provision of necessary healthcare and nursing will fall seriously short of requirements.

According to a plan for elderly healthcare in the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016–2020) jointly issued by 13 Chinese government departments including the National Health and Family Planning Commission and National Development and Reform Commission, the aging population will grow at an average rate of 6.4 million a year. By 2020, there will be 255 million elders, representing at least 17.8 percent of the entire Chinese population.

The planning document indicates there will be an increasing number of totally and partially disabled elders in the future. In 2015, the figure was 40.63 million, among whom 11.35 million had disability identity certificates.

However, China lags behind in elderly healthcare services and the growing population imposes worrying pressures on the system. In 2015, China had 453 elderly convalescent hospitals, 168 nursing homes and 65 nursing service stations to provide the much-needed medical care for the elderly.

Also in 2015, there were only 36,441, 11,180 and 316 staff members respectively in the specialist hospitals, nursing homes, and nursing stations.

Luo Qimin, a senior engineer who has been undertaking researches into elderly people's rehabilitation assistance devices for more than two decades, told 21st Century Business Herald that China has just made a start in dealing with aging issues, which are very complicated.

"The most urgent issue is the government should organize a really professional team on the national level, involving every aspect, including

medical care, rehabilitation, creation of environment suitable for the elderly, and policy-making, and treating the aging problem as a severe problem needing urgent resolution,” he said.

The planning document proposes the concept of “growing old healthily,” which means that to comprehensively and systematically intervene at an early stage of life in all elements that may influence health. This will create a favorable environment for living and nurture social support for elders’ health, which can extend the life expectancy and maintain good health.

It also pointed out that China has not built a comprehensive and continuous service system yet to meet elders’ various health demands.

Li Fen, a research director from Shanghai Healthcare Development Research Center, added that elderly people usually suffer from more than one disease including chronic conditions, so there is great need for close cooperation among various hospitals and medical care institutions and personnel, as well as in the technologies and medicines. Currently, there is no strong connection and interaction among different institutions and medical professionals.

[China to announce annual water-quality rankings](#)

Starting from this year, China will publish the annual rankings of cities with the best and poorest water quality, as the government moves to further increase transparency.

In addition, results of investigations into major or sensitive environmental emergencies, their impacts on the environment, and assessments of losses will also be made known to the public in line with the law, according to the central government’s agendas for 2017 unveiled by the State Council.

Water quality has not drawn as much attention from the public as air quality, and the rankings will serve as a form of supervision over local governments, as well as motivate them to step up efforts to treat polluted water and improve water quality, said Peng Yingdeng, a Beijing-based researcher in urban environmental pollution control.

China still has a long way to go in the treatment of polluted and odorous water, Peng said, adding that the rankings will prompt cities that have done poorly in this regard to strive harder for improvements.