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13/03/2008 China to take seven measures on energy conservation, emission reduction

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[(Two Sessions Express) Report: "NDRC Vice Minister Xie Zhenhua Says on 11 March That China Is To Introduce Seven Major Measures in 2008 to Boost Energy Conservation and Emission Reduction"]

Beijing, 11 Mar (Xinhua) - Xie Zhenhua, vice minister of the National Development and Reform Commission [NDRC], said in Beijing on 11 March that China would introduce seven major measures this year to promote the work of energy conservation and emission reduction. He stressed the need to thoroughly carry out the campaign of energy conservation and emission reduction among the whole people, and to mobilize the entire society to participate in the campaign of energy conservation and emission reduction.

Xie Zhenhua indicated when answering questions that China would introduce several major measures for energy conservation and emission reduction in 2008: Firstly, China will step up the target assessment of energy conservation and emission reduction. Supervision shall be conducted in March and June this year respectively over the results of the target assessment. Secondly, China will further carry out industrial restructuring. The country will check the growth of industries with high energy consumption through tightening credit control, introducing land gate, conducting assessments on energy conservation and environmental protection, and raising the threshold. Third, China will increase the intensity of eliminating outdated production capacities. In 2008, the country shall shut down small thermal power plants with a production capacity of 13m kilowatt, and will eliminate outdated production capacities of 50m tonnes of cement, 6m tonnes of steel, and 14m tonnes of iron respect!

ively; and tasks in this aspect remain heavy and arduous. Fourth, China will give prominence to promoting energy conservation and emission reduction in key enterprises and major projects. Last year, the state made a national bond investment of 5.43bn yuan and put in special funds of 23.5bn yuan as a support to energy conservation and emission reduction, and inputs of this kind will continue to increase this year. Fifth, China will promote the development of a circular economy. We are currently making experiments in 172 trial units, and will further expand the scale of the work through experiments. Sixth, China will improve and perfect its various economic policies that help boost energy conservation and emission reduction. We must not rely solely on administrative means, but should also rely on legal means. Seventh, China will intensify inspection over law enforcement.

On 11 March, the First Session of the 11th NPC held a press conference at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. NDRC Vice Minister Xie Zhenhua and Zhang Lijun, deputy director of the PRC General Administration of Environmental Protection [GAEP], answered reporters' questions on the environment, resources, and energy conservation and emission reduction.

Zhang Lijun said when answering a question posed by a report: The central government has the confidence to meet the target of cutting down the emission of two major pollutants by 10 per cent by the end of the 11th Five-Year Programme period. This is mainly based on reasons in the following

three aspects: Firstly, the party Central Committee and the State Council have assigned great importance to the work of energy conservation and emission reduction as well as the work of environmental protection. In 2006, entrusted by the State Council, the GAEP signed the accountability agreement on the emission reduction of two major pollutants with the governments of 31 provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions as well as five power corporations respectively. In 2007, the State Council promulgated an integrated work programme on energy conservation and emission reduction as well as an implementation plan and procedures for assessments on statistical data and monitoring results co!

ncerning energy conservation and emission reduction. Premier Wen has put forward 10 specific measures in the Government Work Report, which are all aimed at resolving specific problems and are highly operable. Secondly, local party committees and governments at all levels have attached great importance to energy conservation and emission reduction. Third, the country's capability of environmental protection, monitoring, and control has been constantly strengthened. Last year, the central finance put in 2bn yuan to improve the country's capability of environmental monitoring and law enforcement, especially the online monitoring of pollutants emission by key enterprises. When talking about the major obstacles currently faced by energy conservation and emission reduction, Zhang Lijun indicated: With two fifth of the 11th Five-Year Programme period gone, we are left with only three fifth of the time, or three years. To meet the target of cutting down pollutants by about 7 per cent within the said timeframe, we have to say that the task remains considerably arduous and the situation is highly grim.

He noted: To put it in specific terms, firstly, enterprises causing heavy pollution and high energy consumption have been growing at an excessively fast speed. Secondly, some localities have failed to pay sufficient attention to environmental protection, and have engaged themselves in blind development; as a result, they are playing an overly high price in the course of economic development. Surfacing gradually today are environment-related problems caused by projects that were blindly started in the past. Third, leaders at the grassroots level in a small number of localities have yet to assign great importance to environmental protection or the work of energy conservation and emission reduction; as a result, these localities have failed to carry out economic restructuring with great intensity, and key pollution-tackling projects in these localities are progressing at a slow pace. Fourth, environmental supervision and control lacks sufficient intensity and power. All these m!

asures [as published] are the obstacles that are hindering our fulfilment of the emission reduction targets set for the 11th Five-Year Programme period. "Nevertheless, these are all problems that have emerged in the course of development, and are solvable through our efforts."

Zhang Lijun indicated: Energy conservation and emission reduction are indeed highly effective methods for improving the quality of the environment, and our goal of improving the environment will be realized only if we continue to pay close attention to the work with perseverance. At present, the GAEP is launching a special strategic research programme on China's environment, under which a total of about 29 special subjects are being studied, with progress already made in the studies of some of these special subjects. The results of these studies shall be incorporated into China's environmental protection work during the 12th Five-Year Programme, as well as its environmental protection work of a longer range.

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