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Cabinet steps up air pollution controls

Ozone now second-biggest airborne pollutant after fine particulate matter

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China will prioritize efforts to treat industrial pollution, replace small coal furnaces with clean energy and control emissions from diesel vehicles as part of intensified measures to tackle air pollution in key areas.

The State Council passed the decision at its executive meeting on Wednesday, pledging to make air pollution control measures more targeted while taking full account of factors that worsen air quality in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region and neighboring areas.

The meeting, which heard a report from a research program that investigated the causes of heavy air pollution in the region during winter and autumn and possible solutions, also highlighted the need to control

ammonia pollution from agriculture and animal husbandry.

With ozone pollution now an increasing problem, the meeting urged heightened scientific research on regionwide air pollution treatment, with steps to promote coordinated treatment of pollution from PM2.5 particulate matter and ozone.

Premier Li Keqiang said at the meeting that controlling air pollution and improving air quality is a matter of concern to the public, and the government must step up science-based treatment measures and promote green development.

China has seen continuous improvements in its air quality, with concentrations of PM2.5 particulate matter down by 10 percent in 337 cities across the country in the first half of this year, according to the Ministry of Ecology and Environment. PM2.5 refers to particles with a

diameter of 2.5 micrometers or less that can invade even the smallest airways.

The improvement was even more significant in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region and neighboring areas — one of the regions that has suffered the most severe air pollution in recent years — with PM2.5 concentrations down by 16.7 percent and the percentage of days with good air quality up by 12.6 percentage points.

However, concentrations of ozone rose to become the second-biggest airborne pollutant after PM2.5 in the first half, Liu Youbin, a spokesman for the ministry, said at a news briefing on Aug 28.

He said volatile organic chemicals are major contributors to the formation of ozone, and the ministry had come up with a work plan to tackle ozone pollution in the 79 hardest-hit cities from mid-July.

Chai Fahe, deputy head of the National Joint Research Center on Air Pollution Causes and Control, said in an interview with China Environment News last month that tack-

ling ozone pollution could be more difficult than PM2.5, as ozone can linger in the atmosphere for longer and travel further.

He highlighted the importance of finding out the traits of ozone pollution and its transmission patterns before mapping out key areas for controlling the pollutant.

Peng Yingdeng, a research fellow at the National Engineering Research Center for Urban Environment Pollution Control, said that only by finding the cause of air pollution could the government come up with more targeted measures.

The country must beef up measures to control emissions from vehicles, especially heavy-duty diesel trucks, while also putting more effort into treating pollutants discharged by mobile machinery and the agricultural sector, he said.

Wednesday's meeting called for structural adjustments in energy, industries and transport, with measures to boost the clean use of coal and expedite the transformation of industries producing steel, coke, pet-

rochemicals and construction materials. The shipment of commodities by railway and the use of new-energy cargo vehicles in urban delivery services will be significantly increased.

The government will boost the development of eco-friendly industry and the circular economy, and strengthen specialized services for green technology and equipment, new types of energy-efficient products and products designed to conserve energy and reduce emissions, the Cabinet said. It also vowed to reinforce international cooperation, foster new growth drivers and enable win-win outcomes for both environmental protection and economic growth.

"There is still much room for improvement for China's environmental protection sector, and we need to focus on key areas to encourage businesses to increase research and development inputs," the premier said. "This will not only help improve the quality of life for the people, but also the quality of development for the economy and society."

POLICY RESPONSE

Public feedback sought on managing commercial messages, calls

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A number of ministry-level departments, including those responsible for industry and information technology, commerce, human resources and social security, and financial markets, have responded recently to matters of public concern.

Draft regulations target unwanted communication

China is soliciting public opinion on draft regulations on the management of short message and voice call services, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology said on Aug 31.

The draft regulations say organizations or individuals should not send any commercial short messages or make any commercial calls to users without their consent or request, or after they have been explicitly rejected.

Basic telecommunication business operators would not be allowed to provide any access services or communication resources for organizations and individuals that have not obtained business licenses for telecommunication services to

engage in commercial short message and voice call services.

Suppliers of short message services should make sure users have agreed to or asked to receive commercial short messages before sending them out, with records of user consent to be kept for at least five months.

Members of the public will be able to give feedback on the draft regulations until Sept 30.

Hotels told to phase out disposable plastic items

Star-rated guesthouses and hotels across China should no longer voluntarily offer disposable plastic items by the end of 2022, according to a notice published by the Ministry of Commerce on Aug 31 about strengthening control of plastic pollution by businesses.

The restriction will be applied to all

the country's guesthouses, hotels and homestay inns by the end of 2025, the notice said.

By the end of this year, the use of disposable nondegradable plastic straws will be forbidden in the catering industry nationwide and disposable nondegradable plastic tableware will not be allowed to be used for dine-in catering services in urban built-up areas at the prefecture level and above.

Noting that the continuously increasing consumption of plastic products, particularly disposable ones, has brought new challenges to efforts to curb environmental pollution, the ministry told local authorities to earnestly implement specific restrictions on plastic use in key areas including shopping malls, supermarkets, restaurants, hotels and e-commerce.

Autumn recruitment campaign for graduates

A special autumn recruitment campaign for college graduates was launched on Sept 1 in an effort to boost employment, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security said.

The nationwide campaign, which



will run to Nov 15, will organize more than 800 job fairs across China, it said.

An online recruitment conference will also be held to precisely match employers with graduates applying for jobs.

To satisfy the need for trans-regional employment both for employers and graduates, 25 comprehensive or industrial job fairs will be held in 21 cities and provinces including Beijing, Kunming, in Yunnan province, Xi'an, in Shaanxi province, and Changsha, in Hunan province. The China Nonferrous Metal Industry Human Resource Center will host a series of recruitment events in 22 cities focusing on the industry.

To help lift the country's most impoverished regions out of poverty, special job fairs will also be held in Linxia Hui autonomous prefecture in Gansu province, the city of

Nyingchi in the Tibet autonomous region, and Liangshan Yi autonomous prefecture in Sichuan province, the ministry said.

Rules aim to increase investment in bonds

Draft rules aimed at facilitating overseas investment in China's bond market — the world's second-biggest — were published on Wednesday in an effort to open up and bolster domestic financial markets.

A statement jointly issued by the People's Bank of China, the China Securities Regulatory Commission and the State Administration of Foreign Exchange seeking public opinion on the draft rules said application procedures for foreign bond investors will be simplified and rules for various investment channels unified.

China's central bank, the securities watchdog and the foreign exchange regulator will jointly supervise such investment according to their own responsibilities and share information and data with each other in order to improve market transparency and jointly maintain a sound market environment, it said.

The solicitation of public opinion will end on Oct 1.

Policy digest

Program to boost coronavirus testing



China will further improve its nucleic acid testing capacity for novel coronavirus infections, according to a work program released by the State Council's joint prevention and control mechanism on COVID-19 on Aug 31.

Under the program, all the country's secondary-level general hospitals will be capable of conducting nucleic acid sampling and testing before the end of this year.

Testing bases in urban areas and public testing laboratories will also be established by then.

The testing capacity of testing bases in urban areas should reach 10,000 samples a day, and the figure should be increased to 30,000 samples a day during epidemics, according to the program.

One hundred public testing laboratories will be set up across the country, with each being able to handle 10,000 samples a day. As a result, the country will be able to handle a million samples a day.

To give full play to the development of third-party laboratories, the program urges local authorities to guide and promote their establishment in accordance with laws and regulations and allow them to participate in nucleic acid testing through government service procurement.

The program said that a mechanism to mobilize different areas' nucleic acid testing resources will be built to ensure a rapid response in times of need.

The country will be divided into eight regions to plan for greater testing capacity, with each being able to handle between 500,000 and 700,000 samples a day.

The measures will help the country achieve the goal of completing nucleic acid tests for all residents who need them in five to seven days.

The program also said that if a location that sees a cluster of COVID-19 infections has insufficient nucleic acid testing capacity, local authorities will be able to submit an application to the State Council's joint prevention and control mechanism, and the National Health Commission will mobilize nearby testing teams to offer support once the application is approved.

80 war memorials and historical sites listed

A list of 80 State-level war memorials and historical sites was released on Thursday when the country commemorated the 75th anniversary of victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, which was part of World War II.

The new list includes facilities and sites that commemorate prominent battles, martyrs who made outstanding contributions, and renowned foreigners who sacrificed their lives to support the Chinese people during the Japanese invasion of China, according to a notice released by the State Council.

Also on Thursday, the Ministry of Veterans Affairs announced a list of 185 war heroes, martyrs and groups.

In its notice, the State Council urged local governments to further enhance the preservation, management and promotion of the facilities and sites, to guide the public, and especially teenagers, in maintaining awareness of China's history of resistance and the contributions made by martyrs.

Previous lists of facilities, sites, fallen soldiers and heroic groups to commemorate the country's victory in the war were issued in September 2014 and August 2015.