

# 19<sup>th</sup> CPC NATIONAL CONGRESS

## Air quality set to improve

Minister says efforts are under way to lower PM2.5 levels across China to meet national standard

By ZHENG JINRAN and CAO YIN

China will see fundamental improvements in its environmental quality by 2035, when the average PM2.5 concentration in the air across the country will meet the national standard, Li Ganjie, minister of environmental protection, said on Oct 23.

"We are conducting studies to clarify the details of the fundamental improvement, but I think, in the field of air quality, it means the national average PM2.5 level will be lowered to 35 micrograms per cubic meter," Li said at a news conference on the sidelines of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China.

PM2.5 refers to hazardous fine particulate matter in the air. The micrograms per cubic meter concentration is one of the major measures used to describe air quality.

In some major areas with severe air pollution, the average PM2.5 level will also be lowered, Li said.

The latest data from the Ministry of Environmental Protection show that 338 cities across the country saw average PM2.5 concentrations of 47 micrograms per cubic meter last year, 34.3 percent higher than the standard.

"It's not easy to reach the targets," Li said. In fact, air pollution worsened in some areas, he added.



Li Ganjie, minister of environmental protection (right), responds to questions from reporters after a news conference at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in Beijing on Oct 23. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

The Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region in North China, along with neighboring provinces, experienced severe air pollution in recent years, especially during autumn and winter. The min-

istry has introduced stronger measures to reduce the air pollution in those areas.

Stricter measures governing discharges have been introduced to

reduce emissions. Some heavy industries, for example, such as steel and cement manufacturing, will suspend production, and vehicles with heavy exhaust emissions will be restricted,

documents from the ministry indicated.

Total emissions reduced in the winter months are estimated at double or triple what was cut the previous winter to help governments reach their air pollution reduction targets, the documents showed. "We will try our best to win the fight against air pollution," Li said.

Hebei province, in which at least six cities ranked among the top 10 cities with the worst air pollution, has promised to strengthen restrictions, said Gao Jianmin, head of the provincial environment department, on Oct 23.

For example, Hebei has restricted coal consumption in rural areas. "Over 1.8 million households will switch to use clean energy — electricity or natural gas — for heating," he said. "It's estimated to cut the consumption of 4.8 million metric tons of coal.

"At least 100,000 small and polluting companies have been ordered to pause their production or shut down altogether this year, which will cut emissions," Gao said.

"Air pollution has been our top priority, and anyone violating the restrictions — in a company or government — will receive severe punishment."

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## Pilot FTZs to get more powers

Free trade zones play key role in China's liberalization of trade and investment, facilitating market access

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As one of the major aspects of further opening-up, the China (Shanghai) Pilot Free Trade Zone has attracted a large number of international industry leaders to set up operations there, providing substantial help to their development in the country.

During the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, General Secretary Xi Jinping reiterated the importance of free trade zones (FTZs) in a report delivered at the opening session on Oct 18.

Xi said the government will grant more powers to pilot FTZs to conduct reform, and explore the opening of free trade ports.

Meanwhile, the government will adopt policies to promote high-standard liberalization and facilitation of trade and investment, significantly ease market access, further open the services sector, and protect the legitimate rights and interest of foreign investors.

"All businesses registered in China will be treated equally," Xi said.

As one of the first foreign banks to set up within the Shanghai FTZ, Citibank China has witnessed a number of pioneering and innovative policies in the financial sector over the past four years, according to Pei Yigen, country head of treasury and trade solutions for the bank.

"These innovations have helped with further opening-up in the finan-

cial market of Shanghai, and even nationwide," he said.

"We are delighted to see that a growing number of multinational companies have set up their Asian accounting and financial centers in Shanghai, and more specifically in the Shanghai FTZ."

Last year, the bank overtook all other domestic and foreign banks with operations in the Shanghai FTZ in terms of the settlement volume of cross-border capital pool business. It also took up 49 percent of the total market value of the cross-border centralized collection and payment business in the zone.

"The establishment of the Shanghai FTZ has provided a new path for foreign banks in China," Pei said.

"We are able to come up with more innovations in our businesses and products.

"Over the past four years, we have helped many multinational companies to enhance the function of their regional headquarters by moving their regional and even global renminbi capital center to Shanghai. We would like to contribute more to the real economy with the platform provided by the Shanghai FTZ."

World-leading automation technology provider Festo, which is headquartered in Esslingen, Germany, has its Chinese operation located in the Shanghai FTZ.

According to Thomas Pehrson, the company's general manager in China, the many reform policies in the

zone, especially in the customs sector, have largely reduced its burden and enabled the company to deliver products and services globally with lower cost.

"Benefiting from reform and innovations in the Shanghai FTZ, Festo is planning for adjustment in our business in the Asia-Pacific region," he said.

"Festo China's automation manufacturing plant, located in the Shanghai FTZ, will shift its focus from manufacturing to research and development (R&D), as well as delivery.

"The existing production center and R&D center in China will be expanded into Festo's Asia-Pacific logistics center and customized production center," he added.