

China Plans 'Clean Energy' Overhaul Over 10 Years

SHANGHAI (AP) — China plans to have "clean energy" account for 15 percent of its total consumption under a 10-year renewable energy promotion program soon to be made public, a state-run newspaper cites the head of the country's National Energy Administration as saying.

The government will spend billions of dollars on building nuclear and solar power plants, wind farms and on research into renewable energy technology, Zhang Guobao said in Tuesday's edition of the China Daily.

The plan would accelerate efforts already under way to help ease reliance on expensive oil imports and heavily polluting coal, which fuels about three-quarters of China's electricity generation.

It also is in line with Beijing's pledges to rein in output of greenhouse gases by reducing China's carbon intensity — its use of fossil fuels per unit of economic output — by 40 to 45 percent by 2020.

Zhang did not say when the plan would be made fully public.

Officials at the National Development and Reform Commission, which oversees the administration, said they could not immediately comment on the report.

Renewable energy accounted for 9.9 percent of China's total energy consumption last year, up from 8.5 percent the year before, the report said. Under the plan, by 2020, the government intends to raise that to 15 percent.

"Power projects take a long time to be up and running, and we are basically allowing five years to complete them although it is a 10-year program," Zhang told the China Daily. "Otherwise, the facilities cannot be put into use by 2020," he said.

China's total energy consumption surged 6.3 percent last year to 3.1 billion tons of standard coal equivalent, up from 4 percent growth in 2008, the report said.

Zhang said that trend was disturbing given that the economy expanded at a rate of 8.7 percent, the slowest growth in five years.

The government says it has devoted a significant share of a 4 trillion yuan (\$586 billion) stimulus package announced in late 2008 to reducing pollution and improving energy efficiency. But local authorities may not be toeing the line.

"It appears that some local governments approved energy-guzzling projects during

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economic crisis," said Zhang. "So only by fully implementing our energy saving regulations can we realize economic growth with less energy consumption."

Highlighting China's concerns over energy use, in January the government set up a so-called "super ministry," the National Energy Commission, headed by Premier Wen Jiabao. It will coordinate energy policies overseen by a slew of agencies including the NDRC.

Zhang is a deputy director in the commission, and Wen headed the drafting process for the new energy plan, the report said.

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