

ENVIRONMENT

Steel plants told to relocate

Move is expected to help improve cities' air quality greatly

By ZHANG YU and WANG WEI in Shijiazhuang

A steel plant has been ordered to move out of Shijiazhuang, capital of North China's Hebei province, within the next two years to cut pollution in one of the nation's 10 most-polluted cities.

It is one of at least four such plants ordered to move from downtown areas in the nation's premier steelmaking province.

The Shijiazhuang Iron and Steel Co has also been told to reduce its production to help lessen China's overcapacity problem, and modernize its operations to become cleaner and more efficient, officials said.

The company, a subsidiary of China's largest steelmaker, Hebei Iron and Steel Group, must finish the move from the Chang'an district of Shijiazhuang to Jingxing county by the end of 2017, according to a government announcement.

The new location is about 70 kilometers from its old site near the center of Shijiazhuang.

"The plant's relocation will decrease the smoke and dust in the city's air and thereby help improve downtown's air quality greatly," a government official surnamed Guo said.

The company, founded in 1957, has been emitting sulfur dioxide, smoke, dust and nitrogen oxide for nearly 60 years.

The steelmaking capacity of the plant is 2.6 million tons a year, making up 5.2 percent of the group's production capability, according to the company's official website.

When the relocation is complete, its capacity will be reduced to 2 million tons.



A worker checks progress at the rolling mill of the Shijiazhuang Iron and Steel Co. The company will be relocated to Jingxing county, 70 kilometers away from downtown Shijiazhuang. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

“Relocation is not just transferring of capacity and pollution. ... It's like a process of purification.”

Wang Liping, chairman of Shijiazhuang Iron and Steel

"Relocation is not just transferring of capacity and pollution. Companies like mine are required to upgrade their production process and greatly reduce pollutants after the relocation," said Wang Liping,

chairman of Shijiazhuang Iron and Steel. "It's like a process of purification."

The relocation will cut the company's emissions of sulfur dioxide by 73 percent, and that of smoke and dust by 23 percent, Wang said.

Other plants to be moved are those of Bohai Steel Group in Tangshan and Jinan Steel Group and Taihang Steel Group in Handan. They will be moved from city centers to coastal zones or special industrial zones far from downtowns by 2017.

For the three companies, a total of 16.2 million tons of steel capacity will be moved.

Preparations for plant relocations started in 2014, right after the State Council designated Hebei as a key province in the structural readjustment of the iron and steel industry.

Hebei is the nation's top iron and

steelmaking province, accounting for about a quarter of the nation's total steel production.

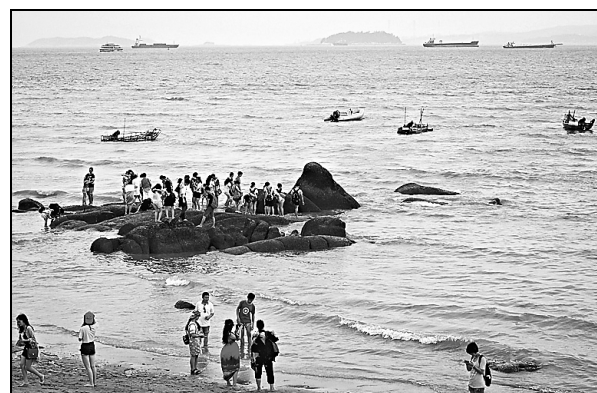
In 2014, as the province launched a restructuring program, steel production there reached 185 million tons. It has ranked first in the country for 14 straight years, according to Zhang Qingwei, governor of the province.

Relocation of steel plants is one of the major aspects of the program.

By 2017, the province is expected to cut its steelmaking capacity by 60 million tons, in accordance with goals set in 2014.

By the end of last year, the province had cut its steelmaking capacity by 41.1 million tons, according to the province's government work report released last week.

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Tourists visit Cengcuoan, a fishing village that has become a tourist spot in Xiamen, Fujian province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Fujian vows to restore ecology, sustain GDP

By HU MEIDONG in Xiamen, Fujian humeidong@chinadaily.com.cn

Restoration of the ecological system in Fujian province needs to be further strengthened in 2016 while maintaining a high GDP growth rate, officials at the provincial People's Congress said on Friday.

The provincial GDP is forecast to grow by 8.5 percent this year, two percentage points higher than the national average, according to a government report.

"There are definite improvements in the environment in the last year, but further efforts are needed in less-developed rural areas, especially in small watershed management," said Yu Weiguo, Fujian governor. Yu emphasized that the government needs to maintain a good balance between economic development and the environment.

The water quality of 12 major rivers in Fujian has remained good in the past year, officials said. Around 90 percent of rivers are within levels I to III, according to the report. Rivers are graded from I to V, with I being the best and V the worst.

Cooperation between experts from Taiwan and the government in Xiamen has set an example for villages

as they prepare to help manage small watersheds in their areas.

Jian Poyan, an agricultural expert from Taiwan who graduated from the University of Hawaii in the United States, has worked to make rural areas in Xiamen healthier and more sustainable and livable places.

"We found that the soil is suitable for planting lavender, which requires well-drained, slightly alkaline soil," Jian said. "The plant gradually improves the water quality and provides a habitat for fish and other aquatic life."

He said villages should make changes to land use by planting organic vegetables and aquatic plants that are helpful in improving soil quality.

After a one-year trial using 3.35 hectares of land in Chushan village, revenue generated from each hectare of land reached 2.25 million yuan (\$341,770) a year, triple that of 2014.

"The focus is not just bringing a specific new plant here but to create a habitat. We want to tell the local residents that only when the ecology is restored can they make long-term profits," Jian said.

Wang Yanfei contributed to this story.

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