

Inspections of imported waste to rise



Border patrol officers handle parcels of used clothes that were smuggled from Hong Kong to the Chinese mainland in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, in June last year. [File Photo/China Daily]

Legislators have vowed to increase supervision of government departments in charge of handling imported solid waste, aiming to protect the environment and ensure public health.

The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress will conduct inspections to ensure that the law on the prevention of solid waste pollution is being enforced.

The inspections, led by Zhang Dejiang, chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, will be conducted in 10 areas, including Tianjin, Jiangsu Province and the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. The inspections will last until the end of July, the committee said.

It is the first enforcement inspection since 2005, when the revised law took effect.

“Our aim is to protect the environment by rule of law, hoping supervision and inspections can be effective in ensuring residents’ health and improving ecological safety,” Zhang said on Monday.

“We’ll urge government departments to enforce the law, and find areas where the law needs to be improved.”

The country has drawn up a list of 66 kinds of solid waste that can be imported, including paper and plastics, to satisfy the nation’s need for raw materials for economic development, “but problems brought by illegal imports are still serious”, said Chen Jining, minister of environmental protection.

Since 2013, more than 400 cases relating to smuggling of imported solid waste have been filed at Chinese customs and nearly 800 suspects have been detained, a statement from the legislature said.

In April, for example, Shenzhen Customs in Guangdong province seized more than 1,000 metric tons of imported industrial waste in 38 containers. The goods from the Middle East were prohibited from import under the law, and smugglers attempted to transport the waste into the country as synthetic graphite.

“Some imported solid waste doesn’t meet our environmental standards, while some enterprises import banned waste by hiding it or making false reports to governments,” Chen said.

He confirmed that a few areas for recycling and reusing waste become “trafficking destinations” for imported solid waste. A campaign led by the ministry against illegally imported waste began in March.

“In addition, we’re trying to reduce the quantities and categories of imported solid waste, further reforming management in the industry,” he added.

Liu Jianguo, a professor at Tsinghua University’s School of Environment, said the utilization of solid waste comes with a higher cost to the economy and environmental protection than natural resources, warning that some recycling projects harm human health and pollute the environment.

Solid waste can have high levels of pollutants, while the reusable resources are of low quality, he was quoted as saying by Xinhua News Agency. He said there should be clear and stricter controls on the recycling of solid waste.

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[China pledges peaceful development in Antarctica](#)



Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli (L) addresses the opening ceremony of the 40th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) in Beijing, capital of China, May 23, 2017. [Photo/Xinhua]

The Chinese government reiterated its commitment to the peaceful development and research of Antarctica as the 40th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) opened in Beijing Tuesday.

This is China's first time hosting the meeting, an annual decision-making mechanism established under the the Antarctic Treaty.

Peaceful, stable, green and sustainable development of Antarctica is in line with the common interests for mankind and a strong commitment to future generations, said Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli when addressing the opening ceremony.

China acceded to the Antarctic Treaty in 1983 and became a consultative member two years later.

In the past three decades, China has sent nearly 6,000 professionals to Antarctica since the nation dispatched its first Antarctic expedition team in November 1984.

Chinese leaders have stressed on various occasions the need to better protect and research Antarctica due to its special location and environment. To review its progress on Antarctica, China on Monday published the first full report on its study and use of the region over the past 30 years, titled "China's Antarctic Activities."

According to the report by China's State Oceanic Administration, the country has so far opened four research bases – the Great Wall station, Zhongshan station, Kunlun station and Taishan station – and established the Polar Research Institute of China in Shanghai in addition to sailing the icebreaker Xuelong (Snow Dragon).

The number of papers on Antarctic studies published by Chinese scientists and included by the Science Citation Index (SCI) has risen from 19 in 1999 to 157 in 2016, leading China to rank among the top 10 countries.

China has a relatively short history of study in Antarctica, but the progress it has achieved, especially in the past few years, has been huge, said Qin Weijia, director of the Chinese Arctic and Antarctic Administration.

China also raised its financial inputs in Antarctic research. In the past 15 years from 2001 to 2016, China invested 310 million yuan (about 45 million U.S. dollars) in related projects – 18 times the total for the years 1985 to 2000.

Antarctic research has remained one of the most difficult topics due to the lack of research data, said Qin.

China is not yet a global leader in Antarctic research, Qin said, but as the country grows in technology and overall national power, it is willing to contribute more to a better understanding of Antarctica.

China pays close attention to cooperation and sharing of information in the study of Antarctica. The Chinese National Arctic and Antarctic Data Center has provided data for more than 100 international projects and more than 10 countries.

“In past years, China has cooperated with more and more countries in various aspects such as policy making, expeditions and scientific studies,” said China's Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin.

According to “China's Antarctic Activities,” from 2016 to 2020, China plans to elevate its Antarctic activities to a higher level, including installing new Antarctic stations and deploying new and advanced icebreakers.

“Down the road, China is willing to join hands with the rest of the international community in understanding, protecting and using Antarctica,” said the report.

Some 400 delegates from 44 countries and 10 international organizations which have signed the Antarctic Treaty attended the 40th ATCM in Beijing.

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Xi calls for more replicable reform practices

Chinese President Xi Jinping Tuesday stressed the importance of pilot reform while calling for more reform practices that could be replicated and promoted.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks at the 35th meeting of the Central Leading Group for Deepening Overall Reform, which he heads.

Li Keqiang, Liu Yunshan and Zhang Gaoli, all members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and deputy heads of the leading group, also attended the meeting.

A guideline on deepening reform of the educational system was adopted at the meeting, aimed to cultivate students' abilities in lifetime learning and creative thinking, as well as the ability to adapt to the times.

Educational reform should update the methods of school running as well as management mechanisms to promote comprehensive development, according to a statement issued after the meeting.

In a separate topic, the leading group called for enhanced efforts to allow foreign investors easier access to China's key sectors via a "negative list" approach.

The statement outlined several sectors that should further open to foreign investment, including services, manufacturing and mining.

The leading group also urged standardization of Chinese firms' overseas operations, urging the formation of a supervision system featuring clear demarcation of rights and obligations and effective risk control.

According to the meeting, a long-term supervision and early warning system should be established to keep an eye on resources and environmental constraints on economic development. Environmental monitoring should be conducted in a scientific way with collection of reliable data.

The leading group also vowed to push for establishment of the personal information and asset system, and introduce information rating and a traceable security mechanism to ensure that personal information is safe and used properly.

To improve air quality in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region with coordinated efforts, the leading group called for efforts to conduct a pilot program on

setting up a cross-region environmental protection agency.

Environmental regulation in the region should apply unified standards, assessment, monitoring and law enforcement.

With the principle of prioritizing environmental protection and proper use of resources, the leading group called for use of market-based and paid-use mechanisms to develop maritime areas and uninhabited islands. Certain such regions that need special protection are prohibited from development.

The statement also said time has been ripe to officially establish the system of public interest litigation by prosecutors after nearly two years of pilot reform.

In July 2015, the Supreme People's Procuratorate began the pilot program that allowed prosecutors in 13 provincial divisions to institute public interest litigation in civil and administrative cases.

So far, prosecutors have filed public interest lawsuits related to environmental protection, food and drug safety, state assets and state land use.

Abundant case samples and rich experience have been gained and the procedural mechanism well tested, according to the statement, which called for legal guarantees for procuratorates to file such litigation.