

## [China makes progress in fight against desertification](#)

China will step up efforts to fight desertification to meet a global target of halting net land degradation by 2030, a senior official said Sunday.

The country plans to rehabilitate more than 11,300 square kilometers of severely desertified farmland in the next three years at a cost of at least 27.2 billion yuan (about 4 billion U.S. dollars), Zhang Yongli, deputy head of State Forestry Administration, said at a press conference.

Zhang said China will enhance vegetation protection on desert land and improve compensation mechanisms to reward localities working toward fighting desertification.

China will also strengthen international cooperation, especially with countries along the Belt and Road, to reverse desertification, Zhang said.

Expanding deserts are a global challenge. It is estimated that one-third of the earth is exposed to desertification, affecting millions of people.

China has spent decades curbing desertification through greening. It has effectively contained desertification, with desertified land area shrinking continuously during the past decade.

The area of its desertified land totaled 1.72 million square kilometers at the end of 2014, nearly one fifth of the country, down 9,900 square kilometers from 2009.

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## [Xi to head central commission for integrated military, civilian development](#)

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, will head a new central commission for integrated military and civilian development, according to a decision by the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee on Sunday.

The decision was made at a meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, which was chaired by Xi.

The commission will be the central agency tasked with decision-making,

deliberation and coordination of major issues regarding integrated military and civilian development.

The commission will report to the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee.

Attendees at the meeting also heard a report on the work of leading Party groups of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), the State Council, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee, the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate, and the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee.

In a statement released after the meeting, the political bureau called for efforts to uphold the authority of the CPC Central Committee with comrade Xi Jinping as the core, adhere to its centralized and unified leadership, and fully implement major policies of the committee.

The year ahead is an important year to implement the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020) and supply-side structural reform.

The top leadership called on the leading Party groups of the NPC Standing Committee, the State Council, the CPPCC National Committee, the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate to follow new development concepts, fulfil their responsibility for strict governance of the Party, promote stable and healthy development of the economy and social stability and harmony.

Attendees urged the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee to make policies to serve the overall situation, improve its working system and capability to solve practical problems so as to complete tasks given by the CPC Central Committee.

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## [Online gun ring busted in NE China](#)

Police in Dalian in northeast China's Liaoning Province have uncovered a gang selling guns online.

Police have detained 27 suspects for allegedly manufacturing, selling and possessing guns without licenses.

In addition, 105 guns, more than 1,200 bullets and 147 gun components were seized.

In August and September 2016, online trades in cartridge cases and gunpowder in the city caught the attention of police.

Investigation showed that a gang was manufacturing guns, selling them through

WeChat, a popular chatting app and social network service, and delivering them by courier service.

The suspects were caught in January in 13 cities across the country.

Manufacture and sale of guns is banned in China, and members of the general public are not allowed to own guns.

Anyone found guilty of owning a gun can face up to seven years in prison.

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## Getting things done – Morven Terrace and Ancrum Place sheltered housing



I had a meeting with residents of the Morven Terrace and Ancrum Place sheltered housing just before Christmas at which residents asked when the external stairwells would be repainted as part of external cyclical maintenance (ECM) works. Tenants also asked about possible insulation improvements.

The council's Housing Investment Manager has since updated me as follows :

We are planning to commence ECM works at Ancrum / Morven at the tail end of the 17/18 Financial year and I would confirm this will include a repaint to the stairwells and landings. Unfortunately this development is of a traditional build so is not a priority for External Insulation as it will have received cavity insulation in the past.

I have since been in correspondence with him regarding the properties' Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing ratings to ensure all properties meet current standards.

All properties meet minimum standards apart from two properties where old electric heating has since been improved with the provision of new gas central heating. I am particularly concerned to ensure end terraced properties have efficient insulation as a number of tenants here have highlighted end terraced properties appear to be less warm.

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## Contributions to this site

Some contributors have not responded to my appeal. I have to reduce the amount of time I am spending on moderating this site, which is now considerably more time than it takes me to write my pieces for it. As a result, from today I will not be publishing comments which are

1. Long
2. Part of a series of multiple comments the same day from the same person
3. Require me to investigate a named third party site or other sources to check out allegations about named people of named institutions.

I value all contributions from constituents, who are welcome to make a longer comment or comments on relevant issues under a local issues story. They should include the first part of their post code as an identifier if they want to submit long or multiple postings.