

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.

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.

[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.

[Huang Xingguo under graft investigation](#)

Huang Xingguo, former acting Party chief and mayor of Tianjin Municipality, is under investigation on suspicion of accepting bribes, the Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP) announced on Sunday.

The SPP said Huang has been placed under "coercive measures," which may include summons by force, bail, residential surveillance, detention and arrest.

Investigation into his case is currently under way, according to the SPP.

[PLA helicopter crashes during night training](#)

A helicopter that belonged to the PLA Army Aviation Corps crashed on Thursday evening during a night time training flight. The two pilots remain missing as of Friday 20:10, the Chinese Ministry of National Defense (MOD) confirmed late on Friday.

The MOD statement says that the accident happened around 19:20 on Thursday evening in the rural area of the Quangan District, Quanzhou City in southeast China's coastal Fujian Province. The MOD did not specify the model of the helicopter nor which military unit it belonged to, adding that the cause of the crash is still being investigated.

The crash also resulted in four damaged village houses and three injured local people with non-life-threatening injuries.

Media have released the news of the helicopter crash in Quanzhou soon after the accident happened, but local authorities said the military authorities will announce the official account of the accident.