

[China SOE watchdog sets up Xiongan working group](#)

The State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC) of the State Council, China's top state-owned enterprises (SOEs) regulator, has announced to establish a special working group to support the construction of Xiongan New Area.

China's centrally administered SOEs are encouraged to make the most of their strengths to map out future development strategies for the area, the SASAC said in a statement released Friday after a meeting gathering its leaders earlier this week.

The economic zone, about 100 kilometers south of Beijing, will cover 2,000 square kilometers in the long term with a population of 2 to 2.5 million.

"The centrally administered SOEs are encouraged to lend strong support to construction of the zone in areas like energy security, infrastructure, electricity, telecommunications, rail transport, ecological protection, information-based network and smart city," noted the statement.

Great support will be given to these central SOEs in locating their newly-registered high-tech, new technology and high-end service businesses into Xiongan New Area, and better coordination between the central SOEs and local authorities will be promoted, it added.

China currently has 102 central SOEs. The plan to set up the new area is a major strategic decision which will open a new era of development.

[Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei restricts construction coatings](#)



Heavy smog hits Beijing. [Photo/Xinhua]

To curb air pollution, Hebei Province, Beijing and Tianjin will enforce a unified standard to reduce the use of coatings and adhesives in construction.

According to the standard issued Thursday, the amount of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) must not exceed set levels in manufacturing, storage and in use of construction coatings and adhesives. The measure is estimated to reduce VOCs in the air by 20 percent.

The Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region sits at the heart of the North China Plain where air pollution, particularly winter smog, often occurs as a result of the high concentration of industrial and vehicle emissions, static air circulation and the burning of coal.

“VOCs are a key component of the ozone and PM2.5 – fine particulate matter with diameter smaller than 2.5 micrometers,” said Yu Jianhua, chief engineer of the Beijing Municipal Environmental Protection Bureau.

He said that rapid urbanization had led construction coating and adhesives to constitute a major part of VOCs in cities. In 2015, 5.16 million tonnes of construction coating was consumed nationwide, an eight-fold increase since 2000.

Yu said Beijing had its rules on the use of coatings and adhesives but the latest standard upgraded restrictions and widened the jurisdiction to cover Tianjin and Hebei where rules had been more relaxed.

The standard is the first jointly-issued rule for the three areas to fight air pollution.

By 2017 the region must cut PM2.5 density by 25 percent from 2012 levels,

according to a government action plan issued in September 2013.

Beijing has been struggling to reach its target of an average PM2.5 density of 60 micrograms per cubic meter. In the first three months, its PM2.5 density averaged 84 micrograms per cubic meter.

However, Beijing's air quality is already ranked the best among 28 cities in the three areas.

Colleges, hospitals to be moved to Xiongan New Area



Aerial photo of Xiongan New Area [Photo/Xinhua]

Some hospitals and universities will relocate from downtown Beijing to suburbs and nearby Xiongan New Area in Hebei Province to relieve the city of functions nonessential to its role as China's capital, 21st Century Business Herald reports.

Construction on some projects is likely to begin within the year, it said.

Beijing's development and reform commission recently unveiled key construction initiatives for 2017, including nine that involve new, expanded or relocated projects for colleges and hospitals including Renmin University, Beijing Film Academy, Beijing Friendship Hospital and Peking University People's Hospital.

Earlier reports said some of the city's administrative agencies, companies, financial institutes, colleges and research institutes would be moved to

Xiongan.

Chen Yao, a research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said colleges, hospitals and related operations, institutions and agencies could all shift to this area in future.

Yin Zhigang, a Beijing-based researcher, said it is necessary for Xiongan to host non-capital functions that are shifted away from Beijing. "It's not necessary for citizens across the country to come to the capital to see a doctor anyway," he noted.

Colleges closely related to the development of local industries will be the priority, it was added. In Yin's opinion, those set up in Xiongan should integrate with local science and technology industries and companies, and share resources with others.

The New Area about 100 km southwest of downtown Beijing will span three counties that sit at the center of the triangle formed by Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei's provincial capital Shijiazhuang.

[430 arrested in illegal fundraising crackdown](#)



The illegal fundraising schemes involved 4 billion yuan (580 million U.S. dollars). [File Photo]

Chinese police in several provinces arrested more than 430 suspects in connection with internet-based pyramid-style schemes.

Police in Guangdong, Beijing, Zhejiang and Henan busted multiple gangs, said the Public Security Department of Guangdong Province on Thursday.

The illegal fundraising schemes involved 4 billion yuan (580 million U.S. dollars), with victims from across the country, said the department.

Guangdong police began to investigate the cases in March.

Some internet companies in the province organized themselves under the disguise of charities or high-tech biological products with promises of high returns.

In the first quarter, Guangdong police investigated more than 100 illegal fundraising cases and arrested more than 170 suspects, up 18 percent and 26 percent respectively.

[Population in Beijing's central areas drops in 2016](#)



People rush to get a train at the Xidan Station in Beijing Subway.
[Photo/China.org.cn]

The number of permanent residents in Beijing's six main urban districts dropped by about 353,000 last year, according to the municipal bureau of statistics on Thursday.

The reduction is more than the entire population of Iceland.

Beijing plans to cap its population at 23 million by 2020, reducing the population in six core districts by 15 percent from the 2014 level.

The bureau of statistics found residents' image of the city had improved.

A survey showed that 72.3 percent of those polled had confidence in Beijing's becoming a high-class livable city, up 2.1 percentage points from the previous year, and 63.3 percent found the city more livable than last year.