

China pledges to clean up Beijing by 2008

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Chinese lawmakers have pledged to clean up the notoriously polluted city of Beijing by 2008, when the city will play host to the Olympic Games.

Authorities acknowledge that pollution is becoming a growing problem throughout the rest of China, the Wall Street Journal reported.

"We know this is an arduous task, but I have every confidence in the fulfillment of our promise" for a clean Olympics, Mao Rubai, chairman of the Environment and Resources Protection Committee of the National People's Congress, said at a press conference.

Emissions of sulfur dioxide from steel mills and power plants rose 27 percent between 2000 and 2005, the Chinese government said. Excessive sulfur dioxide can result in acid rain, which has been reported in half of the 696 cities monitored by the government.

Water pollution is also reported to be rising at a dangerous rate, with many rivers and lakes showing levels of pollution that are far past their ability to absorb, the Journal said.

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