

China to hold local leaders responsible for air quality

June 16 2013



This general view shows a central business district in Beijing on June 3, 2013. China has pledged to hold local government leaders responsible for improving air quality, officials said, after heavy smog across China earlier this year stoked social discontent.

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The State Council, or cabinet, announced the move along with a range of other policies aimed at reducing emissions of pollutants—from forcing industries to install anti-pollution equipment to strengthening the collection of fines.

China has long been criticised for incentivising local officials to pursue economic growth while placing little emphasis on meeting environmental targets, leading to weak enforcement of environmental laws.

But the country will "build a targeted responsibility and evaluation system for cities and provinces based on air quality improvement," according to a report of a State Council meeting carried on its website on Friday.

The statement suggests that local officials will be assessed on improving general air quality, rather than merely facing targets for reducing emissions of individual pollutants.

The meeting, chaired by Premier Li Keqiang, also agreed that the government would not approve industrial projects which fail to meet [emissions standards](#), and curb the growth of highly polluting industries such as steel and aluminium manufacturing, according to the report.

The capital Beijing earlier this year saw levels of particulate matter in the air reach almost 40 times [World Health Organization](#) limits, as other cities in China were hit by high levels of pollution, provoking outrage nationwide.

[Air pollution](#) contributed to 1.2 million [premature deaths](#) and 25 million healthy years of life lost in China in 2010, the US-based Health Effects Institute reported in March, basing its figures on a global survey published in [British medical journal](#) *The Lancet*.

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