

China's premier 'declares war' on pollution

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A Chinese tourist wears a face mask in Tiananmen Square as heavy air pollution continues to shroud Beijing on February 26, 2014

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on Wednesday said he is "declaring war" on pollution, describing it as a "red-light warning" against inefficiency as he sought to address public concerns on issues from acrid smog to food safety.

China's three decades of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation have transformed its economy, and seen incomes soar.

But they have also brought severe environmental consequences, with the public enraged by cities regularly blanketed in smog, and incidents such as thousands of dead pigs in Shanghai's main river.

In his speech to the National People's Congress, China's legislature, Li described the deterioration of the environment as "nature's red-light warning against the model of inefficient and blind development".

"We will declare war against pollution and fight it with the same determination we battled poverty," said the premier, who took office in March last year.

The government will shut down 50,000 small coal-fired furnaces this year, clean up major coal-burning power plants, and remove six million high-emission vehicles from the roads, he said.

A cap will be put on the country's total energy consumption and measures will be taken to curb [water pollution](#), conserve soil, recover wetlands and restore forests and grassland, he added.



A tourist stands at the top of Jingshan Hill beside the Forbidden City as heavy air pollution continues to shroud Beijing on February 26, 2014

Chinese authorities have repeatedly pledged action to improve the environment in recent months, but experts warn that implementation will be key.

"The fundamental goal of a government's work is to ensure that everyone lives a good life," Li said. "We will definitely enjoy more peace, happiness and prosperity as well as greater development."

The government aims to lift more than 10 million people out of poverty this year, he said, adding that efforts will be made to narrow the income gap and improve social safety nets.

In an apparent response to worries over the country's scandal-prone food

industry, Li promised to crack down on the production and sale of counterfeit and shoddy goods, improve safety monitoring systems and introduce tracing mechanisms.

"We will... apply the strictest possible oversight, punishment and accountability to prevent and control food contamination and ensure that every bite of food we eat is safe," he said.

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