



China – a selection of environmental news reports

“More than 10% of China's farm land is polluted, posing a "severe threat" to the nation's food production, state media reports. Excessive fertiliser use, polluted water, toxic metals and solid wastes are to blame, the reports said. Rapid economic growth has had a damaging impact on China's environment. Its cities, countryside, waterways and coastlines are among the most polluted in the world. “

“At a temperature of -10C (14F), in the grey-blue dawn, two schoolchildren have a thankless job to complete. They are meant to sweep away the soot, dirt and grime from the school gate. But this village is surrounded by coal mines and power stations, so it is impossible to get anything clean.

"When it comes to this time of year, one quarter of students get respiratory diseases from the air pollution," says the head teacher, Zhao Xiangjing. "We sometimes give them injections to try to prevent them all getting ill. But we always have someone coughing." China suffers from some of the worst pollution in the world. Every year, it is estimated that around 400,000 people in China die prematurely from pollution-related illnesses. “

“Nine out of ten of the world's most polluted cities are in China. According to the World Bank, air pollution costs the Chinese economy \$25bn a year in health expenditure and lost labour productivity - largely because of the use of coal. There are ongoing environmental debates surrounding the country's dams policy, especially the construction of the Three Gorges Dam in central Hubei province. And the massive building programme in the country - over half the concrete used in the world last year was poured into China - also threatens wildlife and some very fragile parts of the world's ecology.”

“Officials in Beijing have warned that a third of China's rural population - an estimated 360m people - lack access to safe drinking water. They also said that more than 70% of China's rivers and lakes were polluted. China's waterways are dying, and its rivers are running black from industrial effluent and untreated sewage. The China Daily newspaper said that about two million people had suffered diseases caused by drinking water with high arsenic content, including cancer. “

“Large parts of China's longest river, the Yangtze, have been irreversibly polluted, state media quotes a report as saying. Around one-tenth of the 6,200km-long river is in a "critical condition" and nearly 30% of major tributaries are seriously polluted, the report found. Around 14bn tons of waste are believed to be dumped into the river each year. The river's aquatic life had been seriously affected, with the annual harvest of aquatic products falling from 427,000 tons in the 1950s to 100,000 tons in the 1990s, the report found. A huge reservoir created by the Three Gorges Dam - the world's largest hydro-power project - had also been seriously polluted with pesticides, fertilisers and sewage from passenger boats. “



“In the forested hills above the smoggy central Chinese city of Chongqing, a tiny stream trickles through the tall bamboo. It is called the Qingshuixi, which means "pure stream". Sixteen million tonnes of domestic waste water and one million tonnes of industrial waste water flow into the Qingshuixi River annually, " said Wu Dengming, president of Chongqing's Green Volunteer League. Further downstream, just 3km from the source, is where Chongqing's industry begins and it is easy to see the oils, acids and chemicals from the local engineering factories. Unofficial tests also indicate high levels of coliform bacteria (sewage). “

“Rising sulphur dioxide emissions in China are causing environmental harm and economic loss, the government says. China is the world's largest sulphur dioxide polluter, emitting nearly 26m tons of the gas in 2005. The gas contributes to acid rain, which damages buildings, soil and crops, and can cause health problems in humans. “