



Climate Change : Top Climate Stories

Climate Stories 2007: China Number One Polluter

China has become the single-biggest emitter of greenhouse gases. In the future, developing countries will be responsible for most of the increase in CO2 emissions. How to balance growth with climate protection?



A Chinese woman covers her face as a coal truck passes by. China adds one coal power plant per 7 to 10 days to its national grid (Photo: Reuters)

In November, the International Energy Agency (IEA) calculated that in 2007 China overtook the United States to become the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases.

Although China's per capita emissions lag far behind those of developed countries, the size of its population and breakneck speed of economic growth have made up the difference. India is not far behind, and will be the world's third-largest emitter by 2015.



Picture Gallery (click on the image to start)

China tries to balance massive growth and environmental protection. Is it working? Find out more (Photo: Reuters)

Developing economies are now driving the majority of the increase in demand for energy, which is largely met through the burning of fossil fuels — particularly cheap, but dirty coal — and as a consequence will contribute to most of the future increase in carbon dioxide emissions.

The IEA predicts that if current policies remain unchanged, greenhouse gas emissions will rise by 57 percent between 2005 and 2030, with the United States, China, India, and Russia contributing two thirds of the increase.

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Coal Energy Profile: Dirty Power

That transformation has led to calls on China, India and other large developing countries to accepting mandatory reductions to their carbon emissions. At the UN Bali climate summit in December, however, developing nations managed to fend off such demands.

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