

Energy goals to be overhauled; Nuclear and wind power expected to get far more emphasis for 2020

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China's midterm energy development goals are tipped to change radically early next year with a surge in nuclear and wind power plants.

As the central government pushes infrastructural projects to stimulate the economy, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) is revising the 20-year road map it set for the energy sector last year, according to the influential 21st Century Business Herald.

The paper forecast dramatic expansion in the nuclear and wind sector as the country, under increasing pressure over greenhouse gas emissions and pollution, tries to shift from coal to cleaner, more sustainable energy sources.

If the revisions are implemented, their energy targets would make the original goals look modest.

Last year, China said that by 2020, the country's nuclear industry would produce 40GW, more than 40 times this year's capacity and requiring annual growth of more than 20 per cent.

NDRC Energy Bureau director Zhang Guobao said in March that the commission was considering resetting the target at 60GW. But last month, another NDRC official said that the new target, expected to be released early next year, would be 70GW or higher.

The huge shortening in the timeline meant that construction of a large number of nuclear power plants that were supposed to be built after 2010 would have to begin next year, the paper said.

The possible projects include two new power plants in Yunfu and Shanwei in Guangdong; expansion of existing power plants in Zhejiang, Shandong, Liaoning, Jiangsu and Fujian; the first power plant for Guangxi; and some other projects proposed by some landlocked provinces in central China, it said, quoting a source who it said was knowledgeable about the new plan.

The new target will put enormous pressure on capital investment, technology and supplies of uranium-235. But the NDRC has reason to feel optimistic about meeting the goals because the central government has vowed to invest 4 trillion yuan (\$4HK.55 trillion) to stimulate the economy in less than four years; and France and the US have already sold third-generation thermal technology to China.

One big missing element is China's lack of enriched uranium, but Chen Xinyang , general manager of the China Nuclear Energy Industry Corporation, said the solution was to import it.

Mr Chen said the price of nuclear fuels had been driven higher by six major suppliers that controlled more than 80 per cent of the world supply, and after the September 11 terrorist attacks, some major shipping companies had stopped transporting nuclear fuel as controls on radioactive materials intensified.

"We solve the issue by making some long-term fuel supply contracts ... and secured transport routes from Central Asia and Russia and across the ocean," Mr Chen said. "By 2020, no matter whether the goal is 40GW, 60GW or more, we can guarantee enough supply."

The paper also reported yesterday that wind power generation would also more than triple to a targeted capacity of 100GW by 2020. The new target is 10 times the capacity this year, but it is not unrealistic as **China's wind** power generation has doubled since 2005, according to Qin Haiyan , secretary general of the **China Wind** Power Association.

But Mr Qin said China was still relatively inexperienced in building wind farms and had much research to do before construction begins.