

China in for Extreme Weather as Climate Change Felt



Tue Nov 9, 8:33 AM ET

BEIJING (Reuters) - China can expect more droughts, floods and other extreme weather as it struggles to balance rapid development with environmental concerns, a report on climate change released on Tuesday said.

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The report, part of China's commitment to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, comes as parts of south China suffer their worst drought in 50 years, withering crops, drying up reservoirs and cuts to power supplies.

"It (global warming) affects food security, education, child and maternal mortality and the basic biological systems on our planet and if action is not taken today we are seriously endangering our future livelihood," UNDP China Representative Khalid Malik told a news conference.

"Meanwhile, energy consumption is expected to double, the use of natural resources will continue to grow and this puts China in an extremely vulnerable position as it aims to ensure sustainability."

China, whose cities are choked by car exhaust, construction dust and emissions from coal-burning factories, has issued a series of policies aimed at directing and standardizing energy conservation.

But Tuesday's report is based on data from 1994 -- a lifetime ago given the country's pace of development -- and it acknowledges a "weak position with regard to data" and the lack of a standard approach to collection of information.

It warns that climate change could affect crop yields, resulting in a 10 percent reduction in food production by 2050, and says melting glaciers and rising sea water could affect supplies of freshwater.

But the report, which tapped 400 experts working under a national commission on climate change, says greenhouse gas emissions per capita are still lower than that of developed countries, indicating government policies may be having some effect.

China has approved the Kyoto climate change treaty but has no obligation to cut carbon dioxide emissions during the pact's first phase until 2012.

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