

## 2 rail projects halted over environmental concerns

Written by

Wednesday, 25 May 2011 14:22

---

China's environmental watchdog recently ordered the suspension of a high-speed railway and halted the construction of another line due to violations of environmental laws, a move hailed as an indication of a push to develop in a scientific manner.

In a statement posted online Wednesday, the Ministry of Environmental Protection ordered a halt to the construction of a railway linking northern cities of Tianjin and Qinhuangdao because the route had been changed without approval.

Earlier, the ministry asked a passenger line connecting Qingdao and Jinan in eastern Shandong province to stop running because it had not passed an environmental impact evaluation, according to an online notice dated April 25.

In recent years, China has witnessed the substantial development of high-speed rail that has significantly improved public transport and advanced the country's social and economic growth.

As China continues to progress, further development of the rail system should be coupled with greater attention to the transportation system's overall design in order to achieve a balance between development speed and economic efficiency as well as harmony between projects and the environment.

Authorities and the public have become increasingly alert to environmental concerns, and the ministry has been vigilant in its duties by issuing punishment orders to firms that violate laws. Both its recent orders were in accordance with the law and demonstrated that the ministry is performing its legitimate duties to protect the environment.

Its latest action came Friday when it fined an environment technology firm in eastern Jiangsu province 30,000 yuan (\$4,616) for its role in fabricating an environmental impact assessment report for a battery company.

These punishments reflect the government's resolution to protect the environment and push for development in a scientific manner despite the difficulty of the task. It also shows the government is unwavering in its vow to transform the economic growth mode during the 12th Five-Year Plan period (2011-2015).

Toward that end, China has set an annual average growth target of seven percent for its economy during the coming five years, much lower than in the period from 2006-2010, when the economy grew at an average annual rate of 11 percent. Undoubtedly, common efforts from every sector are needed to achieve the goal.