

Airport plans may leave delays in the past

Beijing Capital International Airport, the busiest in China, will increase ground resources and reduce the number of flights to improve flight punctuality, the airport president said on Wednesday.

Improvements are planned to the airport's operation resources, such as improving the runway and taxiway system, increasing the number of spaces on the ground for aircraft and enhancing shuttle efficiency. On the other hand, the airport will optimize flight slots and improve availability during its peak hours of operation, the airport's president, Han Zhiliang, said at the Beijing Global Friend Airports CEO Forum, a conference of the civil aviation industry.

Many Chinese airports have on-time performance issues. In July, the national flight punctuality rate was 50.76 percent, the Civil Aviation Administration of China said. Nearly half of all flights were delayed or canceled.

As China's busiest airport, Beijing Capital International strives for significant improvement to its on-time performance, Han said.

It's slot scheduling is overused. "The utilization rate of slots capacity has reached 98 percent at the airport ... while data show that a reasonable slots capacity percentage for a large-scale hub airport is 80 percent," Han said.

"The heavy slot arrangement at a busy airport lowers the ability to respond to extreme weather and emergencies, increasing the possibility of causing large-scale and lengthy delays," he said.

"Once extreme weather or an emergency happens at the hub airport, punctuality will fall like dominoes, causing delays. ... At the Beijing International schedule screen, it is rare to see a blank slot from morning to night. Nearly all slots have been allocated to airlines," he said.

He said 103 flights depart and land in an hour at the airport during peak hours, while the capacity standard is 88 flights per hour.

Ouyang Jie, a professor of airport research at Civil Aviation University of China, said, "The move aims to cut regional routes, such as the number of direct flights to third-tier small cities, and detour those regional routes to nearby Tianjin and Shijiazhuang airports". He said passengers can take high-speed rail between nearby airports and Beijing.

It takes about 30 minutes to travel between Tianjin and Beijing by high-speed rail, and 90 minutes between Shijiazhuang and Beijing.

Beijing Capital International Airport will increase the volume of international flights.

The airport handled 94 million passengers in 2016, making it the second busiest in the world for the seventh consecutive year, but it is designed to handle 82 million.

To ease the heavy pressure, Beijing is constructing a second airport.

Liu Xuesong, president of Capital Airports Holding Co, said on Wednesday that the capital will build both the current and the new airport into large-scale international hubs.

According to Liu, construction of the second airport is proceeding well. The main structure of the terminal building was topped off last month, he said.

New roads drawing Tibet cities closer

Gyaca county is only about 300 kilometers from Lhasa, Tibet. But a journey between them once took more than a day. The mud road studded with rocks was a big headache—not to mention the road winding around Kamba La Mountain, with cliffs above and below at an altitude of around 5,000 meters.

“It wasn’t unusual to see accidents when crossing the mountain. In my worst experience, I spent 13 hours there. Even though I hadn’t eaten, I didn’t feel hungry at all because I had to concentrate on driving to avoid danger,” said Tashi, 39, a Lhasa resident who has been driving for a living since 2005.

With paved roads, the journey now takes about six hours and is much safer and more comfortable, Tashi said.

Improvements to the road from Lhasa to Gyaca mirror the change in the traffic conditions in almost all of the Tibet autonomous region, and more changes are coming with increasing financial support from the central government.

More than 4,200 kilometers of highways have been built each year since 2012, increasing the current total mileage of highways in Tibet to more than 82,000 kilometers, according to Chen Chao, deputy head of Tibet’s transport authority.

The investment in transportation in Tibet has increased by more than 40 percent each year from 2012 and reached more than 40 billion yuan (\$6.1 billion) in 2016. The number is expected to reach 56 billion yuan this year, Chen said.

The highway in Medog county, the last Chinese county to be connected with highways, opened to traffic in 2013. All townships in Tibet are expected to be accessible by car before the end of this year.

There is less traffic in Tibet than in many other provincial regions in China. So, rather than build expressways, Tibet developed many high-grade

highways—which are similar to expressways but much cheaper and with narrower emergency lanes. The total length of high-grade highways increased sixfold to 304 kilometers between 2012 and 2016, Chen said.

The huge investment and the improved traffic flow have contributed a lot to the economic growth of Tibet. In the past five years, the region's GDP grew by an average 11 percent. It also outperformed all other provincial regions in the first half of this year with year-on-year growth of 10.8 percent.

By 2020, Tibet's highways will reach 110,000 kilometers. It will take less than three hours for people to travel from Lhasa to four other major cities, Chen said.

“Once transport barriers are removed, there will be more commercial activities like logistics and tourism, thus improving local people's livelihoods.”

Highways were not built at the expense of the environment. In many areas in Tibet, the construction of highways may actually help protect, rather than damage, the environment, he said.

Without highways, drivers often choose to drive on the smoothest places they can find—even on grassland, which damages it, he said.

A miracle sprouts in the Ordos desert

After more than 30 years turning deserts green, Yin Yuzhen, a farmer in Ordos, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, can see the miracle.

She and her family have planted approximately 60,000 trees in recent years across more than 4,000 hectares of what was once barren land deep in the heart of the Maowusu Desert, among the largest of its kind in the country.

“There has been a dramatic change in my home from decades ago,” the 52-year-old told Chinese media.

In 1985, reassured by her father, she left her hometown in neighboring Shaanxi province and married Bai Wanxiang in Uxin Banner, an administrative unit under Ordos. But, she was depressed about what she had to face – a wilderness of wind, sandstorms and seemingly endless deserts.

A sandstorm might last for more than a month in the desert area. Sand blanketed everything and darkened Yin's life. Anyone caught in the storm was coated with sand. Even mouths and noses didn't escape, she recalled.

At that time “the area was bleak and desolate, and no visitors would be seen for weeks”, Yin said, adding that the nearest neighbor lived 20 kilometers away.

An occasional stranger passing by would excite her, she said. To keep the visitor's footprint in the sand, she put an upside-down basin on it. "When I had spare time, I liked to look at it, as if it were my family," she said.

To survive the misery, Yin decided to plant trees.

"I'd rather die of exhaustion from planting than be bullied by sand," she said.

In 1986, she and her husband spent their extra money – earned by doing odd jobs – on 600 new saplings. They planted the trees around their house and tended them daily.

Fewer than 10 of the trees survived the droughts and winds. But, this didn't defeat the couple. They held on tight to a glimmer of hope. If even one tree could withstand the environment, it would mean that a larger group could also succeed, she said.

Later, the couple purchased thousands of small poplar saplings from a faraway nursery and carried them home on the backs of three cows. After the saplings were planted, most were swept away by yet another sandstorm.

Yin learned a lesson from the failure, concluding that brush needed to grow before the saplings were planted to shield them from the wind.

To date, the plantation has expanded to thousands of hectares and has drawn various birds and animals.

Inspired by her story, neighbors joined in the environmental effort. Currently, more than 240 families have tree plantations of at least 20 hectares each in Uxin Banner. The green coverage in the region has increased to 85 percent today from 45 percent 10 years ago.

Acclaimed as heroes for their afforestation efforts, Yin and her husband are thronged annually by visitors, despite being tucked away deep in the desert.

Volunteers from China and other countries, including the United States, Germany, France and Republic of Korea, have helped them to plant their trees.

Her persistent fight against desertification has won her a series of honors, including the Gaia Prize, which was granted in the ROK. She has received awards or given lectures in more than 10 countries and regions as she has campaigned for environmental protection.

[120 children poisoned; bad cakes](#)

blamed

Tainted food sickened 120 children in three kindergartens in Nanchang, Jiangxi province, on Tuesday, and the cause—which some believe was cake—is under investigation, the city's education authority said on Wednesday.



Medical personnel at Jiangxi Provincial Children's Hospital in Nanchang, Jiangxi province, treat a boy for food poisoning on Wednesday. [Photo/China Daily]

As of 11:30 pm Tuesday, 120 children had been diagnosed with food poisoning at Jiangxi Provincial Children's Hospital. Of those, 36 were hospitalized, 62 were held for observation and 22 who had mild symptoms were sent home after treatment.

Symptoms included vomiting, dizziness and abdominal pain, but no fever.

Feng Shengzhe, a 3-year-old boy, was among the sick children. His father, who declined to give his name, said the boy ate a cake on Tuesday afternoon at the kindergarten and started vomiting at around 5 pm before dinner.

"More than 40 children in my son's kindergarten ate the cake, and 10 began vomiting," the father said.

Lian Qinchen, another hospitalized 3-year-old boy, who came from another kindergarten, also started vomiting at around 5 pm on Tuesday after eating a cake at the kindergarten, his mother said.

By 4 pm Tuesday, no new cases had showed up, but 32 children remained hospitalized for treatment, according to a statement released by the provincial health authorities.

The city's health and education departments said they are working with the police as well as local food and drug authorities to investigate the incident. Parents suspected the problem was tainted cakes from the same producer.

"The kindergarten has been buying cakes from a shop which they think are very good," Feng Shengzhe's father said. "I really worry about it, and I will take my son out of the kindergarten when he recovers."

He added that the family will seek compensation from the kindergarten, including medical fees and his loss of income incurred by missing work.

Lian's mother said the kindergarten should increase its awareness of food safety.

[Voices rise for painless childbirth](#)

The suicide of a pregnant woman after her plea for a C-section was rejected has sparked a public outcry across China, with people calling for the promotion of pain-free delivery options.

Ma Rongrong, 26, who was a week from her due date, jumped from the fifth floor of an inpatient building at First Hospital of Yulin in Shaanxi province, because she was in unbearable pain and died on Thursday evening, according to a statement from the hospital.

The hospital and Yan Zhuangzhuang, Ma's husband, are now blaming each other for rejecting Ma's repeated pleas for a C-section instead of a natural birth after she was moved to a delivery room on Thursday.

Before Ma was admitted, she and her husband had insisted on a natural birth, the hospital said.

Li Ruiqin, Ma's doctor, was suspended after the woman's death and is cooperating with the police in their investigation, an unnamed official at the hospital was quoted as saying by ThePaper.cn on Tuesday.

On Wednesday, the incident became one of the hottest topics on Sina Weibo, with more than 56 million views.

A netizen who gave birth a month ago said in a comment that she, too, felt unbearable pain in the delivery room and asked for a pain-free vaginal delivery—with primary anesthesia delivered via the spinal cord—but was rejected by her doctor. She had to settle for an injection to stop the pain.

Song Xingrong, director of the anesthesia department at Guangzhou Women and Children's Medical Center, said natural childbirth may bring the most acute pain a Chinese woman will experience in life.

Most births in China are natural—with no pain intervention—or C-sections, which are generally painless because of techniques such as epidural and spinal anesthesia.

Pain-free vaginal deliveries, which may rely on a combination of spinal and local anesthesia, account for less than 5 percent of all deliveries in China. In Guangdong province they account for about 10 percent of deliveries, Song said.

Painless labor—a vaginal delivery aided by an epidural or spinal painkiller—is safe for both mother and child, he said.

“A major factor that discourages hospitals from providing painless labor is that it is not covered by basic medical insurance programs in China,” he said.

“Many people in China have not heard of painless vaginal labor because of lack of promotion. Only 20 percent of pregnant women who come to our hospital are aware of it,” he said.

In the United States, 85 percent of vaginal births are painfree, Song said. In Beijing, it's less than 30 percent, he said.

Yue Hongli, an anesthesiologist at Beijing Tiantan Hospital, said not all pregnant women are good candidates for pain-free labor, including those with serious lung or heart disease, or who cannot give birth naturally—in which case a C-section is required.