

Inspections find 70% of firms violated environmental rules

A total of 13,785 companies, or 70.6 percent of those examined, violated environmental standards during the latest round of air pollution inspections, the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) said in a statement.

The findings came after two months of inspections across 28 cities in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region and other nearby areas, which resulted in the discovery of problems including excessive emissions and insufficient pollution control equipment.

The inspections exposed 4,703 companies with unauthorized locations, lacking relevant certificates, and failing to meet emission standards.

The teams found more than 2,000 such companies in various industries including wood processing and furniture production.

The teams should urge local governments to further investigate the firms and rectify the problems, the MEP said.

China's central government is fighting pollution and environmental degradation as decades of growth have left the country saddled with smog and contaminated soil.

The inspection teams have been conducting on-site checks in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region and nearby areas, where smog has raised widespread concerns.

Qingdao adopts one-dog policy



A dog owner has his pet registered in Qingdao, Shandong Province, on Thursday.[Photo/China Daily]

Families in downtown Qingdao, Shandong Province, can now keep only one dog, which the owners must register for 400 yuan (US\$59).

The new regulation, which took effect on Monday, also prohibited 40 breeds, including mastiffs, German shepherds and St. Bernards.

"An eligible dog should get a rabies vaccine and a license, and have an electronic chip implanted during the registration process," said Zhao Jun, an official at the Qingdao public security bureau.

The electronic chip, which is implanted under the skin of a dog's neck, stores information about the animal, its owner and the date of vaccination.

Registration work will start on Thursday, with 30 pet hospitals authorized to provide the service.

Zhao said dogs have become a serious social problem as increasing numbers of city dwellers are keeping them.

"Pet lovers and those who don't like animals often have disagreements, and some dogs negatively affect the city's environment and people's lives," Zhao said. "The regulation came out after the consideration of opinions of experts, officials and residents, and after reviewing domestic and international experience," Zhao said.

The new regulation allows owners six months to register their dogs. After

that, the authorities will take law enforcement action against violators, including fines and confiscation of animals. The new regulation will be implemented in four heavily populated downtown districts.

Dogs registered before the new regulation was issued are not affected.

Qingdao is not the first city in China to make a one-dog policy. As early as 2009, Chengdu, Sichuan Province, limited households to one dog. Harbin, Heilongjiang Province, prohibited dogs taller than 50 centimeters and longer than 70 centimeters.

In 2011, Jiangmen, Guangdong Province, proposed banning dogs from its urban areas. The city launched strict enforcement action in the zones, but the regulation was set aside after nine days of controversy.

Qingdao's new regulation also aroused strong opinions. Song Wencong, a 64-year-old resident, took his dog to an animal disease control and prevention center to be registered on Thursday.

"The new regulation is reasonable and necessary to encourage dog owners to be responsible," he said.

Wang Xue, a 28-year-old pet lover, said the new regulation is good for city management, and the electronic chip can help owners find their pets if they get lost. But she said the 400 yuan administration fee was too high.

Beijing 'can offer help' to Xiongan



Aerial photo taken on April 1, 2017 shows Anxin County, North China's Hebei Province.[Photo/Xinhua]

Beijing and Xiongan New Area will need systematic cooperation to achieve coordinated development and mitigate urban ills, experts said on Sunday.

Lin Jian, a researcher at Renmin University of China's National Academy of Development and Strategy, said Xiongan will take over many functions of Beijing to help the capital ease its population pressure.

"How to attract people to move there will be a crucial task," he said. "The authorities need to make plans in the sectors of education, medical care and cultural development in Xiongan," Lin said. "Beijing can offer its help."

He said many State-owned enterprises, colleges and government institutions will move to Xiongan. The corresponding educational and medical resources should be planned in advance for people who will move there; otherwise, problems could occur, he warned.

"Xiongan cannot be a cultural desert, which means Beijing should also provide cultural facilities to the new area," Lin said.

On Friday, Beijing pledged to closely cooperate and fully support the development of Xiongan and encourage people to move there as needed.

Liu Bozheng, deputy director of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei development leading group, said Beijing will cooperate with Xiongan on construction and services, accelerating the relocation of industries that suit the new area.

"The Beijing municipal government attaches high importance to the development of Xiongan New Area," he said.

He said Beijing will assist in planning and policymaking in sectors such as infrastructure construction, transportation integration and the sharing of public services. The capital will also encourage innovative companies to establish themselves in Xiongan.

China announced plans to create Xiongan New Area in April as part the integration of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region. It is designed to ameliorate urban ills such as traffic congestion and air pollution.

Located about 100 kilometers southwest of downtown Beijing, the new area will have a substantial footprint in three existing counties of Hebei province □Xiongxian, Rongcheng and Anxin.

Zhao Weidong, spokesman for the Beijing Municipal Commission of Commerce, said on Friday that Beijing has established a platform to cooperate with Tianjin and Hebei and has transferred some wholesale markets and logistics facilities to Hebei.

The commission promoted 26 projects with a total investment of more than 5 billion yuan (\$740 million) last year involving the move of markets and logistics facilities to Hebei.

According to data from the city, Beijing's population and its growth rate has been declining for the past three years. Meanwhile, the city's GDP was up 6.7 percent last year compared with 2015.

China issues blue alert for Typhoon Merbok

China's national observatory on Sunday issued a blue alert for typhoon Merbok, which is expected to hit the southern Guangdong Province on Monday.

At 5 p.m. Sunday, the eye of Merbok, this year's second typhoon, was above the South China Sea some 600 km to the east of Shanwei City, packing winds of up to 18 meters per second, the National Meteorological Center (NMC) said in a statement.

The NMC forecast that Merbok would move northwestward at a speed of 20 km per hour toward Guangdong and make landfall on the coast between Shenzhen and Shantou in late afternoon through the night Monday.

But the center expected the typhoon to weaken and disappear quickly after its landfall.

From Sunday evening to Monday evening, parts of South China Sea and the eastern coast of Guangdong will experience strong winds, while storms with up

to 60 mm of precipitation are expected to affect parts of southeast Guangdong.

The NMC suggested local governments take precautions against possible geological disasters, and ships in affected areas should go back to ports.

China has a four-tier color-coded system for severe weather, with red being the most serious, followed by orange, yellow and blue.

China Eastern flight returns after engine fault

A China Eastern Airlines plane, MU736 heading for Shanghai, returned after an engine fault was detected shortly after its take-off from Sydney Sunday night. No one was injured.

The company said a damage on the air inlet of the aircraft's left engine was "timely" noticed by the crew, and the captain "decisively" made the decision to return. The plane landed safely.

An investigation continues while the airline is taking good care of the passengers.