

Beijing sees decrease in PM2.5 density in April



Beijing witnessed a 22.1-percent year-on-year drop in PM2.5 density, an indicator of air pollution, in April. [Photo by Chen Boyuan/China.org.cn]

Beijing witnessed a 22.1-percent year-on-year drop in PM2.5 density, an indicator of air pollution, in April, the capital city's environment authority said Wednesday.

The average density of PM2.5, airborne particles smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter, was 53 micrograms per cubic meters in April, the lowest level during the same period over the past five years, according to the Beijing Municipal Environment Protection Bureau.

Beijing recorded 22 days with good air quality in April.

The bureau attributed the improvement to air pollution control measures and favorable weather conditions.

In April, the bureau issued fines totalling more than 10 million yuan (1.45 million U.S. dollars) on air pollution violations such as open fires, outdoor barbecues and construction dust.

First H7N9 case reported in north China province

North China's Shanxi Province reported its first H7N9 case of the year on Tuesday evening.

A 66-year-old woman surnamed Zhang from Datong City tested positive by the city's center for disease and prevention (CDC), the Shanxi provincial CDC and the Chinese CDC in the past three days.

She is now in the hospital and described as in "serious but stable condition," said the Shanxi provincial health and family planning commission.

Experts from the Chinese CDC and the provincial CDC were sent to Datong to help with treatment of the patient as well as investigation and prevention work for the disease.

So far those who had contact with Zhang didn't show any symptoms of infection.

Nationwide, a total of 96 people were reportedly infected by the H7N9 virus in March, leaving 47 dead, according to the national health and family planning commission.

Sichuan native offers solutions to Denmark's oyster crisis



丹麦驻华大使馆

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中国吃货把麦麦给惊呆了。。。竟然有一位#成都姑娘丹麦挖生蚝#，4小时挖了300斤！麦麦这就给大家奉上史上最全丹麦挖蚝宝典，相信大家一定能挖出个吉尼斯纪录的！👀 目 史上最全丹麦挖蚝宝典，有本事挖出个吉尼斯纪...



史上最全丹麦挖蚝宝典，有本事挖出个吉尼斯纪录来！

The official Weibo account of the Danish embassy in Beijing on Sunday forwarded a report by the Chengdu Business Daily about a woman from Sichuan who managed to dig up around 150 kilograms of giant oysters along the Danish coast. [Photo: Weibo.com]

The official Weibo account of the Danish embassy in Beijing on Sunday forwarded a report by the Chengdu Business Daily about a woman from Sichuan who managed to dig up around 150 kilograms of giant oysters along the Danish coast.

The Sichuan native, Bian Miaomiao, subsequently put on a massive oyster fry for her family and friends in Denmark, where she has lived with her husband in the past seven years.

Embassy staff was interviewed by Chengdu Business Daily and said they support Bian's oyster fry, as well as welcome more Sichuan people to travel to Denmark and help solve an oyster crisis in the country.

Giant oysters, a much-loved commodity in China, are said to be overrunning Denmark's beaches, causing concern among local fishermen.

Data from China's Zhiyan organization showed Chinese people consumed some 4.5 million tons of oysters in 2015, an annual rise of some 5%.

The Danish embassy in Beijing says it is willing to begin sending their oyster reserves to China, provided they get interested local parties involved.

China, ASEAN expected to build closer ties



A one-day forum on China-ASEAN relations organized by Beijing Review, Mission of China to ASEAN and the Pangoal Institution, runs on May 15, in Beijing. [Photo provided to China.org.cn]

Once the combustible center for strife and conflicts, countries allied in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are now fostering a path of peace and prosperity under the framework of multilateral cooperation, among which their partnerships with China are much accentuated.

Dr. AKP Mochtan, deputy secretary general of ASEAN, described the relationship between China and ASEAN as a “red string of fate”, a Chinese metaphor for the knot tied by married couples.

“This is not a marriage proposal [in the context of bilateral relations. Nevertheless], it is actually what I believe we have shared and how we are connected,” he said.

He made his keynote speech when addressing the “Communication, Cooperation and Common Development Seminar on ASEAN Community Building and China-ASEAN Relations”, jointly hosted by the weekly magazine Beijing Review, Mission of China to ASEAN and Beijing-based think tank Pangoal Institution.

China and ASEAN are embracing a promising future with good momentum. Trade between China and Southeast Asia reached US\$455.44 billion in 2016 and China

has been ASEAN's biggest trade partner since 2009. With a mild fluctuation of bilateral trade and investment last year, China and ASEAN are ushering in an era of cultural cooperation and people-to-people exchanges.

In ASEAN, there are 37 cities connected with 52 Chinese cities by means of 5,000 flights. Likewise, about 20 million visitors from China have chosen ASEAN countries as their holiday destinations, an increase of 60.5 percent from two years ago. Meanwhile, the number of ASEAN visitors to China has grown 60 percent to a current 10 million a year.

"I would rather work with a friend in the dark than be alone in the light," Mochtan added.

His remark was echoed by Li Yafang, president of the Beijing Review.

"China and ASEAN are friendly neighbors linked by seas and mountains," Li said, adding that "[ASEAN] countries are the major members of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)...and there is an invisible red string of bond [between the two sides] in the jungle."

"China is seeking multilateral cooperation with others, tackling challenges together with ASEAN to achieve common development and prosperity to become a community of common destiny, and contributing to exchanges and cooperation. This is why we are coming today," she said.

This year marked the 50th anniversary of the establishment of ASEAN with an involvement of six countries now grown to 10, namely, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, Singapore, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia. It has evolved into a mechanism of "ASEAN plus six" with the additional participation of China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and India, under the framework of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

"The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road of the BRI proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013 signals a splendid chapter in China's broadened openness," said Yu Hongjun, honorary president of the Pangoal Institution and former vice minister of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

"It is being wrongly suggested that an emerging power like China will definitely not escape from the historic pattern of overall rule, which is supposed to lead the country to be a new hegemon in the world," said Yu.

"China's BRI is a peaceful cooperation plan with mutual benefits," he stressed.

According to Yu, there is still room for improvement to achieve even better cooperation. Disturbed by a number of complicated reasons, the trade between China and ASEAN, which has dropped slightly, has, nevertheless, challenged the two sides with targeted trade volume expected to hit US\$1 trillion by 2020.

However, despite disputes and differences at times, experts in the forum

generally agreed that the cooperation between China and ASEAN should be deepened while tackling technological innovation bringing a potential dramatic transformation of the world.

A fundamental change is taking place by the sweeping dominance of social media that is reshaping the way of mass communication and challenging the loss of readership of the media with traditional contents, said Dato Danny Lee Chian Siong, chairman of the Association for Regional Connectivity.

However, despite such challenges, it has also opened a window for opportunities where Facebook and WeChat can play their roles in boosting the diversity of ASEAN countries, he added.

Wang Xiaohui, editor-in-chief of China.org.cn, said, the relation between China and ASEAN dates back many hundreds of years, so the journalists, who may get the chance to represent the friendship carried on in hearts, languages, lives, as well as cultures of the peoples concerned, can tell the stories by using the platform of new media for future information flows on smart phones.

US, UK still top Chinese study sites



A survey of 6,217 students who plan to study abroad, or their parents, found that the United States remains the top choice, with 50 percent preferring the US, up from 46 percent last year. [File Photo]

US President Donald Trump's arrival in the White House and Brexit in the

United Kingdom have not lessened the appeal of these countries among Chinese students choosing an overseas education destination, according to a new report.

A survey of 6,217 students who plan to study abroad, or their parents, found that the United States remains the top choice, with 50 percent preferring the U.S., up from 46 percent last year.

It is the third consecutive year the country ranked No. 1 in the annual Report on Chinese Students' Overseas Study, the latest of which was released on Tuesday.

The UK, which voted to leave the European Union last year, was the second-most popular destination, as it has been for three years.

The survey, by Vision Overseas Consulting Co and Kantar Millward Brown, was conducted in over 40 cities in February and March.

Some of Trump's policies, including visa restrictions, are thought to have influenced international students and prospective immigrants. In a survey by five US higher education associations in February – covering around 250 U.S. colleges and universities – 38 percent reported a drop in foreign applications for the fall 2017 term – Middle Eastern students down the most – The Atlantic reported on Saturday.

Although China was not directly affected by the travel ban, 25 percent of universities saw undergraduate applications from China decline and 32 percent had fewer Chinese graduate student applications, the report said.

According to the Ministry of Education, over 540,000 Chinese students were studying in the U.S. last year, making it one of the largest source countries for international students.

"We have noticed the influence of Trump's policy and conducted an internal survey of our clients months ago," said Sun Tao, executive president of Vision Overseas Consulting.

"We did feel the concerns and worries of parents, but many of them stick to their choices in the U.S."

In the survey, 51 percent of respondents said international political events did not affect their choices, and only 7 percent said they would change their choices of overseas study countries, Sun said.

The education level, overall national power and national culture have been the main factors in Chinese students' and their parents' choice of destination countries, the survey added.

"In addition, the full effect of the proposed U.S. visa restrictions have not become clearer, but they will raise the threshold for immigrants to stay and work in U.S.," said Yu Zhongqiu, deputy head of Vision Overseas Consulting.

He added that the proposed restrictions require immigration applicants to

have an annual income no less than \$110,000, "quite difficult for new graduates to meet".

In the survey, 73 percent planned to work in China after graduation, compared with only 57 percent last year.

"More students than before go overseas to broaden their vision and enrich their experiences, and intend to return home," Yu said.