

Sandstorms sweep through northern China



Tourists in mask visit Wanchun Pavilion in Jingshan Park in Beijing, capital of China, May 4, 2017. [Photo/Xinhua]

A sandstorm swept over much of north China including Beijing on Thursday, turning the sky yellow and reducing visibility.

The National Meteorological Center (NMC) continued its blue alert for sandstorms on Thursday evening, forecasting windy and dusty weather in north China for the next three days.

Since Wednesday, northern areas have witnessed the most severe sandstorms this year, affecting more than 10 provincial-level regions, including Beijing, Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang, and covering an area of 1.63 million square kilometers, NMC data showed.

Weather forecasting authorities in Beijing issued a yellow alert for strong winds at 4:35 p.m., predicting wind speeds of up to 80 km per hour on Friday.

Most monitoring stations in the southwestern part of Beijing showed PM10 readings of more than 2,000 micrograms per cubic meter of air at 8 a.m. Thursday, according to data from Beijing Municipal Environmental Monitoring Center.

Visibility across the city was as low as two kilometers, and the air pollution has been dragged to Level VI, the highest.

According to the Beijing Times, more than 40 flights at Beijing Capital International Airport were delayed, with another 15 canceled.

Neighboring Tianjin Municipality was also hit by dust and sand, which darkened the sky and affected traffic flow.

"The sky turned gray and the smell of dust and sand crept into my room this morning. My child complained about feeling uncomfortable after playing outside," said a Tianjin resident surnamed Liu.

Traffic authorities have advised drivers to reduce their speed and to use their fog lights.

According to Lu Huanzhen with Tianjin meteorological station, the sandstorm in Tianjin should be over by Friday night.

Sandstorms were also reported in north China's Hebei Province and are expected to clear from Friday.

Zhu Jiang, head of the Institute of Atmospheric Physics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said the sand had traveled from Gansu, Inner Mongolia and Ningxia, as well as Mongolia.

Ejin Banner of Alxa League in Inner Mongolia saw the first sandstorm on Wednesday, with visibility reduced to less than 100 meters.

Strong winds reduced temperatures in the region by about four degrees Celsius. Local weather stations warned residents to keep their doors and windows closed, to buttress sheds and billboards, avoid riding bicycles and to remain alert for forest fires.

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

It is the first sandstorm across China this year, later and less frequent than previous years, considering at least two rounds of sandstorms had been recorded every May in past years.

Data showed the annual number of sandy days in Beijing decreased from 26 days at most in the 1950s to around three days after 2010.

Zhang Bihui, a senior engineer with the NMC environmental meteorological center, said the lower sandstorm frequency is attributed to climate change bringing weaker and less-frequent cold fronts and China's forestation efforts.

Zhang also said forests could only stop part of sand moving near the ground level, and the sand this time were actually blown to Beijing at a height of around 5,000 meters.

Sandy weather in Beijing is expected to end on Friday evening, but similar weather may be seen on Saturday and Sunday in China's southern regions.

2 dead, 16 injured in central China road accident

Two people were killed and another 16 injured and taken to hospital when a bus collided with a truck in central China's Hunan Province on Thursday afternoon.

The accident happened around 2 p.m. in Liuyang city, according to local police.

The cause of the accident is under investigation.

China renews blue alert for sandstorms



Tourists in mask visit Wanchun Pavilion in Jingshan Park in Beijing, capital of China, May 4, 2017. A sandstorm swept over much of north China including Beijing on Thursday, turning the sky yellow and obscuring visibility. The city's meteorological center issued a blue alert for sandstorms Thursday morning, forecasting winds to carry sand and dust across the capital.
[Photo/Xinhua]

The national weather observatory continued its blue alert for sandstorms on Thursday, forecasting windy and dusty weather in north China in the next three days.

From Thursday to Saturday, parts of Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Gansu, Shaanxi, and the western part of northeast China will be affected by the dust, said the National Meteorological Center (NMC).

Meanwhile, a strong cold front will sweep north China including areas of Inner Mongolia and northeast regions, bringing a temperature drop of up to 12 degrees Celsius, said the NMC.

Since Wednesday, the country's northern areas have witnessed the most severe sandstorms this year, affecting more than 10 provincial-level regions and covering an area of 1.63 million square kilometers, NMC data showed.

The sandstorms have resulted in serious air pollution. Most monitoring stations in Beijing showed PM10 and PM2.5 readings of more than 1,000 micrograms per cubic meter and over 400 micrograms per cubic meter, respectively, as of noon Thursday.

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

Chinese cuisine to take center stage at Expo

Jiang Junxian, president of the Chinese Cuisine Association, makes a speech at a press conference in Beijing on Wednesday. [Photo provided to China.org.cn]

The China Cuisine & Culture Pavilion will make its debut at Expo Astana 2017 later this year, offering a gourmet guide to China and its unique culinary culture.

The Expo, an international specialized exhibition to be held in the Kazakh capital from June 10 to Sept. 10, will provide a platform to showcase Chinese culinary culture by introducing the wider dimensions of Chinese food to the world.

Li Yaguang, curator of the China Cuisine & Culture Pavilion and vice president of the Chinese Cuisine Association, introduced at a press conference on Wednesday that the pavilion, covering a 1.7-sq.-km site, will display a wide range of China's local foods and snacks.

The pavilion is a two-storied building – Chinese Snacks Culture Hall on the ground floor, displaying well-known local snacks, and Chinese Cuisine Culture Hall on the second floor, displaying crafted dishes representing the major cuisines of China.

Li Yaguang, curator of the China Cuisine & Culture Pavilion and vice president of the Chinese Cuisine Association, makes a speech at a press conference in Beijing on Wednesday. [Photo provided to China.org.cn]

“The Expo platform will give a huge boost to Chinese food brands and food-related industries and provide opportunities for establishing international cooperation,” said Li.

Beijing Jiankun Catering Group will be responsible for all the pavilion’s catering services.

Many gourmet cities with famous snacks are ready to actively participate in the Expo, including Beijing, Shanghai and Chongqing. Famous snack brands, such as Qingfeng Steamed Bun Shop and Lucky Wonton are applying for participation.

Since Kazakhstan is a crucial node on the Belt and Road, Expo Astana is drawing much attention and participation from China’s central and local governments.

According to Xu Li, executive curator of China Cuisine & Culture Pavilion, a total of 23 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities have confirmed participation in Event Weeks and Event Days to be held during the expo.

Xu Li, executive curator of China Cuisine & Culture Pavilion, makes a speech at a press conference in Beijing on Wednesday. [Photo provided to China.org.cn]

The Chinese Cuisine Association will work together with local governments during the expo to hold a series of major events to show China’s rich culinary culture and extensively promote exchanges between China and Kazakhstan.

The 2017 World Expo will attract nearly 150 countries and international organizations.

Since this year marks the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Kazakhstan and the Year of Tourism of the two countries, Expo Astana 2017 holds great significance for the development of bilateral relations as well as the advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative.

[China to begin building two new ships for 2019](#)



Jiaolong, China's manned submersible, conducted its fourth dive on April 30 around the Zhenbei Seamount in the South China Sea. [Photo/Xinhua]

China will soon begin building its first marine resources survey ship and its first mother ship for manned submersibles, according to the State Oceanic Administration.

Hu Xuedong, deputy director of the administration's Deep Sea Department who oversees China's ocean exploration programs, said at a news conference in Beijing on Wednesday that the construction work on the two vessels will start before July.

The survey ship will be built at China State Shipbuilding Corp's Huangpu Wenchong Shipbuilding Co in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province. The mother ship for manned submersibles will be made at China Shipbuilding Industry Corp's Wuchang Shipbuilding Industry Group in Wuhan, Hubei Province.

"The two ships will have world-class technological and operational capacity. They will be able to travel at least 6,000 nautical miles on each journey," Hu said. "Their service will extensively improve our capabilities in ocean surveying, deep-sea science and marine environmental protection."

The ships, which have yet to be named, will be commissioned in the first half of 2019, he said.

Currently, China Marine Research Vessels operates 17 long-range oceanographic research ships and 15 coastal water survey ships.

According to the State Oceanic Administration, the marine resources survey ship will be 98 meters long and 17 meters wide, and will have a displacement of 4,000 metric tons. It will have an advanced electric propulsion system.

The vessel will carry more than 70 kinds of scientific research equipment and will be capable of conducting highly accurate long-term surveys in a wide range of fields such as marine geology, marine ecology and ocean-atmosphere systems.

The mother ship, which will serve China's manned submersible Jiaolong, will also have a displacement of around 4,000 tons. It will support Jiaolong's operations and handle and analyze samples taken by the submersible, according to the administration.

Named after a mythical dragon, Jiaolong is China's first manned deep-sea research submersible. It reached its deepest depth—7,062 meters—in the Mariana Trench in June 2012. Currently, the Jiaolong is based on the Xiangyanghong 09, a survey vessel that has been in service since 1978. The new vessel will be the first dedicated mother ship for the submersible.

Hu said the mother ship will also assist the nation's effort to build a manned deep-sea station that the government plans to put into operation around 2030.

Cui Yiliang, editor-in-chief of industry magazine Modern Ships, said the two ships will be sophisticated in terms of technology and structure, so their construction will be a challenge to shipbuilders.