

[China warns of geological disasters in some region](#)

Meteorological authorities Thursday warned of possible geological disasters in southwestern China as heavy rain is expected in the region.

The National Meteorological Center (NMC) and the Ministry of Land and Resources warned of high risks of geological disasters in quake-hit Jiuzhaigou County and central areas of Sichuan Province as well as parts of Gansu, Tibet, Yunnan, Guangxi, Jiangxi and Anhui from Thursday to Friday evening.

A 7.0-magnitude quake rocked Jiuzhaigou County last Tuesday, leaving 24 dead and hundreds injured.

The NMC revoked a blue alert for a rainstorm on Thursday, but the forecast for rainstorms in north, east and south China will continue.

People in rain-affected areas should take precautions against possible mountain torrents, mud-rock flows and landslides, the NMC warned.

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

Over the past years, China has suffered some large-scale natural disasters, from extreme weather to geological events, causing huge losses of life and property.

[Official: Tainted eggs won't enter mainland](#)

Eggs tainted by the pesticide fipronil in Europe do not pose a threat to the Chinese mainland, as no European countries have approval to send eggs or egg products here, the Ministry of Agriculture said on Thursday.

China maintains strict supervision over the use of pesticides, and forbids the use of fipronil in poultry farming, Jin Fazhong, the ministry's deputy director for agricultural product quality and safety supervision, said at a news conference.

The eggs in question originated in the Netherlands and were exported to as many as 16 European countries and Hong Kong. Millions of chicken eggs have been pulled from European and Hong Kong supermarket shelves as a result of

the fipronil scare.

The ministry “will intensify supervision and control of pesticides and veterinary drugs to ensure they are used safely in agricultural production” and it “will ensure the safety of agricultural products at the source”, Jin said.

Agricultural product quality and safety in China has improved steadily over the past five years, with more than 96 percent of products passing national standards in each of the past five years, said Guang Defu, director of the ministry’s agricultural product quality and safety supervision.

In the first half of this year, inspection results showed 97.6 percent of agricultural products met quality and safety standards, a rise of 0.4 percentage points over the same period last year, he said.

By comparison, in 2001 only about 60 percent of vegetables, meat and aquatic products in the domestic market met standards, he said.

Food containing melamine, a toxic substance that can make dairy products appear to have more protein, has met standards for eight consecutive years, he said.

Melamine was at the center of a food safety scandal in 2008 in China, when infant formula produced by Sanlu Group, then a leading dairy company, was found to contain a large amount. Six babies died.

Over the past five years, agricultural authorities have launched various special campaigns to catch violators, focusing on the use of banned pesticides, veterinary drugs and illegal additives in fresh milk. Punishments have been handed down in 238,000 cases, Guang said.

Luo Yunbo, a professor of food safety at China Agricultural University, said more legislation is needed in the production and use of agricultural products, with more severe punishments for violations.

He also said the authorities should roll out more measures encouraging farmers to use environmentally friendly pesticides, such as raising the prices of highly toxic pesticides and providing subsidies to manufacturers of effective pesticides that have lower toxicity.

Body altered by PM2.5, study finds

Chinese scientists have discovered that exposure to PM2.5 could significantly increase stress hormones in humans, as well as cause metabolic changes in blood glucose, amino acids and lipids.

The team, led by Kan Haidong, a professor at Fudan University’s School of

Public Health, shed light on the prevention and treatment of diseases caused by PM2.5—fine particles 2.5 microns or less in diameter that can go deep into the lungs and cause health problems, even deadly ones.

There is considerable evidence that the tiny particles found in polluted air can damage the cardiovascular system, but it is still not fully known how they work in many parts of the human body.

The team's study appeared in *Circulation*, a science journal published by the American Heart Association, on Tuesday.

"We generated two conclusions from the study: Exposure to PM2.5 may lead to higher cardiovascular risk through increasing stress hormones; and indoor air purifiers are useful for protecting our health," Kan said on Thursday.

Stress hormones, such as cortisol and epinephrine, are released when the body senses a danger, resulting in an increased heart rate, blood pressure and breathing rate, and a shutdown of metabolic processes such as digestion, reproduction, growth and immunity.

The scientists conducted tests on 55 healthy college students in Shanghai, with real and fake air purifiers randomly placed in participants' dormitories.

Analysis showed that exposure to higher levels of PM2.5 led to significant increases in cortisol, cortisone, epinephrine and norepinephrine. Between-treatment differences were also observed for glucose, amino acids, fatty acids and lipids.

Scientists found significantly higher blood pressure, hormones, insulin resistance and biomarkers of stress and inflammation among individuals exposed to higher levels of PM2.5.

However, short-term reductions in stress hormones were observed following indoor air purification.

The studies were released as air quality in Shanghai is improving somewhat.

According to the city's environmental protection bureau, the average concentration of PM2.5 in the first half of this year stood at 42 micrograms per cubic meter, a drop of 22.2 percent year-on-year and a 36.4 percent reduction from 2013.

Statistics also showed that the city reported excellent or good air quality on 142 days in the first six months, an increase of 7.1 percentage points year-on-year.

[Fossilized dinosaur footprints discovered in SW China](#)

More than 200 fossilized dinosaur footprints have been discovered in Maotai Township, the town famous for Kweichow Moutai alcohol.

It is believed to be the largest cluster of Sauropod footprints found in China. Sauropods were a group of huge, plant-eating, four-footed dinosaurs with long necks and tails dating from the early Jurassic period.

“The tracks were discovered by accident,” said Xing Lida, an expert at the China University of Geosciences.

In the summer of 2013, workers in Maotai Township in southwest China’s Guizhou Province found marks which looked like footprints on the surface of a huge rock when building a workshop.

This summer, when they saw media reports of dinosaur footprint fossils found elsewhere, the workers contacted researchers and a team of paleontologists came to the site.

Xing said the footprints were left by Sauropods more than 170 million to 180 million years ago.

Several clusters of Sauropod footprint fossils had been found previously in China, though some contained few fossils and others had been severely eroded by wind. The new discovery was well preserved.

“It can help with research on biological migration, behavior and evolution of these ancient creatures in the early Jurassic period,” said Xing.

[Customs catch smugglers of endangered animals](#)

Shanghai customs officials have caught several cases involving illegally bringing in or mailing endangered animals, plants or related products this year.



The unprocessed Siamese crocodile skins sent illegally in a mail package.[Photo/Shanghai Daily]

More than 60 dried sea horses and two Siamese crocodiles were found recently, the authority said yesterday.

Officials said a required certificate must be obtained to import or export endangered animals, plants and their related products to or from China.

This is according to Chinese regulations and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

The authority said the sea horses, weighing 0.34 kilograms, were found in a passenger's luggage when it went through a machine examination at Pudong International Airport in July.

The passenger said the dried sea horses were bought for relatives as gifts, and he did not realize sea horses were an endangered animal.

The sea horses were sent to the inspection and quarantine authority.

Sea horses are not allowed to be imported to China. Listed on Appendix II of CITES and the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. The species is not allowed to be fished or traded.

In June, the authority also found two animal skins in a mail package from Southeast Asia. The unprocessed skins were wrapped by salt and were later confirmed to be Siamese crocodiles. The Siamese crocodile is listed on the Appendix I of CITES, and banned from international trading.

Other imports of endangered species and related products attempted to have been smuggled into the country in recent years include ivory and pangolin scales.

The authority said it will penalize violators according to regulations.