

Beijing drafts fireworks ban

Chinese Lunar New Year is likely to be less noisy in Beijing in the future, as local authorities are considering a ban on fireworks, a traditional part of the celebrations.

The city's legislative affairs office published a draft amendment Friday that prohibits fireworks within the fifth ring road. The draft will be open for public comment from Friday until Aug. 26.

Setting off firecrackers is a long-standing custom to celebrate the lunar new year, as Chinese believe the noise will drive away bad spirits and bring good luck. However, the tradition has caused fiery arguments in recent years, amid mounting air pollution complaints and safety concerns.

Although fireworks are allowed within the city during the lunar new year, or Spring Festival, the number of fireworks sold has declined year by year since the current regulations took effect in 2005, according to Zhang Changyu with the legislative affairs office.

In Beijing, the sales of fireworks and firecrackers during this year's Spring Festival dropped by around 30 percent year-on-year, and by nearly 74 percent compared with that 12 years ago, Zhang said.

Nevertheless, they have continued to take their toll on air quality. During the past five years in Beijing, from the lunar new year's eve to the fifth day of the holiday period, two to four days saw heavy air pollution, according to Sun Feng with the Beijing Municipal Environmental Monitoring Center.

From January to June, days with good air quality accounted for 55.3 percent, down 5.8 percentage points year-on-year, and the average density of hazardous fine particle matter PM2.5 was up 3.1 percent from the level in the first half of 2016.

In addition, fireworks and firecrackers caused more than 2,100 fires, killing five people and injuring eight others during the Spring Festival holiday periods from 2005 to 2017, inflicting direct losses worth 150 million yuan (US\$22 million), Zhang said.

"In recent years, we've heard a stronger voice demanding stricter control of fireworks, and found that people care more about the environment and urban development," Zhang said, adding that the amendment aims to better "adapt to the capital's development" and "safeguard citizens' lives and property."

The proposed fireworks ban has split online opinion. Many support the idea, with some even suggesting a national ban, while opponents criticized it for killing off cultural traditions and questioned its effect on addressing the obstinate winter haze in Beijing.

Nationwide, 444 cities, including 10 provincial capitals, have banned

fireworks.

China issues orange alert for ocean waves

China's State Oceanic Administration (SOA) Friday issued this year's first orange alert for ocean waves as Typhoon Nesat approaches.

The typhoon is expected to near coastal southern Taiwan Saturday and move to the central and southern parts of Fujian Province Sunday afternoon, according to the SOA.

Waves of four to 10 meters are expected in the southern East China Sea, northeast South China Sea, Taiwan Strait and Bashi Channel.

A blue alert, the lowest level in a four-tier warning system, was also issued by the SOA, for storm in waters off the coasts of Zhejiang and Fujian provinces.

The SOA warned vessels in affected waters to return to port, personnel to evacuate the site and related departments to close entertainment facilities on beaches.

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

Action plan for 2017 BRICS Youth Forum announced



Young delegates from BRICS countries attend the concluding meeting of the 2017 BRICS Youth Forum to witness the announcement of The Action Plan for 2017 BRICS Youth Forum. [Photo by Li Huiru/China.org.cn]

The 2017 BRICS Youth Forum concluded in Beijing on July 27.

After three days of in-depth discussion and deliberation, young delegates from the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) reached a consensus and The Action Plan for the 2017 BRICS Youth Forum (The Action Plan) was announced at the last plenary session before the closing ceremony.

The Action Plan, which takes aspects such as youth policy, youth innovation and entrepreneurship, and youth participation in global governance as the main fields for BRICS youth cooperation, has proposed concrete measures to establish a center for BRICS youth research, a platform for information exchanges, a network dedicated to boost BRICS youth innovation and entrepreneurship, and a BRICS volunteer database for international communication.

“The forum strengthened the bond of youth in BRICS,” said Chinese representative Kong Dewei, adding that, “much useful and practical advice has been proposed for youth policy, entrepreneurship and innovation, as well as global management. Delegates from different countries have also formed solid friendships during the forum.” Kong is a student from Nankai University.

Aleksandr Bolotnov, vice chairperson of National Youth Council of Russia emphasized the importance of such communication mechanisms among BRICS youth. In an interview with China.org.cn, he said, “The BRICS youth forum is a big contribution for the BRICS cooperation.” He added that the forum will help consolidate the relationships of BRICS countries.

“We have learnt a lot together during these three days,” Thamsanqa Zulu,

manager of Mothosi Holdings in Brazil said. "I hope the vigor from the youth forum will be extended to other fields. Our South African delegation will bring back the documented agreements and make sure it will be carried out in a due manner."

The Action Plan, as an achievement of BRICS youth cooperation, will be submitted to the preparatory committee of the Ninth BRICS Summit to be held in China's Xiamen this September.

The 2017 BRICS Youth Forum hosted by the All-China Youth Federation was attended by a total of 50 young delegates from the BRICS countries.

[China to introduce official medals and titles of honor](#)



China's national medals and honorary titles include Medals of the Republic, July 1 Medals, Aug. 1 Medals, Friendship Medals, and national titles of honor. [File Photo]

The Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee has approved a series of documents to set up an honoring system for the contributors in the Party, the country and the military.

According to the documents, China's national medals and honorary titles include Medals of the Republic, July 1 Medals, Aug. 1 Medals, Friendship Medals, and national titles of honor.

The Medals of the Republic, the highest honor of the country, will be given

to honor those with great contributions and distinguished service for the Party, the country and the people, said the documents.

The July 1 Medals, the highest honor of the CPC, will be awarded to CPC members who have made great contributions to the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics and the construction of the CPC.

The Aug. 1 Medals, the highest honor of the military, will be given to servicemen and women who have strongly safeguarded the country's sovereignty, national security and benefit, and who have made outstanding contributions to the development of national defense and the modernization of the military.

The Friendship Medals will be presented to foreigners who have made outstanding contributions to China's socialist modernization drive, promoted exchange and cooperation between China and the world, and helped maintain world peace.

National titles of honor will be awarded for prominent figures who have made great contributions and earned reputations in fields such as economy, education, science, culture and sports.

The documents also stressed that a record book will be kept to remember the recipients and their deeds.

National roaming fee scrapped



National roaming charges will be scrapped for 1.36 billion Chinese phone users from September, one month ahead of the original plan. [File Photo]

National roaming charges will be scrapped for 1.36 billion Chinese phone users from September, one month ahead of the original plan, China's three biggest telecommunication carriers said yesterday.

China Mobile, China Unicom and China Telecom all said yesterday that they

will stop charging national roaming fees from September. However, the international roaming charges remain.

The roaming fee, almost double the local call cost on average, has been an irritant for consumers who wanted it scrapped for a long time. The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology asked carriers to “gradually stop charging” the fee since 2016.

In Shanghai, carriers have already launched packages that do not include the roaming fee since 2015.