

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.

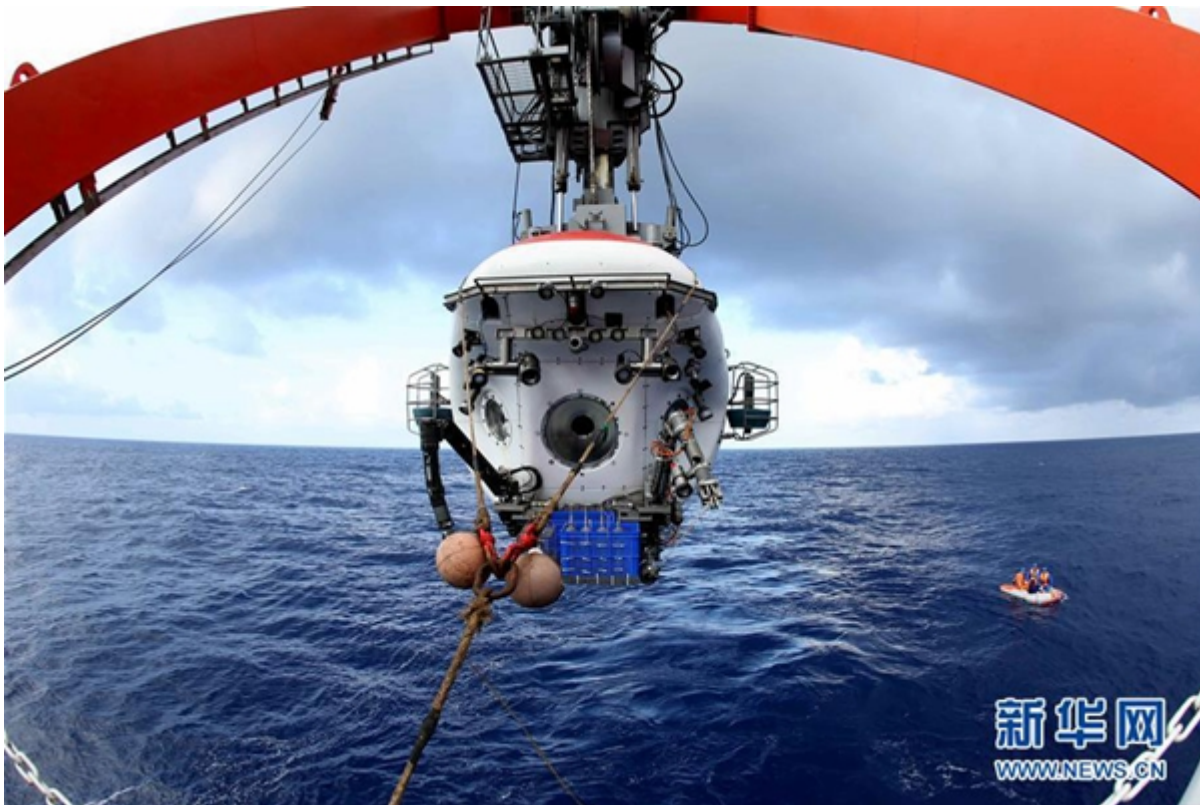
Xu Li, executive curator of China Cuisine & Culture Pavilion, makes a speech at a press conference in Beijing on Wednesday. [Photo provided to China.org.cn]

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.

Thousands sent to fight new forest fire in Inner Mongolia



The fire broke out at 12:15 p.m. on Tuesday in the Beidahe forest in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region. [Photo/Xinhua]

A second big fire broke out in China's largest forest in the Greater Hinggan Mountains on the same day a cross-border fire from Russia was extinguished.

The fire broke out at 12:15 p.m. on Tuesday in the Beidahe forest in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region. More than 8,300 firefighters are working to extinguish the blaze, according to regional fire authorities.

By press time, the fire had engulfed about 50 square kilometers of forest. The firefighters – 2,590 of whom are armed police officers – and 12 helicopters have been sent.

Strong winds, mountainous terrain, and dry vegetation made the firefighting "extremely difficult", according to an official statement from the fire authorities.

The blaze was thought to be caused by a stoker employed at a forestry station who improperly disposed of ashes and other residue from a fire. The suspect is in custody, the State Forest Fire Prevention Headquarters said.

Wang Haizhong, deputy director of the general office of the headquarters, warned that over the next 10 days China will face an increasing risk of forest fires due to an expected rise in temperatures across the nation.

Wang was quoted in a Xinhua interview as saying that China still lags behind developed countries in terms of investment in forest fire prevention.

In some poorly prepared western provinces, he said, the expenditure on fire prevention was less than 10 cents per hectare of forest, while in the United States and Canada it can reach \$2 per hectare.

The temperature in Inner Mongolia this spring is higher than in previous years, posing a higher fire risk for the region's forests.

A cross-border fire broke out Sunday in another area. That fire was put out on Tuesday and cleanup is underway.

[China to further promote diversified healthcare](#)

The Chinese government plans to cultivate a large number of competitive private medical institutions to complete a diversified multi-layered healthcare system by 2020, which is expected to meet growing demands for customized services.

The target was set in a guideline that encourages private businesses to provide diversified medical services, which was approved at a State Council executive meeting presided over by Premier Li Keqiang on Wednesday.

Encouraging private medical services is vital to developing a prosperous healthcare industry, unleashing the potential for domestic consumption and promoting economic restructuring and upgrading, the guideline said.

The premier said that the necessity to develop healthcare industries cannot be overestimated. Healthcare has great potential as people's lives are getting better, but is still in short supply. The key is to transform governmental functions and push forward administrative reforms, he said.

As one of the document's seven key tasks, the guideline eyes private businesses to set up and operate high-quality general clinics, which will offer customized services.

Support will be given to the private sector to create strongly competitive institutions with their own branding in subfields such as stomatology. The advantage of traditional Chinese medicines (TCM) should be fully utilized to offer services such as TCM-based healthcare and rehabilitative services.

The guideline encourages private medical institutions to provide services featuring advanced medical technologies. Customized services will be enhanced to offer value-added and ancillary services such as long-distance diagnoses.

Business models integrating different sectors, such as medical services and nursing homes for seniors, will be promoted.

The guideline also aims to build industrial clusters for healthcare industries that meet high-end demands in and outside China.

The healthcare market will be further opened up with lower threshold of access as private medical institutions will be supported to introduce strategic investors and partners, and forge cooperation with public hospitals to boost diversified services, the guideline said.

In addition, the document envisages foreign investors as partners to establish high-level medical institutions in China through joint ventures and other forms of cooperation. China is open to overseas professionals, medical technologies, management experiences and operation models.

Premier Li called for making full use of the market dynamics to nurture an environment for different medical institutions to grow, compete and prosper. Private businesses will be encouraged to enhance the supply of healthcare products and services that cater to people's diversified demands, he added.

Since the start of a new round of medical reform in 2009, the State Council has been working to boost enthusiasm and participation of private businesses with a slew of guidelines, including one that encourages private capital to enter the healthcare sector in November 2010.

In March, the central government promulgated another guideline to further promote participation of private businesses in areas such as medical services.

The premier said the central government has emphasized equal treatment for state-owned and private capital. He called for pragmatic measures to invigorate the enthusiasm of private businesses to participate in remedying shortcomings in these fields.

Wednesday's meeting also approved another guideline, which aims to develop a system of health and medical tourism by 2030.