

Beijingers buy less fireworks over pollution concerns

Beijingers set off less fireworks this year over pollution concerns as they celebrate Spring Festival, the most important festival in the Chinese calendar.

The Chinese Lunar New Year, which this year is the Year of the Rooster, fell on Saturday.

As of Friday, the eve of the Lunar New Year, sales of firecrackers and fireworks had decreased 4.9 percent year-on-year, the sixth consecutive year of decline, according to the fireworks office of the municipal government early Saturday.

The city reported 25 fires caused by fireworks on Friday, one less than last year.

Beijing has ordered the suspension of fireworks sale in case of serious air pollution alerts.

Compared with the daytime blue sky on Friday, Beijing's air turned noticeably hazy at night due to fireworks displays as locals welcomed the new year.

Due to fireworks and the lack of wind, the city's density of PM2.5, airborne particles smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter, hit a peak of 647 micrograms per cubic meter at 2 a.m. Saturday, down 7.6 percent from the same time of the last lunar new year, according to the Beijing Municipal Environmental Monitoring Center.

"Setting off fireworks and firecrackers surely adds to pollution and creates noises," said a college student surnamed Yu in Beijing's Chaoyang district. His stance is shared by the majority of citizens.

A recent poll on 1,000 residents in the capital showed 83 percent of interviewees said they would not set off fireworks during Spring Festival. This was 6.4 percentage points higher than last year.

Setting off fireworks and firecrackers during the Lunar New Year is a Chinese tradition, however, sales of fireworks have dropped in recent years in cities amid pollution concerns and government restrictions.

Nationwide, 444 cities have banned fireworks and 764 other cities impose restrictions on setting off fireworks, according to the Ministry of Public Security.

[Snowfall disrupts Spring Festival travel in NE China](#)

Snow disrupted the trips of Spring Festival travellers in northeast China on Thursday, causing multiple accidents and temporary closure of an airport and expressways.

Two people were killed and three injured in collisions which damaged more than 40 vehicles on a section of the expressway linking Harbin, capital of Heilongjiang, to Suihua City on Thursday, due to sudden snowfall, local government sources said.

At least 74 inbound and outbound flights were delayed at the Longjia international airport in Changchun, capital of Jilin, due to the snowy weather.

Thirty-two flights were forced to land in alternate airports. The airport started a red alert and closed for about three hours before reopening at 6 p.m. Thursday.

Most expressways in Jilin and 13 expressways in Liaoning imposed traffic control measures. Some flights were delayed at the Taoxian airport in Shenyang, capital of Liaoning.

Spring Festival, or the Lunar New Year, is the most important occasion for Chinese, who have a weeklong holiday period, placing a tremendous strain on railways, airports and expressways.

This year's Spring Festival falls on Saturday. About 3 billion trips are expected to be made during "chunyun," the travel rush that lasts this year from Jan. 13 to Feb. 21, the National Development and Reform Commission said.

[China pledges enhanced livelihood for people in difficulties](#)

Chinese government has pledged enhanced efforts to ensure the basic livelihoods for people in difficulties.

A circular issued by the General Office of the State Council and published on Thursday said the work to guarantee basic livelihoods for people in difficulties matters to fairness, morality and harmony in society, noting that there should be no decline or weakening in help.

The circular called for intensified efforts to identify people of such groups and streamline policies for assisting those affected by natural disasters.

The document said housing problems should be solved by the end of this year for those who were resettled in temporary residences last year due to floods and other disasters.

Also, program will be launched to help rural residents who are caught in difficulties by serious illnesses.

The assistance efforts for those who are in extreme need, disabled people, left-behind children, orphans and vagrants will also be strengthened, according to the circular.

China on alert against firework crime

Chinese police are on alert for firework crimes and violations.

A statement by the Ministry of Public Security on Thursday said that the ministry has ordered police nationwide to intensify checks of illegal production, sales, transport and storage of fireworks and firecrackers.

Chinese people traditionally set off fireworks and firecrackers during the Spring Festival, China's lunar New Year.

The ministry statement said that police nationwide have dealt with 203 pyrotechnic cases since December and a total of 419 suspects have been taken into custody.

The statement also advised the public to reduce the use of fireworks for safety and environmental reasons.

Charter flights to Sansha make trips easier



Passengers get off a charter flight at Yongxing Airport in Sansha city of south China's Hainan province on Thursday, January 26, 2017. [Photo: hinews.cn]

A charter flight linking China's southernmost cities of Haikou and Sansha is taking Chinese home to their loved ones in Sansha for the upcoming Chinese lunar New Year.

"Eventually I can see my daughter during Spring Festival," said Li Chang'an who arrived at Yongxing Airport, Sansha, Thursday morning, together with 112 other passengers.

He came to Haikou from his home in central China's Henan Province to catch the flight to Sansha. His daughter is a civil servant at Sansha's industry and commerce bureau.

The charter flights started five weeks ago from Haikou, capital of Hainan, to Yongxing Island, one of the Xisha Islands and the administrative base.

Li could have joined his daughter last Spring Festival by sea but never made it, fearful of a voyage of more than 10 hours.

An air ticket to Sansha might be the best gift that Jin Honglian has ever received. Wife of a soldier stationed in Sansha, Jin previously had to lay in bed for more than 10 hours because of seasickness when she visited her husband. With the charter flight, her trip is much shorter and more comfortable.

"I'm planning to spend more time here with my husband," said Jin, who also enjoyed a discount for military families.

Sansha City was officially established in 2012 to administer the Xisha, Zhongsha and Nansha Islands, and their surrounding waters in the South China Sea.

The daily charter flight has carried more than 3,300 passengers since Dec. 22.