

Beijing receives over 2 bln cubic meters of water from Yangtze

As of 10 a.m. on Feb 1, the middle route of the South-to-North Water Diversion Project had supplied Beijing with over 2 billion cubic meters of water, of which nearly 70 percent are for drinking.

Water plants got 1.369 billion cubic meters, accounting for 68 percent of the total. Currently the average daily flow into Beijing hit 1.05 million, with 0.93 million supplied to water plants.

11 million people in Beijing have got access to water from the Yangtze River. In addition, 284 million cubic meters were stored in reservoirs, with the rest used for groundwater, rivers and lakes.

Beijing attracted 671 new 'cutting-edge' projects in 2016

A night view of Zhongguancun Science Park in Beijing. [Photo/China.org.cn]

A total of 671 major projects in high-tech and sophisticated industries were registered in Beijing last year, according to the annual work meeting of the city's investment promotion bureau.

In the same period, the bureau managed to attract 747 foreign-funded projects, with a combined value of US\$7.02 billion, up by more than 10 percent year on year. Newly registered enterprises paid 15.2 billion yuan (US\$2.22 billion) in total in tax last year,

"Since 2016, the investment promotion bureau has been endeavoring to remove the city's non-capital functions to make the city more livable," said Zhou Weimin, director of the Beijing Investment Promotion Bureau.

Zhou said these endeavors were the reason that the bureau put a priority over high-tech industries, high-end and high-quality service industries, and high-value cultural industries last year.

The business sector's growing willingness to invest in Beijing reflects the perfect, amicable business environment of the Chinese capital. In particular, the city's business administration, tax, finance, among other government agencies are exploring innovative, new measures that could provide good templates for other cities to follow.

For example, among the 40 innovative, new measures in the city's service

sector, there is China's first aircraft maintenance company formed by a joint-venture and China's first joint-venture tourism agency dealing with Chinese citizens' overseas trips.

While the city keeps promoting cutting-edge industries and projects, local enterprises have accelerated their pace in going overseas. Data shows that in the first three quarters of last year, foreign direct investment (FDI) totaled US\$13.75 billion, a 94-percent year-on-year increase. The FDI figure was basically on par with US\$12.62 billion, the amount of investment Beijing attracted over the same period.

Zhou Weimin said that in 2017, the investment promotion bureau will continue to serve the city's objective of developing the service-based economy, knowledge-based economy, green economy and headquarters economy, helping control the city's population, contribute to stable growth and facilitate private investment.

[Beijing vows to clear out non-capital functions](#)

Beijing Mayor Cai Qi addresses a symposium with state media on Sunday.

Beijing Mayor Cai Qi vowed to remove Beijing's non-capital functions at a symposium with state media on Sunday.

Cai said that to remove non-capital functions of Beijing is to do the supply-side structural reform, to make structural adjustments and transform the economical growth pattern, as well as to clear out outdated industries and fill in advanced industries.

The task also entails improving the quality of urban development and living environment as well as the ease of tensions between population, resources and environment, Cai added.

He said Beijing will perform better as the capital and make headway in development through the move.

Beijing will remove non-capital functions for optimization of economic and spatial structure, stepping on a new path featuring sound structure, high quality and efficiency.

For the next step, Beijing will focus on scientific and technological innovation and boost sophisticated industries.

News story: Law change demands equal treatment for disabled taxi users

Taxi drivers face a fine of up to £1,000 if they refuse to transport wheelchair users or attempt to charge them extra, in a change to the law announced today (7 February 2017) by Transport Minister Andrew Jones.

From 6 April taxi and private hire vehicle drivers will be obliged by law to:

- transport wheelchair users in their wheelchair
- provide passengers in wheelchairs with appropriate assistance
- charge wheelchair users the same as non-wheelchair users

Transport Minister Andrew Jones said:

We want to build a country that works for everyone, and part of that is ensuring disabled people have the same access to services and opportunities as anyone else – including when it comes to travel. People who use wheelchairs are often heavily reliant on taxis and private hire vehicles and this change to the law will mean fair and equal treatment for all.

The new rules will apply in England, Wales and Scotland affecting vehicles that are designated as wheelchair accessible and will apply to both taxis and private hire vehicles. All taxis in London and a significant number in most major urban centres are wheelchair accessible.

In a change to the law, drivers found to be discriminating against wheelchair users face fines of up to £1,000 as part of provisions being enacted from the Equality Act. Drivers may also face having their taxi or private hire vehicle (PHV) licence suspended or revoked by their licencing authority. Drivers unable to provide assistance for medical reasons will be able to apply to their licensing authority for an exemption from the new requirements.

Robert Meadowcroft, Chief Executive of Muscular Dystrophy UK, said:

This is a victory for all people with disabilities who experience daily struggles with accessible transport.

Being able to get from A to B is usually very easy for most people, however we know that this can be a challenge that affects a disabled person's entire life, including their ability to have a job and play an active part in society. This is a positive and very welcome step in the right direction which we hope will not affect the number of accessible taxis being made available by companies because of the duties now being placed on to drivers.

[Muscular Dystrophy UK](#) and our Trailblazers have been campaigning on this issue for many years, and we commend the government for listening to the views of disabled people.

The new requirements, which will come into force from 6 April, complement those already in place to prevent discrimination against users of assistance dogs and underline the government's wide-ranging commitment to supporting transport networks which work for everyone. The government will be consulting on a draft 'Accessibility action plan' later this year, which will seek to address the barriers faced by disabled people in accessing all modes of public transport.

Statement to Parliament: PM statement on European Council: 6 February 2017

Mr Speaker, before I turn to the European Council, I am sure the whole House will want to join me in sending our congratulations to Her Majesty the Queen as she marks her Sapphire Jubilee today.

It is testament to Her Majesty's selfless devotion to the nation that she is not marking becoming our first Monarch to reign for sixty-five years with any special celebration, but instead by getting on with the job to which she has dedicated her life.

On behalf of the whole country, I am proud to offer Her Majesty our humble thanks for a lifetime of extraordinary service. Long may she continue to reign over us all.

Turning to last week's informal European Council in Malta, Britain is leaving the European Union but we are not leaving Europe – and a global Britain that stands tall in the world, will be a Britain that remains a good friend and ally to all our European partners.

So at this summit, we showed how Britain will continue to play a leading role in Europe long after we have left the EU.

In particular, through our contribution to the challenge of managing mass migration; through our Special Relationship with America – and through the new and equal partnership that we want to build between the EU and an independent, self-governing, global Britain.

Let me take each in turn.

Migration

First, on migration, the discussion focused in particular on the route from Libya across the central Mediterranean.

As I have argued, we need a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach – and that is exactly what this council agreed.

This includes working hard in support of an inclusive political settlement to stabilise Libya, which will not only help to tackle migration flows but also counter terrorism.

It means working to reduce the pull factors that encourage people to risk their lives, building the capacity of the Libyans to return migrants to their own shores, treat them with dignity and help them return home.

It means looking beyond Libya and moving further upstream, including by urgently implementing the EU's External Investment Plan to help create more opportunities in migrants' home countries – and by helping genuine refugees to claim asylum in the first safe country they reach.

And it means better distinguishing between economic migrants and refugees, swiftly returning those who have no right to remain and thereby sending out a deterrence message to others thinking of embarking on perilous journeys.

And the council agreed action in all of these areas.

Britain is already playing a leading role in the region and at this summit I announced further steps including additional support for the Libyan coastguard and more than £30 million of new aid for the most vulnerable refugees across Greece, the Balkans, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Sudan and Libya.

Britain is also setting up an £8 million special protection fund to keep men, women and children in the Mediterranean region safe from trafficking, sexual violence and labour exploitation as part of our commitment to tackle modern slavery.

And the council agreed with my call that we should do everything possible to deter this horrific crime, including by introducing tough penalties for those who trade in human misery and by working together to secure the necessary evidence for prosecutions that can put these criminals behind bars where they belong.

America

Mr Speaker, turning to America, I opened a discussion on engaging the new administration and I was able to relay the conversation I had with President Trump at the White House about the important history of co-operation between the United States and the countries of Europe.

In particular, I confirmed that the President had declared his 100 per cent

commitment to NATO as the cornerstone of our security in the West.

But I also made clear that every country needs to share the burden and play its full part, meeting the NATO target of spending 2 per cent on defence. Because, Mr Speaker, it is only by investing properly in our defence that we can ensure we are properly equipped to keep our people safe.

I was also able to relay my discussions with President Trump on the importance of maintaining the sanctions regime on Russia in response to its actions in Ukraine.

And I very much welcome the strong words last week from the new US ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, in confirming America's continued support for these sanctions.

Mr Speaker, of course, there are some areas where we disagree with the approach of the new administration. And we should be clear about those disagreements and about the values that underpin our response to the global challenges that we face.

But I also argued at this council that we should engage patiently and constructively with America as a friend and ally – an ally that has helped guarantee the longest period of peace that Europe has ever known.

For we should be clear, Mr Speaker, that the alternative of division and confrontation would only embolden those who would do us harm, wherever they may be.

Brexit

Finally turning to Brexit, European leaders welcomed the clarity of the objectives that we have set out for the negotiation ahead.

They warmly welcomed our ambition to build a new partnership between Britain and the European Union that is in the interests of both sides. They also welcomed the recognition that we in Britain want to see a strong and successful European Union, because that is in our interests and the interests of the whole world.

On the issue of acquired rights, the general view was that we should reach an agreement which applied equally to the other 27 member states and the UK, which is why we think a unilateral decision from the UK is not the right way forward.

But as I have said before, EU citizens living in the UK make a vital contribution to our economy and our society and without them we would be poorer and our public services weaker.

So we will make securing the reciprocal agreement that will guarantee their status a priority as soon as the negotiations begin, and I want to see this agreed as soon as possible because that is in everyone's interests.

Mr Speaker, our European partners now want to get on with the negotiations.

So do I.

And so does this House, which last week voted by a majority of 384 in support of the government triggering Article 50.

There are of course further stages for the Bill in Committee and in the other place. And it is right that this process should be completed properly.

But, Mr Speaker, the message is clear to all.

This House has spoken. And now is not the time to obstruct the democratically expressed wishes of the British people.

It is time to get on with leaving the European Union and building an independent, self-governing, global Britain.

And I commend this Statement to the House