



China faces tough fight against air pollution

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(Xinhua)

BEIJING - Beijing was once again shrouded in a heavily polluted, foggy air on Wednesday, which is familiar to local residents some of whom are accustomed to wearing masks outdoors.

A day before the Mid-Autumn Festival — a traditional mooncake-eating and family-reunion holiday that falls on Sept 19 this year — the worsening air was aggravated by car emissions as the capital's major avenues were almost turned to parking lots even before the rush hour at dusk.

Air pollution in the Chinese capital and its neighbors **Tianjin** and **Hebei** was heavier than other parts of the country last month, according to the Ministry of Environmental Protection.

The 13 monitored cities in the region had about 20 of the 31 days in August failing to meet the required standards set by the ministry, while the national average stood at around 10 days.

Among the top 10 heavily polluted cities, seven are in north China's Hebei province that encircles Beijing. In addition, Tianjin is also listed among the top 10.

Therefore, Beijing and Tianjin municipalities, Hebei, **Shanxi** and **Shandong** provinces, as well as Inner Mongolia autonomous region, all major economic engines in north China, have pledged to deal with the heavy smog that has caused people to worry about their health and undermined the realization of the Chinese dream of improving people's lives.

Arduous, persisting and coordinated efforts among the northern Chinese cities are desperately needed to deal with the worsening air, as there is no boundary for air pollution.

People breathe the smog floating from neighboring cities due to atmospheric circulation. They either share the same blue sky or breathe the same choking smog.

When Beijing held the 2008 Olympics, China not only removed heavily-polluted industries outside the capital, but also required factories of adjacent Hebei and Tianjin to suspend production in order to ensure clean air over the Olympic venues.

However, provisional anti-pollution measures cannot cure the chronic and stubborn disease agonizing the cities for long.

Over the years, coal-based energy consumption, especially in north China, has worsened the winter air quality in areas with coal-fired heating.

Beijing even started emergency response measures in January to curb the hazardous air pollution after dense, choking smog smothered the capital for several consecutive days.

Immediate action must be taken to clean the worsening air in and around the capital so that other parts of the country can follow suit to purify the air breathed by one-fifth of the earth's population.

China as one of the world's largest polluters has been under growing pressure to combat air pollution. The country has vowed to contribute in dealing with global climate change.

In a government action plan unveiled last week, China vowed to take a multi-pronged approach to tackle air pollution by cutting coal use, shutting down polluters and promoting cleaner production.

PM2.5 should fall by about 25 percent from 2012 levels in Beijing and surrounding provincial areas by 2017, according to the plan, which will cost 1.75 trillion yuan (\$284.2 billion).

Slowing the growth of car use and speeding afforestation are also among top priorities of Beijing's anti-pollution drive.

The prosperity of Chinese civilization is closely linked to its ecological environment, as the fall of Ancient Babylon was due to ecological damage.

The country should bear in mind that environmental preservation should top the government agenda in order to build a beautiful and prosperous China.

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