

“ If it's true that the school provides bad food for students, the school is utterly conscienceless and it should be shut down.”

Zhang Xiaojie, mother of a 10-year-old after her child's school was accused of providing substandard food

ENVIRONMENT

Heavy pollution, smog shroud northern areas

Capital raises four-tier health alert, while some expressways closed due to limited visibility

By ZHENG JINRAN in Beijing and LIU CE in Shenyang

Residents in vast northern and northeastern regions awoke to encounter severe smog on Friday, prompting Beijing to raise its health alert.

Visibility dropped to below 200 meters in some areas, including the capital and the southern region of Liaoning province on Friday morning due to pollution mixed with heavy fog, leaving some expressway sections closed for hours.

At 6 pm, some monitoring stations in the capital recorded an air quality index of 301,

the second-worst air quality level in the six-tier system, according to data from the Beijing Municipal Environmental Monitoring Center.

The capital raised the emergency response from blue to yellow on Friday afternoon. It's the second time that the capital issued the third highest alert in October.

At 9 am, 16 cities in Shandong province were blanketed by heavy smog as well, according to the provincial environmental authority.

The spell of smog covering these regions, such as Beijing, Hebei, Shandong and Liaoning provinces, would disperse after

301

Air quality index at some monitoring stations in Beijing at 6 pm on Friday, reaching the second-worst air quality level

a rain on Sunday, the National Meteorological Center said.

“It's frustrating to breathe the choking air, and reminds me of my experiences during last winter's hazardous smoggy days,” said Zhang Shuai, a 33-year-old with asthma from Shenyang, Liaoning province.

In November, many cities including Shenyang saw air quality readings off the charts due to large emissions and poor weather to disperse pollutants.

Zhang had to stay indoors

with air filtering equipment running all day, but she still had problems breathing.

“Though the air pollution today is not as severe as last winter, I am afraid it's just the start,” she said, adding that she has to ask for leave if hazardous smog hits in the coming months.

Many people, as well as governments and experts, shared her concerns, as the northern regions burn large amounts of coal to provide heat.

Chen Jining, the minister of environmental protection, admitted that it's a thorny issue since it involves thousands of families, but controlling coal consumption has been made a priority this year.

Zheng Fengxiang, from Shijiazhuang, Hebei province, said all the villagers will use



People wearing masks walk in the smog-shrouded Sanlitun area in Beijing on Friday. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

natural gas instead of coal for heat this winter after Lingshou county installed pipes to their households and provided subsidies of around 4,000 yuan (\$594) to each family.

“In the coming months, I won't have to breathe the

choking air from the boiler any more,” he said, adding that he did feel encouraged by government support to control air pollution.

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Briefly

GUIZHOU

Nation protects ancient villages

China has put 4,157 ancient villages onto its State protection list to conserve the country's historical agricultural civilization. Under the program, China built the world's largest agricultural heritage protection network, said Zhao Hui, chief economist engineer of the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development. China kicked off the protection program in 2012.

BEIJING

Guidelines boost medical services

Health authorities will encourage medical institutions and staff to report substandard medical care, according to a guideline from the National Health and Family Planning Commission. The guideline, to be adopted on Nov 1, aims to improve quality control of medical services to protect people's health, the commission said.

China has 190 million cars

China's car ownership reached 190 million by the end of September, with total motor vehicles numbering 280 million, the Ministry of Public Security said on Friday. There are 47 cities that have car ownership of more than 1 million, and in 16 cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai and Chongqing, car ownership exceeds 2 million, the ministry said.

HUNAN

Residential blast kills 3

Three people were killed and another six injured after an explosion in a residential building in Yongxing county on Thursday, according to the Xiaoxiang Morning Herald. Two of the victims — a couple living in the building — are suspected of setting off the explosion after a dispute over a possible divorce, local police said.

CHINA DAILY — XINHUA

HEALTH

School canteen accused of serving substandard food

By ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan zhaoruixue@chinadaily.com.cn

The discipline inspection and prosecuting bodies in Haiyang, Shandong province, are investigating administrative authorities after a school canteen was accused by parents on Monday of serving substandard food.

Parents told media that Haiyang Great Talent Experimental School, a privately-funded school, used poor quality meat in meals, while photos provided by parents show moldy steamed buns and rotten tomatoes in the school's kitchen.

More than 100 parents gathered at the school on Monday morning seeking an explanation.

The local education office and the market and quality supervision office has set up a team to investigate, including probing the school's suppliers as well as storage and food processing techniques.

The market and quality supervision office collected 22 food samples from the school's canteen, which will be tested this week, with results to be released on Saturday, according to Haiyang's publicity office.

The local discipline inspection and procuratorate bodies are investigating administrative authorities, including the Haiyang education office, market and quality supervision office and the farming office for possible negligence and graft.

The school's canteen was managed by Yu Chunli, the younger sister of school chair-

man Yu Chunlin. Yu Chunli has already been replaced over the food scandal.

“If it's true that the school provides bad food for students, the school is utterly conscienceless and it should be shut down,” said Zhang Xiaojie, the mother of a 10-year-old.

The school published a letter on WeChat on Monday, saying the school has never used bad or dirty food in meals.

Wang Xiaoyan, vice-mayor of Haiyang, said Haiyang views students' physical and psychological health as the top priority.

“The food scandal has exposed some problems in the field of government supervision and management. We will continue improving our work to ensure students' health,” Wang said.

Officials from the Haiyang education office met some parents on Thursday to listen to their advice and suggestions.

According to the education office, more surveillance cameras will be installed at the school's canteen to monitor meal preparation. A new medical room will be set up at the school to treat students who are ill.

The school's official website states it has been approved by the local education authority and is a full-time private school that offers kindergarten, primary and junior middle school education. It has more than 3,600 students, and 200 teaching and administrative members.



Fun in the sand

Players from China and Uruguay compete for the ball during a beach soccer competition in Tangshan, Hebei province, on Friday. The two-day event, involving soccer teams from China, Uruguay and Costa Rica, will conclude on Saturday. YANG SHIYAO / XINHUA

ANTI-GRAFT

Former Shanxi legislator jailed for corruption

By XINHUA and CHINA DAILY

A former senior legislator in north China's Shanxi province was sentenced to life in prison for accepting bribes amounting to nearly 124 million yuan (\$18.44 million) by a court in Jiangsu province on Friday.

Jin Daoming, former vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the Shanxi Provincial People's Congress, was also deprived of his political



Jin Daoming

rights for life and all his personal assets were confiscated, according to a statement from Zhenjiang City Intermediate People's Court.

The court also ruled that Jin must turn over his ill-gotten gains to the State.

Jin was found guilty of taking advantage of his positions to seek profits for others related to coal mine mergers, official promotions and discipline inspections between 2007 and 2014, the court said.

The court issued a lesser punishment as Jin owned up to his crimes and voluntarily turned over his illicit gains.

Jin was placed under investigation for “serious violations of Party discipline”, a phrase usually referring to

corruption in China, in February 2014 and was removed from his post and expelled from the Communist Party of China in December the same year, according to the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection.

Jin pleaded guilty when the case was heard.

Jin held various discipline inspection positions in Beijing before he was shifted to Shanxi in 2006, where he held several positions. He was head of the Party's disci-

plinary department in the province as well before he was placed under investigation.

Jin was among several officials sentenced by the courts for corruption this week.

On Thursday, Tan Li, former vice-governor of Hainan province, was convicted of bribery and sentenced to life in prison by a court in Guangdong province on Thursday. He was found guilty of accepting 86.25 million yuan in bribes.

WILDLIFE

50 escaped cobras still on the loose around Nanjing

By CANG WEI in Nanjing cangwei@chinadaily.com.cn

Fifty illegally bred cobras are still missing from a private farm in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, after 50 days of searching.

The cobras fled from the farm after its floor became soaked and broke during a

heavy rain in late August. The local government did not receive a report about the escape until some villagers living nearby noticed the cobras.

About 150 cobras have been found and beaten to death by the villagers and searchers. The cobras remaining at the farm — about 900 — have been transferred to a licensed

wildlife farm in nearby Taizhou city.

The Nanjing forestry police department arranged for the 900 cobras to be put into special containers and escorted by police on Thursday. The illegal farm and the surrounding areas have been cordoned off for disinfection.

About 150 staff members

are on the hunt for the cobras in the surrounding areas, though none have been found by the searchers since the news broke on Monday.

Wang Jiuqing, a worker with the local Xiongzhou community, said that experts have been consulted to help capture the runaway cobras.

“The experts said that

there's a great chance that the cobras, which live in tropical areas, won't survive the upcoming cold winter in Nanjing,” said Wang. “The operation will continue until the experts stop it.”

Many scared residents living near the illegal farm have rushed to seal windows and doors with lime, which they

believe will prevent the cobras from entering their homes.

Qin Xiao, owner of the illegal farm, and his father, have been detained by local police for investigation. Police have found that they bought monocled cobra eggs from Shaoguan, Guangdong province, on Aug 6 and incubated about 1,820 cobras, out of which some 1,500 survived.

“Though they consulted the local government about getting official permission, they

started the breeding business without any legal procedures.”

Cobras are sought after by pharmaceutical companies and restaurants, and cobra-soaked wine can be sold at a very high price, according to business insiders.

“The wine made with cobras can be sold at 5,000 to 6,000 yuan (\$745 to \$890) per half a liter, although the wine itself may be very cheap,” said a snake breeding base manager surnamed Chen in Nanjing.