

GREAT BARRIER REEF

Largest coral die-off recorded

Environmentalists call for Australian govt to abandon coal mining to help prevent further bleaching disasters

By AGENCIES in Sydney

A mass bleaching event on the Great Barrier Reef this year killed more corals than ever before, scientists said on Tuesday, sounding the alarm over the delicate ecosystem.

The 2,300-kilometer long reef — the world's biggest — suffered its most severe bleaching in recorded history, due to warming sea temperatures during March and April, with the northern third bearing the brunt.

Follow-up underwater surveys, backing earlier aerial studies, have revealed a 700-km stretch of reefs in the less-accessible north lost two-thirds of shallow-water corals in the past eight to nine months.

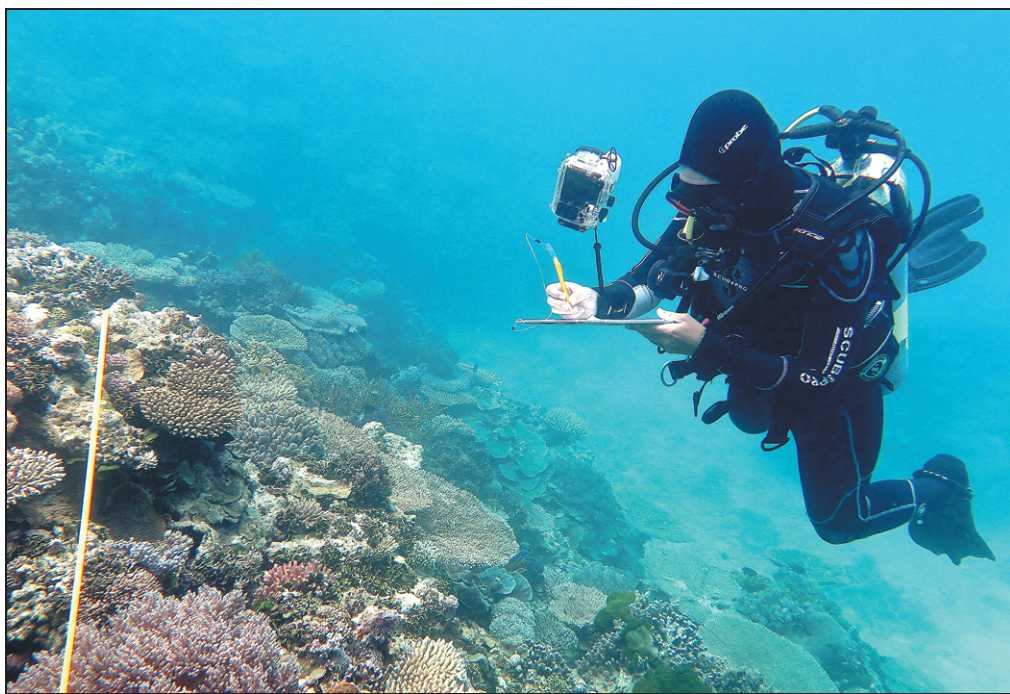
"Most of the losses in 2016 have occurred in the northern, most-pristine part of the Great Barrier Reef," said Terry Hughes, head of the Center of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies at James Cook University.

"This region escaped with minor damage in two earlier bleaching events in 1998 and 2002, but this time around it has been badly affected."

Further south over the vast central and southern regions, including major tourist areas around Cairns and the Whitsunday Islands, there was a much lower toll.

Fossil fuels

Bleaching occurs when abnormal environmental conditions, such as warmer sea temperatures, cause corals to expel tiny photosynthetic algae, draining them of their color.



Researcher Grace Frank carries out a bleaching survey along a transect line on the Great Barrier Reef off Northern Queensland.

ARC CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR CORAL REEF STUDIES VIA AFP

“Most of the losses in 2016 have occurred in the northern, most-pristine part of the Great Barrier Reef.”

Terry Hughes, head of the Center of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies at James Cook University

Algae are vital to the coral, which uses the organic products of photosynthesis to help it grow.

The loss of algae makes the host vulnerable to disease and means it will eventually die.

However, coral can recover if the water temperature drops and the algae are able to recolonize them.

Environmentalists blame the burning of fossil fuels for global warming and repeated calls on Tuesday for Australia to abandon coal mining to help prevent further bleaching disasters.

Canberra insists it is doing more than ever to safeguard the reef, which is also under pressure from farming runoff,

development and the coral-eating crown-of-thorns starfish, committing more than \$1.50 billion over the next decade.

Tourism industry

Scientists estimate the northern region, which teems with marine life, will take at least 10-15 years to regain lost corals, but are concerned that a fourth major bleaching event may occur before that, hampering the recovery.

The reef studies center warned earlier this year that if greenhouse gas levels keep rising, similar events would be the new normal, occurring every two years by the mid-2030s.

Given reefs need so long to

recover from severe bleaching, it said "we are likely to lose large parts of the Great Barrier Reef in just a couple of decades".

There have been fears that the bleaching would badly hurt the tourism industry. Tourism on the World Heritage-listed reef employs 70,000 people and generates \$3.7 billion in income each year.

Australia last year narrowly avoided UNESCO putting the site on its endangered list and must report to the World Heritage committee by Dec 1 on the progress being made to rescue the reef.

AFP—AP

Poultry culling starts after bird flu outbreak

By AGENCIES in Tokyo

Japan has started culling more than 300,000 chickens and ducks after the discovery of a highly contagious form of bird flu on farms in the north of the country, local officials said.

The bird flu outbreaks are the first in nearly two years in Japan and news of the culling boosted shares in some infection-control product makers.

In Niigata prefecture north of Tokyo, authorities on Tuesday started culling about 310,000 chickens at a farm in the village of Sekikawa after 40 birds were found dead from H5 bird flu, a prefectural official said. The cull will continue until Dec 2, the official said.

Further north in the prefecture of Aomori, about 16,500 ducks were being culled in the city of the same name after some tested positive for bird flu.

This is the first time that highly pathogenic bird flu has been confirmed in Aomori prefecture, it said. The Agriculture Ministry said the outbreaks are the first for nearly two years in poultry farms in Japan.

South Korea on Friday announced a temporary nationwide standstill order for poultry farms and related transport over the weekend in a bid to

contain a spread of H5N6 bird flu, a severe strain of the disease.

Another severe strain of bird flu, H5N8, has hit several countries in Europe and led to the culling of thousands of poultry after being detected in wild ducks in Northern France.

Undetected in humans

In recent weeks there have also been outbreaks in the Netherlands, Switzerland, Romania and Germany. Dutch authorities destroyed about 190,000 ducks on Saturday at six farms following an avian flu outbreak.

Farmers located in humid regions, where the risk of transmission is higher, are advised by health authorities to keep poultry flocks indoors or apply safety nets preventing contact with wild birds.

The H5N8 virus has never been detected in humans but it led to the culling of millions of farm birds in Asia, mainly in South Korea, in 2014 before spreading to Europe.

The World Organization for Animal Health had warned in November that more outbreaks of H5N8 were likely in Europe as wild birds believed to transmit the virus migrate southward.

REUTERS—AP



Workers wearing protective suits cull ducks after some tested positive for H5 bird flu at a poultry farm in Aomori, Japan, on Wednesday. KYODO NEWS AGENCY VIA REUTERS

Chengdu special

Chengdu MICE industries propel city onto world stage

By ZHUANTI
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Chengdu, capital of Southwest China's Sichuan province, is being hailed as one of the country's most innovative cities in 2016 due to its international meetings and exhibitions at the 2016 MICE (meeting, incentive, convention and exhibition) STAR ceremony.

The event was hosted by the China Convention, Exhibition and Event Society and the Beijing Commission of Tourism Development on Nov 9 in Beijing.

Earlier, on Oct 21, Chengdu topped its peers in western China and ranked the fifth in the nation in competitiveness for event hosting, according to the first official report on China's meeting cities of 2015, released by the society.

The report was compiled by more than 20 experts through thorough studies.

Indicators included competence, overall environment, urban management and services, as well as participants' feedback, making the report a pioneer in China.

Another report on the top-100 international meeting destinations released in 2015 by the International Congress and Convention Association included 12 Chinese cities, among which Chengdu ranked sixth.

This recognition indicates that Chengdu has effectively nurtured its MICE sector.

Chengdu serves as the center of western China in economy, science, technology, cultural innovation, foreign affairs and transportation. With its GDP ranked the sixth in the nation, its advanced facilities provide Chengdu's MICE sectors with strength in infrastructure.

This year has seen more than 520 major events held in Chengdu, covering an exhibi-



World Routes, the world's top aviation conference, is held in Chengdu in April.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Left: The Chengdu motor show, held in September, is Southwest China's most influential event in the auto sector. Right: The China Beauty Expo joins hands with the Chengdu Beauty Expo.

tion area of 3.3 million square meters.

The added value of MICE industries sees 8.5 percent growth annually in recent years, with 20 percent of the exhibitions being international events.

A total of 278 of Fortune 500 enterprises have arrived in Chengdu, a sign of Chengdu MICE businesses' nationwide influence and international interest.

Both of the city's two international venues — the Chengdu International Convention and Exhibition Center and the Chengdu Century City New International Convention and Exhibition Center — are fueling Chengdu's growth, according to Wang Xin, deputy direc-

tor of the Chengdu Bureau of Exposition and vice-chairman of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade.

The Chengdu International Conference and Exhibition Center, as Wang put it, will better meet the increasing number of major events in Chengdu with an exhibition area of 200,000 sq m and 500,000 sq m outdoors.

More than 100 exhibitions are held in the Chengdu Century City New International Convention and Exhibition Center each year.

Both are expected to help Chengdu to gear up to become a world-renowned host city for meetings as part of Chengdu's 13th Five-Year

Plan period (2016-20).

Eventually, the city's hospitable environment, professional management, and fair and orderly competition is expected to grow from effective guidance of the local government and strong partnerships with its counterparts, said Wang.

On Oct 20, the Shanghai-based convention organizer Informa Exhibitions (Asia-Pacific) announced an agreement with the China Beauty Expo, marking the first time a joint venture exhibition company has arrived in China's western MICE sector.

It is another big step for Chengdu's exhibition industry toward globalization.

The Chengdu Beauty Expo,

Expos drive economic growth

Chengdu, capital of Southwest China's Sichuan province, will organize over 1,000 exhibitions and conferences next year, and out of them, about 590 will be international events.

Upcoming events will include the 96th China Food and Drinks Fair, the Chengdu Motor Show 2017, the 12th EU-China Business & Technology Cooperation Fair and the 2017 Education Forum for the Asia Annual Conference. A total of 3.3 million square meters of exhibition space will be used.

The total revenue generated by the conference and exhibition events in 2017 is expected to reach some 89.4 billion yuan (\$12.97 billion), up 12.8 percent year-on-year.

As of Nov 15, Chengdu had hosted 505 exhibitions and conferences, including 122 international events. The number is expected to exceed 530 by the end of the year. The exhibitions and conferences have covered an area of 3.18 million sq m, a 10.7 percent year-on-year increase.

The year-end data will surpass 3.4 million sq m for year-on-year growth of 9.5 percent.

The total revenue as of Nov 15 amounted to 71.2 billion yuan, up 12.8 percent year-on-year.

By the end of 2016, it is expected to receive 98 million visitors and create 4,600 short-term job opportunities. Major events of 2016 included the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting, the 22nd World Route Development Forum and the 2016 Chengdu Global Innovation and Entrepreneurship Fair.

ZHUANTI

tions, said Chen.

The Chengdu Bureau of Exposition has been very supportive of Chengdu's exhibition industry, while local government officials have provided support and suggestions, according to Chen.

Chen is the director of the China National Standardization Committee for Exhibition Industry, as well as chairman of the Shanghai Convention and Exhibition Industries Association.

"As a celebrated meeting city, Chengdu MICE has developed well in recent years. On the national scale, the strength of its exhibition sector grows as that of its other sectors does," Chen said.

What they say

Officials, market insiders and company representatives share their insights on Chengdu.

"Chengdu, with its advanced infrastructure, lives up to its title of an excellent tourist destination and Asia's first 'City of Gastronomy', as commended by UNESCO. All these ensure sound momentum of the MICE (meeting, incentive, convention and exhibition) sector of Chengdu."

Wang Xin, deputy director of the Chengdu Bureau of Exposition and vice-chairman of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade's Chengdu branch

"The joint venture of Informa Exhibitions and the China Beauty Expo achieved outstanding results in three years. Merging and acquiring the Chengdu Beauty Expo forged a multilateral partnership of great strength. A more efficient business platform should be built for China's beauty sector."

Pang Dawei, chairman of Informa Exhibitions China and president of Shanghai Baiwen Exhibition Co Ltd

"Chengdu is well-equipped with industrial and exhibition facilities. The advanced facilities definitely draw more major exhibition enterprises and agencies, especially when the services provided by the government is of high quality and efficiency."

Sang Jingmin, founder of China Beauty Expo

"Chengdu is rising to become a megacity, following Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen. The newly released report ranked Chengdu in the fifth place, indicating the overall growth of the city. Chengdu has now blazed a trail of rapid development, with the aim of becoming a megacity of international fame."

Chen Xianjin, honorary chairman of the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, director of the China National Standardization Committee for Exhibition Industry and chairman of the Shanghai Convention and Exhibition Industries Association