

DRY CHINA INDUCES SNOWING



China has problems with extremely long droughts. The officials try to fight it in various ways. They even artificially induced snowing over Beijing.

China is every year hit by droughts and floods but this year's **drought is the worst in 38 years**. Some 12 provinces are endangered by the situation. Because of that the government has declared a state of emergency in eight regions.

There are arguably **four million people who suffer** from lack of water. Also approximately half of China's winter crop of wheat and rape seed is in danger. Chinese officials decided to provide 400 million yuan (€46 million) to help these regions. Millions of Chinese in rural areas have no jobs because of the global economic downturn and if the farmers' incomes drop the plans for stimulating the economy by consumer spending in rural areas may also fail. The drought may socially destabilize the region where most of the farmers still rely on the rainfall. Irrigation systems are rather poor in many Chinese farming communities.

To fight the drought the Chinese decided to use science. Beijing Weather Modification Command Centre has lunched **500 cigarette-size sticks of silver iodide** into the clouds over Beijing to induce snowing and it seems they have managed. It is not, however, sure whether it would not start snowing anyway. The scientists are still uncertain if the technique really influences the weather. Chinese used the silver iodide in past to prevent rain from marring the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Beijing. Environmentalists also fear it could be harmful, nevertheless, there is no evidence for such claim.

Natural or not the snow certainly is a change for tourists in Beijing which is usually a dry city. A sector of the Great Wall near Beijing has attracted **twice as many tourists** as usual. Beijing's Forbidden City recorded no drop in the number of visitors. Snow in Beijing is simply a new tourism attraction.

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