

Japan, China, S. Korea to cooperate on air pollution

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A resident wears a mask as air pollution shrouds Beijing on May 6, 2013. Japan, China and South Korea agreed Monday to continue cooperating in the fight against cross-border air pollution, despite strained relations between the neighbours because of territorial disputes.

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The annual environmental meeting in Kitakyushu, southern Japan, on Sunday and Monday, came after acrid haze blanketing swathes of China earlier this year sparked [health warnings](#) in Japan as the smog spread across the ocean.

"[Air pollution](#) and climate change are common issues in the region," Japan's Environment Minister Nobuteru Ishihara told his counterparts in remarks carried by [public broadcaster](#) NHK.

"Apart from domestic countermeasures, it is indispensable for China, South Korea and other countries to cooperate in solving them."

Details of the cooperation were expected to be released later Monday.

Zhou Shengxian, China's minister for environmental protection, cancelled his attendance, citing a tight schedule after the earthquake in Sichuan last month.

But Japanese media reported the likely influence of a territorial dispute over the Japanese-controlled Senkaku islands in the East China Sea, which Beijing also claims and calls the Diaoyus.

Li Ganjie, China's vice minister for environmental protection, who attended in his place, said that there was "strong concern" in China about [environmental pollution](#).

"We wish to create a more beautiful environment in Asia by continuing cooperation with Japan and China," he said.

South Korea's Environment Minister Yoon Seong-Kyu told the meeting that the three-way cooperation on environmental issues had reached a "new turning point" with new governments in all three countries.

Relations between Tokyo and South Korea have also been strained by a separate territorial row over a Seoul-controlled chain of islets in the [Sea of Japan](#) (East Sea).

The meeting on air pollution, climate change and and environmental policy has been held since 1999.

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