

Beijing swelters under record-breaking run of extreme heat

July 19 2023, by Poornima WEERASEKARA



People in the Beijing wear protective clothing as the Chinese capital bakes under a record-breaking run of high temperatures.

Beijingers baked under crippling summer heat on Wednesday as China's capital kept up a record-breaking streak of four weeks of highs above 35

degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit).

The [extreme temperatures](#) forced delivery drivers to seek refuge under bridges, residents covered their faces and arms in [protective clothing](#) and tourists clasped mini electric fans outside the famous Forbidden City.

"At noon, it feels like the sun is roasting my legs, it feels like my skin is burning," said Qiu Yichong, 22, an [undergraduate student](#) visiting Beijing during her summer holiday.

Large swaths of Asia, Europe and North America have experienced deadly heatwaves in recent weeks, which scientists say are aggravated by rising [global temperatures](#) caused partly by the burning of fossil fuels.

Beijing broke a 23-year-old record on Tuesday with 27 consecutive days of temperatures above 35C, the China Meteorological Administration said.

The temperature recorded by Beijing's benchmark weather station in its southern suburbs soared higher still on Wednesday afternoon to 36.3C (97.3F).

"It feels like this year is hotter than ever," Han Weili, a delivery driver, told AFP.

"I take a bottle of iced water when I come out every day and try to keep myself hydrated to prevent heatstroke," she said.

Han, 38, is her family's main breadwinner after her husband suffered a [brain hemorrhage](#) last year and quit work.

"Sometimes when it is very hot, I feel a little confused or dizzy," she said, adding that she rests "near a river or under a bridge" or works when

it is cooler in the evening.

Her income depends on the number of deliveries she makes and she says there is no allowance for working in high-temperature conditions.



A man fans himself in an alley in Beijing as the Chinese capital bakes under a record-breaking run of high temperatures.

'Stay indoors'

Hundreds of visitors were seen lining up outside the historic Forbidden City, with children carrying small, portable blowers to keep cool.

In the narrow alleyways crisscrossing the old neighborhoods in central Beijing, elderly men were topless or sat with their undershirts rolled up, fanning themselves against the heat.

The scorching heat also led to higher levels of air pollution.

The Beijing government has urged the elderly to stay indoors and children to shorten outdoor playtime to reduce exposure to the heat and ground-level ozone pollution, a major component of the smog blanketing the city.

"I work from 7 am to 7 pm... I felt sleepy all the time in the first few days (of the heatwave)," said Li Yong, a security guard.

"I just drink more water and find a place with some shade to stand under," the 57-year-old said.

People are cranking up [air conditioning](#) in offices, homes and restaurants to stay cool, leading to a surge in energy demand, according to utility providers.

This creates a [vicious cycle](#) with more fossil fuels burnt, contributing to a warmer planet.

But air conditioning is a luxury for some in the Chinese capital.

"I only have a fan where I live," Li said.

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