



KERATAN AKHBAR

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Beijing to increase use of cloud seeding to relieve drought

BEIJING: China plans to increase its use of cloud seeding to relieve drought in key areas and lessen its impact on agricultural production, an official newspaper reported.

China has used weather modification techniques such as cloud seeding for decades, particularly in the arid north where much of the country's wheat is grown. The government also uses the technique to

ensure blue skies ahead of key events, such as the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics two years ago.

There is rising demand for weather modification to cushion the impact that drought and hailstorms pose to rural income and food supplies, the *China Daily* newspaper said yesterday, citing Zheng Guoguang, director of the China

Meteorological Administration.

Zheng acknowledged the technique was imperfect, saying it was at a "research-and-use" stage. Chinese scientists have acknowledged they cannot say exactly what effect they are having by blasting clouds with silver iodide.

The chemical is thought to help concentrate moisture in clouds, thereby producing rain or snow.

China has more than 20% of the world's population but less than 7% of its arable land, underscoring the need to maximise agricultural output. A drought in 2007, the worst in a decade, caused losses of 37.4 million tons of grain, out of an annual output of 500 million tons, *China Daily* said.

Last year, authorities ordered a record 840 flights in efforts to

increase rain in 3.6 million square kilometres – roughly one-third of Chinese territory. They also fired 116,000 rockets and 890,000 artillery shells.

Weather modification was expected to play a role in ensuring good weather during the World Expo in Shanghai this summer and the Asian Games in Guangzhou later in the year. – AP