

TAR experiences third warm winter in seven years

24 April 2007

(Xinhua) The Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) experienced its third warm winter in the last seven years between December 2006 and February 2007, with a temperature rise of nine degrees in some areas. The region reported an average temperature of minus three degrees Celsius between December and February, up 1.4 degrees from the average of minus 4.4 degrees Celsius based on data collected since 1965, said Ma Yanxian, spokeswoman and deputy head of the regional meteorological bureau. *"The average temperature in some parts of the Nagqu Prefecture, central Tibet, soared nine degrees Celsius from the historical benchmark of minus 4.4, the highest since 1965"*, she said. The temperature in Lhasa also rose by six degrees. Ma said most parts of the TAR reported temperature rises ranging from 0.6 to 2.9 degrees Celsius during the three-month period. The China Meteorological Administration's definition of a warm winter is a temperature rise of 0.5 degrees above the historical average. Most parts of TAR reported a 50-percent decline in rainfall, which measured less than one millimetre at 17 of the region's 32 meteorological stations between early December and the end of February. The warm and arid climate were to blame for several forest fires in Qamdo and Nyingchi prefectures and were likely to increase the risks of plant diseases and insect pests in the summer, Ma said.

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