

44 dead or missing in flood-stricken Chinese county



Citizens watch the flood on a bridge in Changsha, capital of central China's Hunan Province, July 2, 2017. Days of torrential rain in Hunan Province raised the water level of the Xiangjiang River, a major tributary of Yangtze River, to exceed its record flood level Sunday morning. (Xinhua/Long Hongtao)

A total of 44 people have died or are missing after floods hit Ningxiang County in central China's Hunan Province, local flood control headquarters said Friday.

Heavy downpours since June 22 have led to the area's worst natural disaster in 60 years.

About 815,000 people, or 56 percent of the county's population, suffered property damage in the floods, it said.

In south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, floods have left 26 dead and 8 missing since heavy rain started on July 1, according to the regional civil affairs department. More than 1.88 million people suffered losses in the disaster, which damaged 108,000 hectares of crops and flattened 6,102 houses. Direct economic losses have exceeded 7.8 billion yuan (1.15 billion U.S. dollars).

Torrential rain since late June has caused flooding along several tributaries of the Yangtze, China's longest river.

The level of the Xiangjiang River, a major tributary of the Yangtze, exceeded

its record level Sunday morning.

Since Saturday, reservoirs in the upper and middle reaches of the Yangtze have managed to control the flood, holding back more than 10 billion cubic meters of water, according to the Yangtze flood control and drought relief headquarters.

The efforts made by the Three Gorges Reservoir and upper reservoirs on the Jinsha River in the upper reaches of the Yangtze, and Yalong River, Jinsha's tributary, have greatly reduced water levels of rivers and lakes in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze, the headquarters said.

According to the headquarters, local water authorities have spent 100 million yuan repairing 42 sections of bank along the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze, which collapsed due to floods last year, the most severe since 1998.