

Over 100 trains suspended over downpour in C. China

Over 100 trains have been suspended after heavy rain flooded a tunnel on a key railway line through central China, according to railway authorities.

Water flowed into Liuyanghe Tunnel along the high speed railway between Beijing and Guangzhou early Thursday. The tunnel has been closed and maintenance crews are using equipment to pump out the water, Guangzhou Railway (Group) Corporation said.

Trains that pass through Hunan and Hubei provinces have been affected. As of 10 a.m. Thursday, 104 trains had been suspended.

Railway authorities have reminded passengers to stay up to date with information regarding the suspension.

In Hunan, heavy rain since on June 22 has killed 27 people with 8 still missing.

Police investigate Baidu self-driving car video



Baidu tested a self-driving vehicle on the fifth ring road in Beijing on Wednesday, with its chairman and CEO Robin Li sitting in the passenger seat.
[Photo/China Daily]

Beijing traffic police said Thursday that they will investigate footage showing a self-driving car developed by Chinese tech giant Baidu on the open

road.

At a meeting Wednesday, Li Yanhong, Baidu's CEO, live streamed while riding in a Baidu self-driving car on Beijing's fifth ring road.

The video went viral on social media, and caught the attention of traffic police. The public has since debated whether driverless cars should be allowed on the streets, as there are no clear regulations or laws covering their use.

Traffic police said they support technological innovation in driverless vehicles, but will investigate possible violations of existing traffic laws.

Baidu launched its autonomous car project in 2013, joining the race with Internet giants such as Google and Tesla Motors. The search engine giant said in 2016 that it plans to mass-produce driverless cars in five years.

[Polepark Road environmental improvements](#)



Late last year, [I highlighted](#) that the City Council had identified environmental improvements at Polepark Road as part of a number of welcome works taking place to upgrade areas in the West End.

Polepark was particularly welcome as [I had previously advised](#) the City Council the need for upgrade of the area to the back of the flats on the east side of Polepark Road.

The works were approved at the council's Neighbourhood Services Committee last month and I asked if the tenants' car park immediately north of the flats would be improved at the same time given its poor surface.

The council's Head of Housing and Communities has now updated me as follows :

"I can confirm that the car park area at this location is on the Housing Revenue Account. We have opened discussions with environment staff to ensure that we co-ordinate housing and environment works in this area so that the car park does not detract from the other works being planned."

Education money

It is clear from the reports of discussions within government and within the Conservative Parliamentary party that many think more money should be given to schools that have low funding levels today. There is general agreement to the idea of the pending reform, that a larger share of the money should go as a per pupil sum for each student at the school to reflect the basic costs of provision where ever it may be in the country and whatever the social background. There is also agreement among many that the better funded schools should not have cash taken away from them when the more lowly funded schools get more.

The Treasury clearly hoped that the new formula would take money from the generously funded and give to the poorly funded without major increases in total funding. It is never easy getting through these redistributational reforms, as the losers always speak more volubly than the winners. It looks as if on this occasion there will need to be some pump priming money as the formula is altered, to prevent big losers. It will also be needed to give sufficient to the winners for them to think they have made a reasonable gain.

Labour asked a Question in the House about this yesterday. The junior Minister, Mr Gibb, replied. He was unable to reveal more of the detail, as the government is still finalising its position on its response to the consultation concerning the new formula. I had a conversation with him afterwards to remind him of the position of Wokingham and West Berkshire.

Wokingham and West Berkshire schools remain at the low end of the table for per pupil money. It does not cost us less in Wokingham to educate a child than it does in the big cities. Teachers pay is based on national rates, whilst property costs are quite high. These matters need to be reflected in a common per pupil sum throughout the country which is a sufficiently high proportion of the total money awarded.

Meanwhile this week in the Commons Ministers have returned to explaining that there do have to be sensible controls on the total level of public spending, given the continuing deficit. More work is being done on spending priorities, and on raising the general level of efficiency and quality in public service. The answer to the need for better public services lies partly in economic growth generating more revenue, and partly in better management. Working smarter can be a win for taxpayers, keeping down cost, for service users, bringing up quality, and for employees, with better paid and more rewarding jobs. I raised these issues with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury when she answered a question about public sector pay yesterday.

China strengthens scientific research cooperation with B&R countries

The press conference on the International Symposium on Funding Science and People Cooperation for a Prosperous Belt and Road is held on July 4. [Photo by Wu Qiongjing/China.org.cn]

The press conference on the International Symposium on Funding Science and People Cooperation for a Prosperous Belt and Road was held on July 4.

A consensus was reached at the symposium held from July 3 to 4 on strengthening the cooperation on scientific research collaboration among Belt and Road countries and regions, and decided to build a framework to fund the cooperation of Belt and Road scientific talents, aiming to solve common challenges and boost the economic and social development of Belt and Road countries and regions.

Yang Wei, director and academician of the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC), said international cooperation becomes increasingly important now.

He added that the communication and exchanges, cooperative research, as well as working in different countries will boost the friendship, encourage mutual learning, facilitate the resolution of difficult problems, and will promote scientific innovation and economic growth of Belt and Road countries and regions. The communication among international scientific research personnel has deepened the cultural exchange among Belt and Road countries and regions, which lays a foundation for sustained cooperation.

Widespread praise over cooperation funding framework

Scientific research funding agencies from more than 30 countries and regions reached a joint declaration at the symposium, which demonstrates that they will deepen cooperation further, collaborate more in basic research, promote joint innovation among scientific research talents, so as to complement each other with respective advantages and resolve common problems.

The prospects depicted by the framework of funding the cooperation among Belt and Road scientific talents also received widespread praise from the representatives from different countries.

Professor Bernard Stewart, director of interdisciplinary research and international cooperation of Research Councils UK (RCUK), pointed out that RCUK has cooperated with NSFC for ten years. He said, it is a close and dynamic partnership between us, and the cooperation framework will help to deepen the cooperation between the U.K. and China as well as other Belt and Road countries and regions in agriculture, medicine, water resources, robots, big data and other fields in the future.

Professor Pavel Kabat, President and CEO of International Institute for

Applied Systems Analysis said, Belt and Road countries and regions have crucial significance, and by proposing this framework, China has taken a visionary move.

Sirimali Fernando, chairman of the National Science Foundation of Sri Lanka also regarded this framework as an excellent opportunity for Sri Lanka, a country with relatively weak foundation of scientific research and limited international partners in this field to escalate its capacity of scientific research overall.

Great attention to China's leadership in scientific research cooperation

Representatives at the symposium also attached great significance to China's leadership in scientific research cooperation among Belt and Road countries and regions. In an interview with China.org.cn, Elwyn Grainger-Jones, CEO of Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), said that research in agricultural science is crucial to the achievement of sustainable development goals, and the research of agricultural science among Belt and Road countries and regions has a bright prospect.

Dr. Liu Jian, chief scientist of the United Nations Environment Programme, pointed out that the successful convening of the symposium has testified China's strong leadership in international scientific research cooperation. The framework proposed by NSFC and science foundations of other countries will play a leading role in supporting the joint cultivation of talents.

China plays an irreplaceably leading role in promoting Belt and Road construction with scientific and technological innovation, Liu emphasized.

NSFC funded over 200 million yuan (US\$ 29.4 million) on cooperative projects with Belt and Road countries and regions in 2016, providing support for young scholars in China and abroad to carry out exchange events and cooperation on scientific research.