

China battles southern floods, endures northern heat wave

China is battling floods along the Yangtze River in the south while northern regions, including Beijing, endure a heat wave.

The first flood this year of the Yangtze River, the country's longest, is forming as water levels are rapidly rising in major tributaries in the middle and lower reaches, said the Yangtze River Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters Saturday.

The headquarters ordered the Three Gorges Reservoir of the Yangtze to reduce the flow of discharging to 18,000 cubic meters per second from 2 p.m. Saturday to relieve the flood pressure downstream.

Other upstream reservoirs also joined the flood control efforts.

Floods have already hit the Xiangjiang, Yuanjiang and Zishui rivers in central China's Hunan, the worst-hit province. The rain continues in Changsha, the provincial capital and other cities such as Xiangtan and Huaihua.

The level of the Xiangjiang River in Changsha stood at 38.6 meters at 4 p.m. Saturday, well above the warning level of 36 meters and only 57 cm lower than its highest record level, according to the Hunan Provincial Hydrological Bureau.

The level of the Zishui River in Taojiang County was only 38 cm lower than its record level in history, said the bureau.

At around 1 a.m. Saturday, a 20-meter stretch of the Taxi river, a small branch of the Zishui River, burst due to flood, according to a local official.

The Hunan flood control and drought relief headquarters raised the flood response from Grade III to Grade II on Saturday. The province has mobilized soldiers, officials and villagers, allocated funds and sent relief supplies to affected areas.

As of Saturday, the rain had caused an evacuation of 310,000 in Hunan.

"The water level is rising and my house is in danger of being submerged. I was relieved when I saw a rescue boat coming," said Zhou Changsong, who was evacuated Saturday afternoon from Chenxi County, where eight towns were flooded by the Yuanjiang River. Around 100,000 people have been evacuated.

Downpours also hit Hubei, Guizhou and Jiangxi provinces and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

In Jiangxi, which neighbors Hunan, seven people died and two were missing due

to flood in the past ten days, showed statistics with the provincial flood control headquarters.

About 440,000 were evacuated in Jiangxi. On Saturday morning, a landslide buried two residential buildings in a village in Xiushui County, but caused no casualties as all 39 residents had been displaced on Thursday.

More than 70 passenger trains passing Jiangxi Province were suspended from Saturday to Monday due to floods, said the Nanchang Railway Bureau in Jiangxi.

The State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters launched a Grade III emergency response plan Saturday and dispatched eight work teams to flood-stricken areas to guide relief work.

The National Meteorological Center (NMC) forecast Saturday afternoon rainstorms will hit Guangxi, Hunan, Jiangxi and Anhui from Saturday night to Sunday.

In north China, a heat wave affected Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Liaoning and Inner Mongolia, with temperatures reaching 35 to 37 degrees Celsius at 2 p.m. Saturday, said the center.

In Beijing, many residents chose to stay indoors over the weekend due to the hot weather.

The NMC forecast the heat wave will continue in the north until Tuesday. Some areas will see temperatures of up to 40 degrees Celsius in Inner Mongolia, Hebei and Shaanxi on Sunday.