

Inner Mongolian forest fire extinguished



About 4,000 firefighters from Inner Mongolia and neighboring Heilongjiang Province try to extinguish the lightning-induced fire. [Xinhua]

A lightning-induced fire engulfing 1,500 hectares of forest in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in north China has been put out, local authorities said.

The fire broke out Thursday. About 4,000 firefighters from Inner Mongolia and neighboring Heilongjiang Province, together with a dozen helicopters were dispatched to extinguish the blaze.

All open fire had been put out by 8 p.m. Saturday. The firefighters continue to search for smoke points.

The forest is part of the Greater Hinggan Mountains in north and northeast China.

According to firefighters, the Greater Hinggan Mountains have seen a longer period with high temperatures and severe drought this year, which has made it difficult for preventing and putting out fires.

China pledges enhanced heritage protection cooperation

A senior cultural official said Sunday that China should shoulder more responsibility for world heritage protection and promoting international cooperation.

With more inscriptions, comes greater responsibility and more duties, said Liu Yuzhu, head of China's State Administration of Cultural Heritage.

Liu's remark came after the country's Gulangyu historic international settlement was put on the UNESCO's world heritage list Saturday.

China will work closely with international organizations, promote the protection of world heritage and share its experiences, according to Liu.

In the meantime, China will continue its participation in the practices of world heritage protection, including international protection of Cambodia's Angkor Wat and helping Nepal restore a temple in Kathmandu's Durbar Square.

Liu also pledged further coordination and cooperation in protecting heritage sites with countries along the ancient Silk Road, the south Asia silk road and the ancient Maritime Silk Road.

In addition, Liu called for calm among Chinese regarding successful inscriptions, as the country still faces many problems in supervising, protecting and managing the heritage.

We should focus on improving our management, protection and preservation work, Liu said.

Gulangyu is the 52nd Chinese site inscribed on the list.

Overseas fugitive caught after 17 years at large

Liu Mengping has been arrested in late June for taking bribes, 17 years after first being listed as wanted, Beijing police confirmed Saturday.

Liu, a former accountant with a subsidiary of the China International Water and Electric Corporation, was put under investigation on June 2, 2000 for allegedly taking bribes. She had fled to Southeast Asia via Hong Kong.

Following unswerving search and investigation, and on learning of her recent

whereabouts, police arrested her on June 29.

Police give no further details.

The anti-graft authority in Beijing said that Liu's arrest proved again that overseas was no paradise for fugitives and giving themselves up was the only way to go.

Inner Mongolian forest fire spreads to 1,500 hectares

A lightning-induced fire in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in north China has engulfed 1,500 hectares of forest as of Saturday, but authorities believe the fire is still controllable.

About 3,000 firefighters from Inner Mongolia and neighboring Heilongjiang Province, together with 14 helicopters, are trying to extinguish the blaze. Another 1,000 firefighters are rushing to the scene to help.

The forest is part of the Greater Hinggan Mountains in north and northeast China.

According to firefighters, this year the Greater Hinggan Mountains have seen a longer period with high temperatures and severe drought, which has made it difficult to put out the fire.

Gulangyu island enters world heritage list

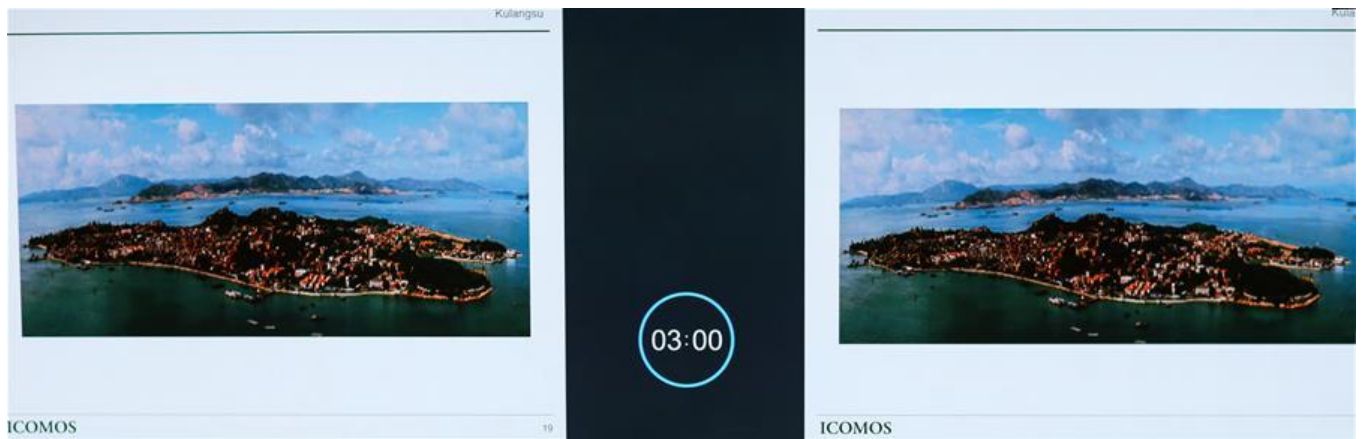


Photo taken on July 8, 2017 shows the session of the World Heritage Committee in Krakow, Poland. The 41st session of the World Heritage Committee on Saturday decided to put China's Gulangyu historic international settlement on the prestigious World Heritage List as a cultural site. So far, China has 52 sites inscribed to the List. (Xinhua/Chen Xu)

Gulangyu island in east China's Fujian Province, famous for its varied architecture and multicultural history, was included on the UNESCO World Heritage list Saturday.

The 41st session of the World Heritage Committee on Saturday decided to put China's Gulangyu historic international settlement on the prestigious World Heritage List as a cultural site. So far, China has 52 sites inscribed to the List.

Only a six-minute ferry ride from Xiamen, Fujian's dynamic economic and culture hub, Gulangyu has an area of about two square kilometers and is home to 20,000 residents.

A former international settlement, the island features 13 consulates, churches, hospitals, schools, and police stations, built by foreign communities from the middle to late 19th century.

In the early 20th century, the island attracted overseas Chinese elites, who returned and built private residences on the island, often with a mixture of eastern and western architectural styles.

Gulangyu has more than 2,000 intact historical buildings, making it one of the best-preserved international settlements in China.

Wu Yongqi, a historian on Gulangyu, said the styles developed here affected the architecture in southern Fujian and were brought to east and southeast Asia by Chinese immigrants.

"The island was home to an international community made up of local people, overseas Chinese and foreigners," Wu said. "It was a distinct combination and the integration of their cultures made the island unique."

A popular tourist destination, the island receives more than 10 million visitors per year.

"People often come to the island for its beautiful gardens, winding alleyways, pristine beaches and quiet lifestyle," Wu said. "However, the island's status as a world cultural heritage tells another story."

In its bid, Gulangyu listed 53 groups of representative historical buildings, four historical roads and seven representative natural landscapes.

"Better protection is what we want to achieve through the world heritage inscription," said Zheng Yilin, director of Gulangyu island management committee.

According to UNESCO, the inscription serves as a "magnet for international cooperation" and financial assistance for heritage conservation projects.

In preparation for the bid, Xiamen municipal government rolled out protection laws and regulations for Gulangyu, repaired damaged historic buildings, opened more cultural museums, and limited tourist numbers to the island.

"With the successful inscription, we are going to keep up with these efforts," Zheng said.

Island of music

Gulangyu has one of the highest pianos ownership ratios in China, with nearly 600 pianos on an island that is less than two square kilometers.

Many of China's most celebrated musicians have come from Gulangyu, and the island is nicknamed "piano island."

"When I was a child, the sound of piano could be heard everywhere on the island," said Fang Site, a 34-year-old local pianist. Her family was among the overseas Chinese who moved to the island in the early 1900s.

Fang said she grew up in a place with strong music traditions. At about six years old, she and many of her peers were sent to music schools on the island.

Her family, like many others on Gulangyu, gather weekly to hold a family concert, a tradition that persists to this day.

"The concert is a part of our lives, through which we connect with our families and express our love for music and life," Fang said.

Gulangyu has the first piano museum and only organ museum in China, both established by Hu Youyi, an Australian Chinese pianist and collector. The museums host important music festivals and contests regularly.

Fang is the curator of the organ museum and has received UNESCO inspectors to the museum, a landmark on Gulangyu and one of the 53 historical buildings.

"Music is an important part of Gulangyu's culture and my life. With the inscription, our music has a wider audience," she said. "Gulangyu's inscription provides a great opportunity for the preservation and promotion of music culture," Fang said.