

Two police missing while battling floods

Two police officers have gone missing after being sent to evacuate villagers from a flood-hit region of northeast China's Jilin Province on Friday.

The two, Cao Zhiyu and Wang Yansong, fell from their moving vehicle into floodwater at around 2:40 a.m. Friday, while driving over a bridge in Antu County, Yanbian Korean Prefecture.

The men were returning from evacuating villagers after torrential downpours since Thursday night caused two rivers to flood threatening the safety of nearby villages, said Ding Weicai, deputy chief of the local police bureau.

As of Saturday noon, their vehicle had been retrieved, but Cao and Wang had not been located, Ding said.

"The two officers, both born in the 1990s, had just graduated and started working. They were both diligent workers. We will find them no matter how much it costs," he said.

China sees fewer workplace accidents in H1

China's workplace safety record improved in the first half of 2017, with the number of accidents and fatalities both dropping, latest data from the country's work safety watchdog showed.

The number of workplace safety accidents fell 25.4 percent year on year in the first six months, while related fatalities went down 17.4 percent, according to Fu Jianhua, deputy head of the State Administration of Work Safety.

No "extremely severe accidents" occurred, which in China refers to those that cause more than 30 deaths, leave more than 100 severely injured or result in more than 100 million yuan (about 15 million U.S. dollars) in direct economic losses.

Despite regular calls by the government for more focus on work safety, frequent tragedies still occur. A lack of safety awareness, poor regulations and lax implementation of safety measures are among the factors leading to accidents.

Earlier this month, the Work Safety Committee of the State Council announced the start of a four-month nationwide inspection on workplace safety to close loopholes and prevent major accidents.

The inspection, running from July to October, covers all regions, all industries, and all types of enterprises, as well as crowded places across the country.

China's farmland slightly shrinks in 2016

China's total farmland area dropped slightly in 2016, while the amount of construction land went up, official data showed.

At the end of 2016, China had a total of 2.024 billion mu (about 1.349 million hectares) of farmland, down 1.153 million mu from the 2015 level, according to a survey by the Ministry of Land and Resources (MLR).

Meanwhile, an extra 8.09 million mu of land was used for construction land in 2016, up 4.4 percent year on year, a large part of which has been set aside for infrastructure construction, said the ministry.

In 2016, the amount of new land opened up for highway and railway construction rose 30.7 percent and 102.8 percent from a year ago, respectively, the MLR said.

China must retain at least 1.865 billion mu of farmland in 2020, under a new target set by the MLR in 2016, which is above a government red line of 1.8 billion mu.

11 dead, 9 injured in bus, semi-trailer collision

Eleven people have died and nine others were injured in the road accident Friday morning in north China's Hebei Province, authorities confirmed Saturday.

Eight people died at the scene and three others died later in hospital after a light bus carrying 19 people collided with a Shanxi-registered semi-trailer at 8:30 a.m. Friday on a national highway in Huangmei Township in the city of

Zhangjiakou.

One of the injured remains in a serious condition, said a spokesperson for the city government.

The victims were aged between seven and 70 years old, according to authorities.

The drivers of the two vehicles are being treated in hospital under police custody.

The cause of the accident is under investigation.

[China releases Yangtze environmental protection plan](#)

The Chinese government has released an environmental protection plan covering the Yangtze River Economic Belt, the latest move to protect the country's longest river from pollution.

The plan was jointly released by the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Water Resources.

It places an upper limit on the usage of water resources along the belt, said Zhao Yingmin, vice minister of environmental protection.

An ecological "red line" will be put in place to protect and restore the environment of key areas, Zhao said.

This is in line with government guidelines issued earlier this year on a nationwide ecological "red line" strategy that will place certain regions under mandatory and rigorous protection.

Water quality management will be based on a "bottom line" system to strengthen controls on pollution along the belt, especially at drinking water sources, according to Zhao.

The plan also demands improved responses to environmental emergencies and closer regional coordination, he said.

Stretching from southwest China's Yunnan Province to Shanghai, the Yangtze River Economic Belt covers nine provinces and two municipalities in an area of 2.05 million square kilometers.

In 2014, China made developing the economic belt a national strategy. The move was expected to boost development in riverside regions and provide new

growth stimuli for China's slowing economy.

Authorities have stressed that environmental protection should be a priority in the development of the belt, which accounts for more than 40 percent of the country's population and economic aggregate.