

CHOPPER PILOTS IN ACTION P.22 | CHINA ON THE FORTUNE 500 P.34

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## CAPITAL INUNDATED

Deluge causes death and destruction, raising questions about Beijing's outdated infrastructure

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Cover Photo: The flooded Wangchunyuan Community in Beijing's Chaoyang District on July 21 (CFP)



## Dealing With the Deluge

From noon on July 21 until early the following morning, Beijing was hit by the heaviest rains in 61 years, triggering floods and other natural disasters in some districts. Official statistics show the rainfall was the heaviest since the city started keeping records of weather conditions. About 1.9 million people were affected by the storm. The rain had caused 77 deaths as of July 26, and more than 50,000 people had been evacuated. Economic losses had exceeded 10 billion yuan (\$1.6 billion).

Dealing with the aftermath is a huge challenge for city managers and residents alike. We need to answer some questions raised by the terrible disaster.

The rain revealed a weakness in Beijing's ability to cope with emergencies. Before the severe weather, a special meeting is held to prepare for the rainstorm and form a relief team of 160,000 people: a very big operation. Nonetheless, the downpour led to massive property damage as well as scores of deaths. There is a problem in disaster warnings and implementation of relief efforts. Short messages, the media and the Internet were not fully utilized to give advance warning to the public. As a result, citizens were not prepared to cope with the impending rainstorm.

We need to address questions such as how to help the most vulnerable, like children and elderly people, protect themselves in disastrous weather conditions. We should also consider providing a free toll to drivers on expressways and determine what actions should be taken by public transportation companies and businesses to provide shelter to those stranded by natural disasters.

Beijing residents are used to seeing water accumulate in some streets during the rainy season. These hazardous conditions have not been solved in time, and the latest heavy rain again revealed this problem. As a result, the whole city's drainage system is unable to function in heavy rains. We should learn from the drainage systems in Japan and Europe.

The severe damage from the storm has dealt a heavy blow to Beijing's image as China's capital city and hampered its efforts to develop into an international metropolis. Nevertheless, we are happy to see an improvement in the sense of community among the residents. Particularly, the public's sense of responsibility for others and their interest in public affairs has increased.

In the rainstorm, Beijing netizens organized volunteers on micro-blogs to pick up stranded travelers from the airport and take them to the city for free. Some residents set aside their wariness toward strangers and published their home address online to welcome people to stay overnight at their homes. Some commercial institutions posted notices on the Internet offering free accommodation and food to those stuck in the rain. People from different walks of life clung together during this difficult time. This warms our hearts and makes us proud of Beijing. ■

### WRITE TO US

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Please provide your name and address along with your submissions. Submissions may be edited.

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## Water Fall

Liujiaxia Hydropower Plant opens the floodgates on July 25. On that day, the water level of Liujiaxia Reservoir reached 1,724.15 meters with a rushing flow of 1,600 cubic meters per second. The heavy rainfall ushered in the Yellow River Basin's major flood period. To ensure safety during the flood, a total of 5 hydropower generating units were kept running at full capacity.

Meanwhile, heavy rainstorms continued to pound the upper reaches of the Yangtze River as the peak flood level surpassed that of 1998, setting a record high this year.

Several areas of China have suffered from continuous torrential rains this summer, causing severe economic losses.

**“We must adhere to the guidelines, principles and policies set since the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), enshrine the spirit of reform and innovation into every aspect of governing and push forward the drive toward reform and opening up more consciously and more steadfastly.”**

Chinese President Hu Jintao calling on officials to carry out reform and opening up at the opening session of a workshop for ministerial officials and provincial heads in Beijing on July 23, ahead of the CPC's upcoming 18th National Congress

**“The newly established Sansha military garrison is responsible for defense mobilization, militia reserves, coordination of the relationship between the garrison and local government as well as the city guard, support for the city's disaster rescue and relief work, and supervision of militia and reserve troops in military actions.”**

Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman Yang Yujun at a press conference of the ministry in Beijing on July 26

**“It did not feel like I was driving a car. It was more like sailing on a boat. There were waves all around, and I was very nervous thinking about what would happen if the car broke down.”**

Beijing resident Yuan Xin, talking about his experience driving home during the heaviest rain in 61 years that hit Beijing on July 21

**“A few universities claim the Ministry of Education had authorized them to set the admission grades based on gender. We hope for verification from the authorities.”**

Lu Xiaquan, a lawyer who drafted a letter to the Ministry of Education for an NGO focusing on women's rights, urging authorities to look into allegations that several colleges have lowered their minimum entrance exam scores only for boys





**FOLK CUSTOMS** People dance at the 13th Sham-bha-la Tourism Festival on July 24 in Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in northwest China's Gansu Province

## Homicide Charge

Bogu Kailai and Zhang Xiaojun were recently charged with intentional homicide by the Hefei Municipal Procuratorate in Anhui Province, Xinhua News Agency learned from authorities on July 26.

The municipal prosecuting body filed the charges with the Hefei Municipal Intermediate People's Court. The prosecuting body informed the two defendants and the family members of the victim of their litigation rights during the investigation period. The prosecuting body also interrogated the two defendants and heard the opinions of the defense team.

Investigation results show that Bogu Kailai, one of the defendants, and her son Bo

Guagua had conflicts with the British citizen Neil Heywood over economic interests. Worrying about Neil Heywood's threat to her son's personal safety, Bogu Kailai along with Zhang Xiaojun, the other defendant, poisoned Heywood to death.

Bogu Kailai is the wife of Bo Xilai, former Party chief of Southwest China's Chongqing Municipality and a former member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

In April, the CPC Central Committee suspended Bo from his posts at the committee and its Political Bureau because "Bo is suspected of being involved in serious violations of discipline." Bo is under investigation by

## Leaders of Sansha City

**Xiao Jie** was elected mayor of the newly established Sansha City, and **Fu Zhuang** the director of the standing committee of Sansha Municipal People's Congress in the first session of the first Sansha Municipal People's Congress held on Yongxing Island, the government center of Sansha, in south China's Hainan Province on July 23.



Fu Zhuang

Forty-five deputies to the municipal people's congress attended the session to cast their votes.

Fu, 56, was deputy director of the Hainan Provincial Civil Air Defense Office before he was elected. Xiao, 50, was head of the Hainan Provincial Agriculture Department and Party secretary of the Hainan Academy of Agricultural Sciences before his new post.



Xiao Jie

the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection.

## Shantytown Renovation

China had allocated 6.5 billion yuan (\$1.02 billion) from the central budget to fund the country's shantytown renovation projects, the Ministry of Finance said on July 22.

"The money will be used to fund the government's shantytown renovation scheme, including the relocation of shantytown residents and construction of new houses and infrastructure facilities," the ministry said in a statement.

The amount brings the Central Government's total investment in the scheme to 27.7 billion yuan (\$4.34 billion) this year. The plan is expected to benefit 1.9 million urban households nationwide.

## Registration Network

Chinese authorities have ended the practice of requiring manual marriage registration by setting up a national network and database for marriage registration covering all 31 provincial-level regions around the end of June this year.

A local marriage network and database has also been set up in each provincial-level region to offer online marriage registration and verify individuals' marital status based on national data.

Civil affairs authorities were working to update data for the national network, the Ministry of Civil Affairs announced on July 24.

**ANCIENT ART** European snuff bottles made in the 18th century are shown at an exhibition that kicked off in the Taipei Palace Museum in Taiwan on July 25





**WELCOME TO THE SHOW** American visitors watch robot performances at the opening of the 2012 Shanghai International Youth Science and Technology Expo on July 21

The ministry plans to exchange and share marital information with foreign affairs departments and relevant agencies in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan in the future in order to set up a national marital status database for all of the country's citizens.

## School Merger Control

The Ministry of Education has issued a circular banning the "blind" closures and mergers of rural public schools over concerns regarding road safety and students' commute times.

County-level governments must work out feasible plans for the locations of their elementary and primary schools in accordance with local conditions, according to a circular issued by the ministry on July 22.

Chinese authorities have been making efforts to optimize educational resources in rural areas since 2002, urging schools to reassemble or merge in order to distribute education more fairly.

Higher enrollment in urban schools and a decreasing birth rate in rural areas have contributed to the efforts, the circular said.

However, overcrowding and long commute times remain a problem for rural students. Many also worry about traffic safety and boarding conditions at the schools, particularly after a string of school bus accidents and food poisoning incidents since late last year.

The circular said that students' commutes should be within 40 minutes.

## New AIDS Treatment

A drug typically used to treat AIDS-triggered lung infections may be able to prevent the reproduction of HIV and possibly provide a new method for the control and elimination of the virus, Chinese scientists said on July 19.

A research team led by Shen Binghui, a life science professor at Zhejiang University in east China's Zhejiang Province, found that a drug containing pentamidine can cut the life cycle of HIV and prevent the reproduction of

the virus that causes AIDS.

HIV has an incubation period of 10 years on average, during which the virus infects immune cells and uses the cells and proteins to reproduce and spread, gradually damaging the immune system. Symptoms appear in the form of AIDS when the body loses its ability to fight the virus and other diseases that would ordinarily be eliminated by a healthy immune system.

Research indicates that a kind of human protein called FEN-1 has a decisive function in the reproductive process of HIV.

Shen said that his team found that the drug can effectively prevent the reproduction of HIV by destroying the protein. The virus can no longer cause any damage to the immune system once it cannot reproduce, and a small amount of HIV can even be eliminated by a healthy immune system.

## Sci-fi Saga in English

*The Three Body* trilogy, one of the most popular Chinese-language science fiction series, will be published in English soon, a publishing company said on July 20.

The Chinese edition of the three-part saga by award-winning Liu Cixin has sold 400,000 copies, according to China Educational Publications Import and Export Corp. Ltd., which will cooperate with *Science Fiction World* magazine to release the English version.

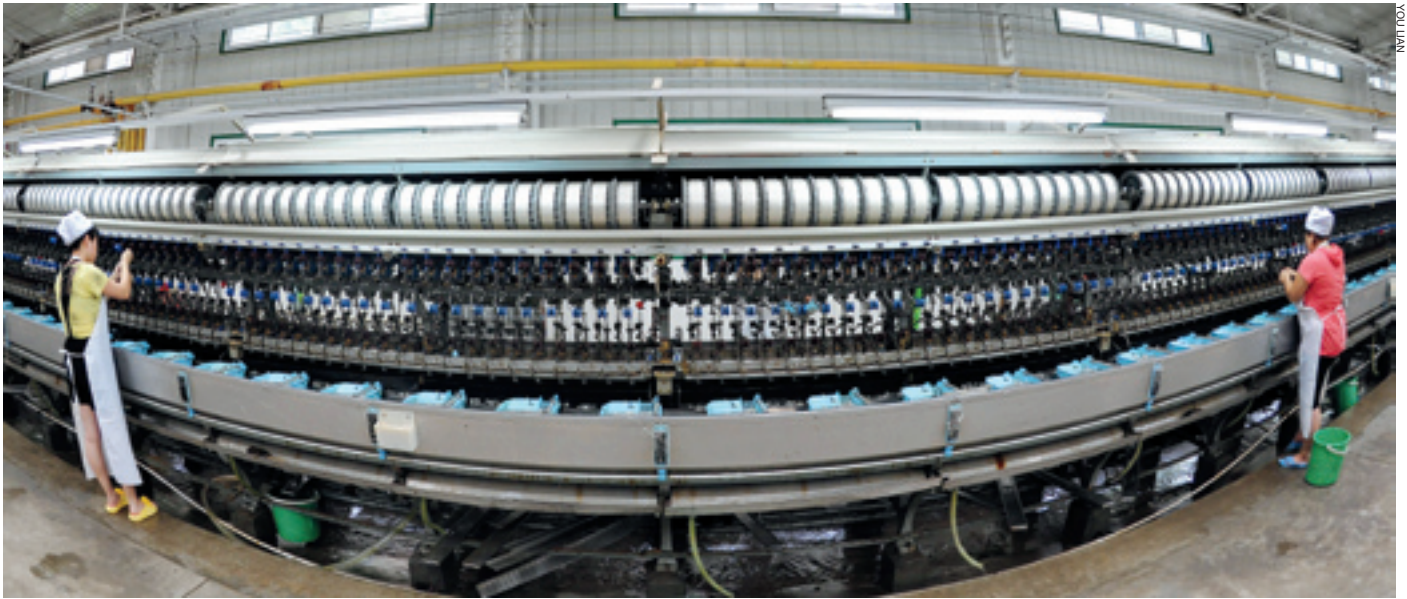
The trilogy depicts the human race's centuries-long contacts and conflicts with an alien civilization hailing from a three-star system. Its finale, *Dead End*, came out in 2010.

The novel will be available to Western readers both in paper and digital versions, according to the company.



**NEW ATTRACTION**  
A buyer shows off his newly purchased New iPad at an Apple Store in Beijing on July 20, the day the new tablet device hit stores in China





**SILK WAY** Workers process silk in a factory in Qinglong County, Hebei Province, on July 23. In Qinglong, silkworm breeding brings in more than 3,000 yuan per *mu* (1 hectare = 15 *mu*)

## Sanguine Job Situation

China's urban registered unemployment rate stood at 4.1 percent at the end of June, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (MOHRSS) said on July 25.

The rate remained unchanged for the eighth consecutive quarter during the April-June period, and rested below the government's 4.6-percent annual target set for this year.

China created 6.94 million new jobs in urban areas in the first half, fulfilling 77 percent of its annual target of creating 9 million new jobs, said Yin Chengji, spokesman of MOHRSS.

A total of 2.94 million laid-off workers were reemployed in the first six months, meeting 59 percent of the annual target to have 5 million unemployed workers move back into jobs.

The country's central and western regions were a major force in creating jobs in the first half. Labor-intensive industries have been

gradually moving to the central and western areas from eastern coastal regions in recent years, as part of the country's efforts to upgrade its industries.

## Trade Remedy Abuse

The Ministry of Commerce on July 23 repeated its calls for the EU to avoid abusing trade remedy measures to disrupt bilateral trade, after the EU's highest court recently ruled in favor of a Chinese enterprise.

"For a long time, the European Commission has been abusing the discretionary power and misusing relevant laws in its trade investigations, which have led to unjustified trade remedy measures," said a statement posted on the ministry's website.

The ministry said as an important member of the WTO, the EU should strictly observe trade rules.

The remarks came in response to a court ruling that rejected an appeal by the EU Council to impose anti-dumping duties on imports of the herbicide glyphosate produced by China's Zhejiang Xinan Chemical (Xinanchem) because of the Chinese Government's minority stake in the company.

The ruling said the state's control over the general meeting of Xinanchem's shareholders did not automatically exclude the company from the benefit of market economy treatment, marking a landmark victory for Chinese companies seeking market economy treatment in Europe.

## Rare Earth Protection

China will continue to protect its rare earth resources while working to solve disputes with other countries on its rare earth policies within the WTO framework.

"In any case, the Chinese Government

## Numbers

# 47.33 million

The number of people subscribing to third-generation (3G) mobile phone services in China increased by 47.33 million in the first half of this year, said the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

# 598%

Taobao, China's largest online shopping site, said the number of hammer sales increased by 598 percent, and the number of flashlights and lifejackets sold increased nearly 20 times from July 21-23 after the heavy rains and flooding in Beijing on July 21.





YANG SHIYAO

**OCEANIC TITAN** The offshore wind turbine installation vessel produced by COSCO Shipyard Group Co. Ltd. is named *Sea Installer* in Qidong, Jiangsu Province, on July 24

## Tea Time With Economist

**Mao Yushi**, an 84-year-old economist at Unirule Institute of Economics, had tea with six people in a tea house in Chengdu, capital city of southwest China's Sichuan Province, on July 16. The six people won the chance to drink tea with Mao and his wife in a bid of 259,000 yuan (\$40,481) in an online auction. They asked questions concerning international trade, education, inflation, housing prices and even the value of life at the tea table. The money raised from the auction will support academic research at Unirule Institute of Economics.

Mao has been compared to Warren Buffett, the legendary American investor who has raised more than \$11.5 million in his past 13 annual lunch auctions. Buffett hosted a record-breaking bid of \$3,456,789 this year. The money raised from these auctions is used to help the poor and homeless.

Born into a family of scholars in 1929 in Nanjing, capital city of east China's Jiangsu Province, Mao is one of the most influential Chinese economists. His father, Mao Yixin, is a railway mechanics engineer and his uncle, Mao Yisheng, is an outstanding bridge engineer. Mao graduated from the Department of Mechanical Engineering of Shanghai Jiao Tong University in 1950 and worked at Tsitsihar Railway Administration as an engineer after graduation. He retired from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 1993 and established Unirule Institute of Economics with four other economists.



will surely provide reasonable protection for rare earth resources and ensure environmental protection and sustainable development while making use of the resources," said Zhu Hongren, chief engineer of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, on July 25.

The remarks came after the WTO on July 23 established a panel to consider China's exports of rare earths, tungsten and molybdenum following complaints brought by the United States, the EU and Japan over China's export restrictions of those materials.

Zhu said China is willing to hold discussions and carry out full consultations within the WTO framework to solve the disputes.

"Some countries with rich rare earth resources have not mined their own land for environment protection or other reasons, but made groundless accusations against China and repeatedly ignored the widely-known pollution caused by rare earth exploitation in the country," Zhu said.

## Bond Agreement

The Bank of Indonesia and the People's Bank of China signed an agreement on July 21 to enable the Bank of Indonesia to invest in China's inter-bank bond market.

The Indonesian central bank has already started investing in the nation's inter-bank bond market.

The People's Bank of China said that it welcomes the Indonesian investment and believes the move will boost financial cooperation between the two countries.

As part of the country's overall plan to promote the yuan's use as a global reserve currency, China has allowed overseas financial institutions to invest in its domestic inter-bank bond market as part of a trial program implemented in 2010 to widen investment channels for overseas yuan funds.

Under the program, yuan accumulated

overseas through central bank currency swaps, trade settlement or yuan investment can be used to invest in China's inter-bank bond market.

## Overseas Acquisition

Sany Heavy Industry, a leading Chinese manufacturer of construction machinery, announced on July 24 that it has fully acquired Intermix GmbH, a German truck mixer maker.

Sany spent 8.1 million euros (\$9.72 million) to buy all of Intermix from its founder Hans-George Stetter on July 19 through its subsidiary Putzmeister, a German concrete machinery manufacturer, according to a Sany statement.

The acquisition will expand Putzmeister's product portfolio, extend its industry chain and better collaborate with Sany's existing business.

Intermix, founded in 1984, is the third largest manufacturer of truck mixers in the world.

# 20%

The China Securities Regulatory Commission said it is considering cutting stock transaction fees by around 20 percent in a bid to boost investor confidence.

# 10,000

High school graduates from impoverished counties are given preferential treatment in this year's college admission plan. More than 10,000 graduates from these counties will benefit, according to the Ministry of Education and other Central Government agencies.





XINHUA/APP

## SPAIN

A wildfire approaches trucks in La Jonquera in northeast Spain on July 22. The fire, whipped up by strong winds, spread rapidly across the Alt Emporda region near the French border



XINHUA/APP

Italian archaeologists work on the burial site of Lisa Gherardini, the wife of a wealthy silk merchant who inspired Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting *Mona Lisa*, inside the medieval Convent of Saint Ursula in Florence on July 17

## ITALY







XINHUA/AFEP

## THE UNITED STATES

A woman and her daughter attend a memorial ceremony near the Century 16 movie theater in Aurora, Colorado, on July 21. The day before, a gunman opened fire on audiences in the cinema, resulting in 14 deaths with another 57 injured



XINHUA/AFEP

## GUATEMALA

Clowns pose for the camera in the historic center of Guatemala City during the Fourth Latin American Clown Congress on July 24



XINHUA/AFEP

A vendor looks at traditional wind bells at the annual Wind Bell Bazaar in Kawasaki, suburban Tokyo, on July 22. Some 30,000 wind bells from all over Japan were on display

## JAPAN

XINHUA/AFEP



A newly born marmoset is fed by a zoo keeper at the zoo in Eberswalde, eastern Germany, on July 25. Since the mother could not feed the baby, it is now being raised by zoo staff

## GERMANY



COVER STORY

# RAIN HAVOC

Beijing suffers from the heaviest rain in six decades  
By Li Li, Yuan Yuan & Yin Pumin







TRAFFIC IN RAIN: Passengers and vehicles are stranded by floodwaters near Guangqumen Bridge on the East Second Ring Road in downtown Beijing on July 21





NOWHERE TO GO: On July 22, many passengers remain stranded in the Beijing Capital International Airport

The heaviest rain in six decades struck Beijing on July 21, leaving an average of 170 mm of precipitation across the entire city and 225 mm in the urban center. With an average annual precipitation of only 585 mm, the 16 hours of nearly constant downpour wreaked havoc on Beijing's infrastructure.

The Beijing Flood Control Headquarters said on July 26 that at least 77 people were killed in rain-triggered disasters and accidents throughout the city.

Among them, 66 had been identified, including five people who died while carrying out rescue work, according to Pan Anjun, a spokesman for the headquarters.

Of the other 61 victims—36 men and 25 women—46 drowned and five perished from electric shock. Collapsed buildings took three lives and the death toll from mudslides was two. Traumatic shock, falling objects and lightning killed two, two and one, respectively.

Pan said that a further sharp increase in the death toll was unlikely because the search for missing persons was drawing to an end. "But we will not give up searching just yet," he said.

Most of the bodies were found in subur-

ban districts, including 38 bodies that were recovered in the hardest-hit suburban district of Fangshan.

Official statistics show that about 1.9 million people in 13 of Beijing's 16 districts and counties were affected by the torrential rains, which also incurred 11.64 billion yuan (\$1.82 billion) in economic losses. A total of 57,000 residents had been relocated citywide, including 20,990 in Fangshan alone. Hit by two mudslides, road traffic in Fangshan's 12 towns and townships was disrupted and mobile telecommunication services and Internet access were cut off in six townships.

As many downtown streets and major thoroughfares were transformed into miniature canals within minutes, countless motorists had to abandon their broken-down vehicles in rapidly submerging streets to run for their lives. A 34-year-old man drowned in his sport utility vehicle when stranded in a low-lying stretch of the East Second Ring Road. Rescuers eventually pulled the car out of 3 meters of water.

The rains have caused serious damage to roads and bridges in Beijing, including 31 cave-ins. As water rose above 30 cm in

at least 30 road sections, 85 bus routes were either adjusted or suspended. After water gushed into 12 subway stations, subway services were also partially interrupted.

Trains traveling on eight lines between Beijing and other cities were suspended as sections of railways were soaked in water. More than 500 flights out of Beijing were canceled or delayed.

As of July 24, auto insurance claims related to the rains, with an estimated value totaling 260 million yuan (\$40.75 million), had been filed, as well as asset insurance claims of 270 million yuan (\$42.32 million), according to statistics released by the Beijing Municipal Insurance Regulatory Commission on July 26.

The Beijing Municipal Commission of Rural Affairs said that agriculture suffered total economic losses of nearly 450 million yuan (\$70.47 million) from the rain and ensuing flash floods and 2,867 hectares of vegetable fields were submerged. Claims made by farmers for flooded farmland and lost livestock were estimated at 71.8 million yuan (\$11.24 million).

Torrential rains ravaged 22 provincial-level regions in the country since July 20,





**LONG RESCUE EXPRESS:** Workers and soldiers pump water out of a submerged section of the Beijing-Hong Kong-Macao Expressway the day after the flood on July 22

killing at least 111 and leaving another 47 missing, the Ministry of Civil Affairs said on July 24.

As of 2 p.m. on July 24, natural disasters triggered by the downpours had affected nearly 9.2 million people in 353 counties and forced the evacuation of nearly 1.18 million people, the ministry said.

### Emergency relief

As Beijing was suffering from the deluge, Weibo, a Chinese micro-blog, played a very important role in providing help to people in need.

With more than 80,000 people stranded in the Beijing Capital International Airport, Wang Lu, a 29-year-old resident, initiated a “free ride” campaign. Wang posted on his Weibo page at 10:32 p.m. on July 21, calling volunteers driving private cars to the airport to pick up passengers for free.

Within two hours, more than 300 people joined him and drove to the airport. Police officers in the airport opened a green lane for the free-ride cars and helped passengers aboard. “I was deeply touched by what they did,” said passenger Qing Qing. “I never thought I could get out of the airport in such heavy rain, as buses operated by the airport couldn’t work and only a few taxis came to the airport.”

Throughout the night, volunteers picked up more than 500 passengers from the airport.

“A group of primary students and teachers got trapped in a school in Fangshan due to flood caused by heavy rains,” said micro-blogger Genqin in a post at 7:14 p.m. on July 21, asking for help.

After receiving the information, Beijing’s fire departments immediately dispatched a rescue

team of 50 firefighters. Within one hour, all the students and teachers were rescued.

A total of 3,200 soldiers and more than 4,000 traffic police were mobilized for rescue and evacuation missions across Beijing on July 21. More than 12,000 drainage workers and water utility workers pumped out nearly 1.4 million cubic meters of water.

The city’s sanitation workers also went above and beyond the call of duty to clean up the mess caused by the flooding. One sanitation worker was spotted submerging himself

almost completely to clear a blocked sewage drain on Baiyi Road in Haidian District.

Other workers were seen acting as “human road signs” near the Beitaping Bridge, standing in deep pools and guiding vehicles to evade manholes, as a lot of manhole covers were forced out by underground water pressure.

A 900-meter-long section of the Beijing-Hong Kong-Macao Expressway accumulated 200,000 cubic meters of floodwaters after a nearby dike broke following hours of continuous rain, an amount equivalent to a small reservoir, ►►



**CAR IN THE WAY:** A taxi swept by torrential rains on July 21 is found covered with debris





MOVING AWAY: A car fords deep waters to find a safer place to park

and dozens of vehicles were submerged beneath an average of four meters of water.

Divers from fire departments and the Bluesky rescue team of the Beijing Red Cross Foundation rushed to the flooded road section and started search and rescue work in the rain. The divers worked 10 hours continuously in the cold, muddy water.

"The underwater visibility was nearly to zero and we could only position and count the submerged autos with our bare hands. Most of us were cut by the broken glass," said Wang Liang, a member of the Bluesky rescue team.

"With one hand protecting my face, I used the other fist to pull the mud underground and move forward. A robe was linking my waist and other crew members on the boat," said another diver Hu Xipeng.

With the efforts of over 500 rescuers, a 1-km-long drainage canal was dug to drain the floods into the groundwork of an under-construction sewage treatment plant nearby.

Traffic on the Beijing-Hong Kong-Macao Expressway resumed on July 24 after divers removed 81 stranded vehicles.

## Lessons to learn

Shocked by the huge casualties in the rains on July 21, Zheng Yuanjie, a well-known author of children's books, said in a Weibo post that if the authorities had sent out warnings promptly, people's lives might have been saved.

In fact, the authorities had been preparing for a plan for the storm a week before and issued rainstorm alert warnings prior to the downpours, according to the Beijing Meteorological Bureau. However, many residents said they did not receive any warning

messages and some other complained that the early warnings were too vague and hoped for detailed explanation of the disasters behind the warnings.

"While issuing warnings, the government should also warn residents to stay indoors through text messages and inform drivers of flooded road sections," said Shi Anbin, a professor at Tsinghua University.

In response, Qu Xiaobo, Deputy Director of the Beijing Meteorological Bureau, said on July 22 that it was technically impossible to send so many short messages within a short time, as there are limited base stations in Beijing.

However, Qu's comments were denied by mobile network operators, which said that there are no obstacles in sending short messages *en masse*.

"The ultimate problem, however, is not whether the authorities have sent text messages. Even if everybody received a text, they would still have to face a problematic drainage system that caused flooding in the city," said Zhang Xin, an associate professor at the School of Public Administration of Renmin University of China.

Zhang called on the authorities to reflect on the infrastructure and city planning and hold accountable departments that fail to perform their assigned function according to the emergency response plans.

Once again, the question of the quality of the capital's infrastructure, especially its drainage system that has long been criticized as insufficient to cope with the rainfall in recent years, was brought to the front stage.

During the downpours on July 21, transportation in the lower areas of the city was paralyzed, especially in some underpasses

with poor drainage systems. Deep water was logged at 52 sites in downtown areas, including many underpasses.

Many skyscrapers have been erected and densely populated communities have been built in recent years due to a buoyant property market. However, the drainage system has not been upgraded accordingly and remains at a low standard, city planning experts complain.

According to the Beijing Water Authority, Beijing's drainage system was designed to cope with precipitation of 36-56 mm per hour. However, the city received 170 mm of precipitation on average on July 21, while the urban area saw an average of 225 mm during the 16-hour deluge.

Beijing's drainage system is made up mainly of old facilities. Some key drains even date back to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). When rain is too heavy, administrators have to order the opening of drainage covers to allow floodwaters to subside faster.

"Beijing's drainage network is already





outdated, although a lot of repair work has been done to maintain it," said Zhang Junfeng, founder of the non-government water resource watchdog Happy Water Journeys.

Dai Shenzhi, a professor at the College of Architecture and Urban Planning of Shanghai-based Tongji University, said that as there is less natural vegetation to absorb rain, more urban development increases the risk of flooding. "It would be much more feasible to allocate areas of wetland to be used as overflows to guard against floods," Dai said.

Echoing Dai's views, Zhang said that the country's obsession with rapid development has many local governments paying little attention to building wetlands, as it won't result in economic benefits.

The design of underpasses in Beijing has also become the target of public complaints.

"The design standards of underpasses are poor because they were constructed in the 1980s," said Zheng Jiang, Deputy General Manager of Beijing Drainage Group in a press



OUT OF THE MUD: The interior of a previously submerged bus is coated with mud

release on July 22. "It makes our underpass drainage system vulnerable."

According to him, many of Beijing's 78 existing underpasses have a limited pumping

capacity and are capable of draining away water only if the rainfall is less than 30 mm an hour, making traffic jams in rainy weather a regular sight.

Pan Anjun, Deputy Director of the Beijing Water Authority, said that thorough examinations of underpasses will be conducted, and upgrading plans will be made for every one of them to improve drainage.

According to a report released by the Beijing Drainage Group in early July, all the existing underpasses will be reconstructed by the end of 2015. More powerful pumps will be installed and adjustable reservoirs will be built for some underpasses.

"One solution to improve the poor drainage system in Beijing is to gradually upgrade the underground conduits and design standards," said Liu Dongwei, chief architect of the China Institute of Building Standard Design and Research. "But it's not a job that will be completed soon."

Liu suggested that the new design standards should be implemented as part of the whole city development plan, and more permeable materials should be adopted in more communities.

"As a megalopolis, Beijing is a combination of old and new," Mayor Guo Jinlong told national broadcaster CCTV on July 22, the day after the torrential rain. "The storm proved that the city's infrastructure facilities are still weak. We will continue to update our emergency plans, improve the construction of infrastructure facilities, upgrade our ability to mobilize rescue staff and promote people's safety awareness in the future." ■



TO THE RESCUE: Rescuers evacuate children from a flood-ravaged school in Beijing's Fangshan District on July 22

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