

Communities come together for disaster relief

Several cities throughout the North China province endured extreme flooding, which were caused by heavy rainfall last week



By YUAN SHENGGAO

Officials, residents and volunteers were intensifying their efforts to relieve damages caused by a severe flood in North China's Shanxi province, in the hopes of bringing local life to normal as soon as possible.

From Oct 2 to 7, the average precipitation across the province reached 119 millimeters, with cities including Taiyuan, Yangquan, Lyuliang, Jinzhong and Linfen exceeding 150 mm. Some areas in those cities saw more than 200 mm, with the largest amount reaching 285.2 mm in Daning county in the city of Linfen, according to local officials.

The drainage basin of Fenhe, the second-largest river in Shanxi and a branch of the Yellow River, was among the hardest-hit regions.

At the lower stream of the river, peak flood volume surpassed 1,000 cubic meters per second. That figure is the largest peak flood volume in the past 40 years, according to local media reports.

Hejin, a city at the lower reaches of Fenhe, took on the peak of the river's flooding measured at 1,000 cu m per second on Oct 9, according to Zhang Tingwu, head of the city's emergency response bureau.

"This is a sharp contrast compared to its normal runoff volume of



Rescuers in Jishan county repair a section of an embankment that was washed away by floodwaters of the Fenhe River. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

less than 30 cu m," Zhang said. "And the width of flow has increased from less than 10 meters to more than 100 meters."

To prevent the risk of embankment breaking, a strong force of rescue teams — with its members including officials, residents and volunteers — had been along the river for three consecutive days since Oct 8. Their missions included mon-

itoring water conditions and enhancing the embankment.

Zhao Guobin, a resident in the village of Dongguan, said he had been patrolling the bank for about 12 hours with his 40-plus colleagues.

"Every two people were responsible for monitoring a section of about 100 meters," Zhao said. "I walked about 8 kilometers during the night."

In Jishan, a county neighboring

Hejin, there were 12 emergency response teams working along the Fenhe River. Team members were on duty 24 hours a day in three shifts to ensure that every emerging situation could be dealt with on time.

Since the flooding began on Oct 2, governments at various levels in Shanxi have responded quickly to all kinds of emergencies.

According to Wang Qirui, head of

the Shanxi Department of Emergency Management, heavy rains have triggered disasters including landslides and flooding that have affected more than 1.75 million people in 76 counties, districts and cities. They have also caused more than 5 billion yuan (\$773 million) in economic losses. Fifteen people have died as a result of the flooding and three are missing.

About 19,500 houses have collapsed and around 120,100 people have been relocated to safer places. The rains and floods damaged about 238,460 hectares of grain crops.

The provincial department of emergency management and the Shanxi Department of Finance allocated a fund of 50 million yuan for disaster relief. The finance department, the Shanxi Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and the Shanxi Department of Water Resources set aside another 50 million yuan for emergency rescue.

According to Li Guishun, an official at the Shanxi Department of Transport, the total length of flood-damaged highways reached 6,021 km.

The department has mobilized nearly 69,000 people and more than 13,000 sets of machines to repair the roads since the beginning of this month. By Oct 11, highway traffic in Shanxi was basically back to normal, Li said.

As floods can cause contagious diseases, the Shanxi Health Commission warned that measures should be taken to disinfect flooded areas.

The commission has dispatched teams of medical workers to help to treat injured residents and patients in disaster-hit regions in the province, according to the commission's deputy chief Feng Lizhong. He added that the medical teams would also give instructions to residents on disease prevention.

Wang Pei contributed to this story.

Visitors, locals revel in patriotic sites of Shanxi

By YUAN SHENGGAO

For residents in and tourists to Shanxi, early October was a time to relax, to travel and to reunite with their families, thanks to a seven-day holiday starting from Oct 1.

As Oct 1 is the National Day, this was also a time to give their best wishes to the country and their hometowns.

In the early morning of Oct 1, the Wuyi Square in Taiyuan was already crowded with visitors. They were there to see the national flag-raising ceremony, which was scheduled for 7 am.

When three flag-bearing soldiers approached the flagpole, visitors held up their cameras or smartphones to take pictures. They later stood still to the national anthem and saluted with their eyes fixed on the rising flag.

Feng Jingliang, a resident in Taiyuan, took his two twin daughters to the square at about 5 am.

"I have attended the national flag-raising ceremony every Oct 1 over the past decade," Feng said. "Every time I

came here, I was overwhelmed with a sense of pride when thinking about the great changes taking place in China and in Taiyuan."

He said Taiyuan is becoming a better place to live in thanks to the local government's efforts to improve the environment and urban facilities.

At many historical sites in Shanxi, tourists said they were proud of not only what has happened over the past seven decades, but also the long history and brilliant culture of Shanxi.

Zhang Yong, a tourist from Henan province, visited the famed Yungang Grottoes in Datong.

On that site, Zhang learned that Yungang is one of the top three ancient grottoes in China. It represents a high level of Buddhist cave art of the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534), when the grottoes were created.

"Relic sites like Yungang Grottoes are the silent witnesses to China's long history and brilliant culture over the past millennia," Zhang said. "A visit to such destinations can enhance people's confidence in the nation."

The Mausoleum of Emperor Shun in Yuncheng city welcomed thou-



A class of children from a kindergarten in Linfen celebrate National Day on Oct 1. LI LIANJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

sands of visitors during the holiday.

A leader of the country some 3,000 years ago, Shun was one of the forefathers of the nation that also included the famed Yellow Emperor and Red Emperor.

Shun was known for his abilities in managing state affairs, especially those related to agriculture, as well as his quality of moral integrity and filial piety.

Wang Zezhi, a tourist from the city of Sanmenxia in Henan province, and his family, were among the visitors to the mausoleum.

"We came here to pay homage to

this great figure in ancient China," Wang said.

Along the roads outside the mausoleum, there were a variety of activities to entertain tourists, including shows of local intangible cultural heritage items like paper-cutting and shadow puppetry, as well as local dishes and snacks made on the site.

"My child was amazed at the charm of colorful folk cultures," Wang said. "This was a tour both enlightening and entertaining."

Wu Jia contributed to this story.

Fun designs promote native culture, history

By YUAN SHENGGAO

During the past summer holiday, the Shanxi Museum in the Shanxi provincial capital of Taiyuan gained huge popularity among tourists with its creative cultural product — popsicles in the shape of the bird-shaped bronze wine vessel.

The bronze wine vessel, also known as *zun* in China, was unearthed from a cemetery in the Western Zhou Dynasty (c.11th century-771 BC). It is the centerpiece of the Shanxi Museum.

"Our popsicles are tasty, beautiful, and especially meaningful. That's why I figured they would become an instant hit," said Zhang Lei, a representative of the museum's operation team.

The sweet frozen treat comes in golden mango and green matcha flavors, reflecting the two colors of bronzes when they were just produced and after being buried for thousands of years, Zhang said.

"We want to utilize the simple and interesting product, helping more people to learn about Shanxi's culture and history in a more direct way," he said.

It's not the first time that an attractive cultural product was inspired by the province's deep cultural roots.

Several years ago, Xiao You, an owl-shaped bronze container from the Shang Dynasty (c.16th century-11th century BC), received much attention online because of its stunning resemblance to the character in the mobile game *Angry Birds*. Chinese netizens described it as "the most lovely and trendy relic."

Shanxi then released an array of creative cultural products based on Xiao You including stationery, toys, and mystery boxes, which earned wide recognition from consumers.

Local paper-cutting master Wen Tao has been committed to improving her techniques and developing more cultural goods from her works.

While selling the products via livestreaming platforms, she taught viewers some paper-cutting skills to further promote the traditional folk art.

These relics and artworks that were once only displayed in exhibition halls have facilitated closer relationships with ordinary people through these cultural products, local officials said.

"Shanxi boasts abundant cultural and historical resources. Based on the evolving technologies, there are multiple and various cultural products we can make in the future," said Yu Man, general manager of Shanxi Xitang Culture Communication.

The company has rolled out more than 2,600 creative cultural products so far, covering Shanxi's natural scenery, historical relics and local customs, Yu said.

In September, the province launched a cultural and creative product alliance to further integrate resources and boost the local culture industry.

The alliance plans to step up cooperation with enterprises, universities, and research institutions to foster new business models in the industry.

Dong Lingyue, head of the Shanxi Cultural Relics and Museum Industry Group, said Shanxi's rich historical and cultural resources offer a considerable advantage and serve as the strongest foundation of its cultural creativity industry.

"We are confident that the industry will be more thriving and prosperous," Yu said.

Wu Jia contributed to this story.

Coalbed methane offers up a green and promising resource of electricity

By CAO YINGYING

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A media report in August that said Shanxi province had extracted more than 100 million cubic meters of coalbed methane from deserted mines has aroused attention from the coal industry nationwide as it pointed to a new path of growth for mine operators.

Coalbed methane is a form of natural gas. Its thermal value is one to four times higher than coal of the same weight. Almost no exhaust gases are produced after coalbed methane combustion, according to industry insiders.

However, coalbed methane presents a danger inside coal mines. It can explode if the concentration of the gas reaches 5-16 percent.

The gas can also be naturally emitted from mines and reach the surface. If discharged into the atmosphere, its greenhouse effect will be 20 times more than that of carbon dioxide.

Safe extraction of the gas can help avoid coal mine accidents by reducing its concentration. The extracted coalbed methane can then be used as a clean energy resource, according to industry insiders.



Technicians at Chengzhuang Thermal Power monitor the status of its coalbed methane-fired power generation equipment.

QIU MEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Shanxi is one of the provinces in China with rich coalbed methane resources and is a pioneer for the safe use of the gas.

Compared with 2015, the proven reserves and ground-extraction volume of coalbed methane jumped 82 percent and 95 percent respectively, according to the Shanxi Department of Natural Resources.

The proven geological reserves of the gas in Shanxi reached 7.14 billion

cu m, accounting for 76.76 percent of China's total, the department's statistics showed.

Last year, Shanxi released a three-year (2020-22) action plan for bolstering the development of coalbed methane.

According to the plan, Shanxi will strengthen institutional guarantees for standardizing exploration, mining management and operations. New policy incentives will include

establishing special funds for the industry and streamlining examination and approval procedures for enterprises.

With governmental support, the development and use of coalbed methane in Shanxi has entered a new stage. The industry has become a new engine for the province's growth. Shanxi has become a demonstration base and modern production base of coalbed methane industrialization in China, according to local officials.

They said Shanxi's capability in coalbed methane research, exploration and production has reached an internationally advanced level.

A number of local energy companies have begun to shift their focus to this emerging industry.

Jinneng Holding Group, a State-owned energy giant based in Shanxi, has launched several coalbed methane-fired power generation projects in the province.

According to Zhang Yongtai, head of Chengzhuang Thermal Power, a branch of Jinneng Group, its 46-megawatt power station generated 170 million kilowatt-hours of electricity in the first seven months this year. It consumed 36.96 million cu m of coalbed methane during the same period. This volume translates into a reduction of 550,000 metric tons of carbon-dioxide emissions compared with the use of coal.

Guo Yanjie contributed to this story.



Hou Wenjie, a craftsman from the city of Changzhi, decorates a porcelain vase during a cultural expo held in Shanxi province.

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