

Severe storms claim more lives

► 21 dead amid heavy snow; closures and havoc continue

The death toll rose to 21 in North China on Friday as storms continued to ravage the region.

The snowstorms left a trail of destruction that will cost more than half a billion dollars to repair, the Civil Affairs Ministry said on Friday.

Heavy snow, which has not been seen in the region for decades, left 21 people dead in seven provinces, the ministry said on its website.

The number does not include deaths came in traffic accidents that were connected to the storms that began on Nov 9, the ministry said.

The deaths prompted the General Office of the State Council — China's cabinet — to issue a circular on Friday ordering local governments to check the safety of buildings used for schools, hospitals and seniors' homes.

The National Meteorological Center predicted on Friday that more snow will hit northwestern and northeastern China in the next three days.

The snowfall has been the heaviest in some areas since records began after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The ministry estimated that economic losses from the storm stood at 4.46 billion yuan (\$652 million).

More than 7.5 million people have been affected by the storms that have caused the collapse of more than 9,000 buildings, damaged 190,000 hectares of crops and forced the evacuation of 158,000 people.

Almost 160,000 people had been stranded on roads or evacuated from their homes, the ministry's statement said.

Beijing, which lies at the



A fruit market in Xingtai, Hebei province, is devastated by the heavy burden of continuous snow.

Huang Tao

heart of the affected area, has been hit by three successive dumps of snow that have caused havoc on roadways and forced the cancellation or delay of scores of flights.

But the impact of the snow has been more serious in the surrounding provinces of Hebei, Shanxi, Shaanxi, Shandong and Henan, where highways have been closed, schools shuttered and crews sent to rescue people from snowbound homes.

But, as bad as the weather has been, the situation is not yet as severe as it was last year when freak snow and

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ice storms hit parts of eastern and southern China — areas unaccustomed to snow and unprepared to deal with winter weather. The storms paralyzed key transportation systems as

millions of migrant workers tried to head home for the Lunar New Year holiday.

The chaos left more than 80 dead and caused billions of dollars in damage.

Most of the snow-hit areas of China turned sunny on Friday, but ice on roads was still causing problems.

In Shaanxi province, dozens of kilometers of highway between Xi'an and Shangluo was dotted with stuck vehicles.

On Friday, Shenyang Taoyuan International Airport in Northeast China's Liaoning province, closed at 7 am and reopened at 1:20 pm — after

the snow stopped.

In Hebei province, some major highways were closed early Friday before being reopened in the afternoon.

Moderate-to-heavy snow hit many parts of northeastern Jilin province on Friday. The provincial meteorological bureau is forecasting more tough times to come — saying the temperature will fall by eight to 10 degrees Celsius in the coming week. The provincial observatory on Friday urged residents to prepare for heavier snow in the next two days.

China Daily

Entrapped man claims letter threatens him

By Xiao Yu

SHANGHAI: A driver who sued local traffic police for legal recognition of his innocence said he has received threats pressing him to withdraw the case.

Zhang Hui, a white-collar worker in Shanghai, was fined 10,000 yuan (\$1,470) in September by local traffic management authorities of the Minhang district for operating an illegal cab service.

Zhang immediately brought the local traffic police to court, alleging that the police obtained evidence against him by adopting an illegal entrapment scheme.

According to Zhang, on Sept 14, he was stopped by a pedestrian who claimed to be suffering from a severe stomachache. Zhang turned the man away at first, but eventually gave in because the man appeared to be seriously ill.

During the short drive, Zhang twice declined the man's offer to pay. When Zhang stopped at a turn, the passenger snatched his car key. The police arrived, dragged Zhang out of his car, and charged him with operating an illegal taxi service.

In late October, the local traffic police withdrew the charge, returned the fines and apologized to Zhang, after Sun Zhongjie, a 19-year-old migrant worker, cut his small finger to call public attention to his own case, thus setting off official investigations in Shanghai.

Despite the acquittal, Zhang decided to go ahead with the lawsuit against Minhang district traffic police for vindication of the law.

However, his wife received a letter early this week, in which the individuals who threatened Zhang also claim to have details about his family,

including his parents and 5-year-old daughter, according to Zhang. He believes that the letter came from someone who worked with the local traffic police in its entrapment scheme.

According to the letter posted by Zhang on tianya.com, a popular online community in China, the anonymous sender claimed that he and his colleagues have failed to earn money for one month since the exposure of the entrapment cases.

"Zhang has received an apology from the government and the refund of fines, which proved his innocence. Please drop the case and let us make a living..." the letter reads.

Zhang, in a telephone interview with China Daily on Friday, said the letter has infuriated him.

"I feel threatened," Zhang said. "I don't want to elaborate on that, but who knows what action they might take in the days to come," he said.

He vowed he would not withdraw the lawsuit because of the anonymous threat.

The illegal entrapment cases, which have also occurred in other parts of Shanghai, which were disclosed recently, have garnered widespread attention.

The Pudong New District government issued a public apology on Oct 26 to Sun Zhongjie.

Zhang's case has also led to a heated discussion among netizens, most of whom have supported Zhang and expressed concerns of the safety of his family.

An officer of the publicity office of Minhang district, who declined to be identified, said: "We regard it a personal issue (concerning the letter Zhang received). Let's wait and see the final judgment next week."

Home-from-home experience promised by Shandong hotel

By Ji YUAN AND DAI YAN

The Qingdao Haiqing Hotel in Shandong province attracts visitors from across the world, drawn by its renowned architectural style, artistic ambience, home-from-home environment and quality of service.

The four-star hotel established its reputation whilst providing accommodation for sailing competitors participating in the 2006 and 2007 Qingdao International Sailing Competition.

This reputation was further enhanced during the 2008 Paralympic Games, when it housed athletes from around the world.

Writing to thank the hotel's staff after returning home following the 2008 games, the Irish athlete, Maff M'Govern, said: "I am very happy with the service I received. The staff members were very helpful, especially those in the laundry and guest room section."

One athlete from Russia was even moved to tears when the hotel made him a special "yacht-design" birthday cake and then threw a party for him.

In October of this year, team members of the OP class sailing team, attending the 11th National Games, not only enjoyed a successful medal-winning run, but also benefited from their stay

HOTEL SPECIAL

at the hotel.

Zhang Chuancheng, general manager of the hotel, said: "As the sailors of the OP class competition are younger than many of the others, we worked hard to ensure they enjoyed their stay and tried to make them feel at home."

Throughout the sailing competition, the restaurant department of the hotel reserved a special area in the dining hall for the sailors, serving them healthy and nutritious food, in line with the dietary requirements of athletes.

The housekeeping department, too, played its part, ensuring all the competitors received a high level of service. They even helped the young sailors wash and dry their clothes.

This special attention did not escape the notice of the young athletes, many of whom expressed their gratitude after leaving the hotel.

One guest wrote: "I stayed in the Haiqing hotel during the 2008 Olympic Games and I stayed there again during the 2009 National Games. Living in Haiqing is like living in my own home, I am so grateful for your warm, thoughtful and considerate service."

We worked hard to ensure they (the athletes) enjoyed their stay and tried to make them feel very much at home.

ZHANG CHUANCHENG
General manager of Qingdao Haiqing Hotel

Located on the Donghai Middle Road in Qingdao, the hotel maintains much of the traditional feel of this coastal city, with guests privy to many exotic scenes — fish swimming in mini tanks on their dining table and models of Qingdao

scenic attractions displayed in the lobby, to name but two. Whilst sitting in the rooms or lunching in the café, guests can also look out across the nearby sea and watch a host of fishing and leisure craft.

The hotel also prides itself on its eclectic blend of traditional Chinese and Western elements. Although much of its internal architecture is European in style, oriental motifs are found throughout its teahouse, ocean view bar and art gallery. Visitors can also enjoy a host of cosmopolitan photography adorning the walls of its corridors and rooms.

In the teahouse, guests can have a relaxing cup or two, whilst listening to the gentle play of its indoor water features. A traditional tea ceremony, conducted by the hotel's staff, is also on offer.

Besides Chinese food, the hotel also supplies international cuisine, including European, Korean, Japanese and Muslim dishes.



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