

Torrential rains disrupt lives in Sichuan

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Continuous and heavy rain has affected the lives of 115,900 people in Sichuan province, local flood control authorities said on Tuesday.

Heavy rain triggered a landslide in Dege county on Monday, killing four people and injuring one, the county government said.

Rain in the province has damaged a total of 4,440 hectares of crops and caused economic losses of 159 million yuan (\$23.8 million).

The heaviest downpour in recent years hit Shuangliu International Airport in Chengdu on Monday, dropping 160 millimeters of rain.

Nearly 200 flights were delayed or canceled and 13,000 passengers were stranded in the airport, said Lyu Junming, an airport information officer.

The downpour was rare in the history of the facility, he said.

The Sichuan Meteorological Observatory issued a blue alert at 3:30 pm on Tuesday warning of torrential rain in some parts of the province from 8 pm on Tuesday to 8 pm on Wednesday.

The cities of Dazhou and Bazhong and the northern parts of the cities of Nanchong and Guang'an were expected to be lashed by heavy rain, and precipitation was expected to range from



Owners of a small diner sit at the doorway as sandbags are used to hold off floodwaters in Suining, Sichuan province, on Tuesday.

LIU CHANGSONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

30 to 60 millimeters.

Expected rainfall in parts of the north of Dazhou and Bazhong will range from 100 to 140 millimeters, the observatory said.

Different parts of Sichuan have been hit by heavy rain since late last month.

On the evening of June 25, Jiuzhaigou Scenic Area in

Jiuzhaigou county in the Aba Tibetan and Qiang autonomous prefecture experienced rain-induced floods and mudslides.

Out of safety concerns for tourists heading for Jiuzhaigou, which is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage, the scenic area's administrative bureau closed the area temporarily to tourists on Sunday.

It did not say when it would reopen.

Tourists who had paid for tickets could get refunds, the bureau said.

In the early hours of Monday, a downpour whipped Jiuzhaigou county and brought mudslides to Langzhai village, Zhangzha

town, cutting off the village's only road leading to the outside.

The mudslides caused havoc in the entire village, extending for about 1 kilometer, said Cao Hong, a rescue official.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

City bans smoking in offices of Party, govt

By WANG KEJU in Beijing
and ZHOU LIHUA in Wuhan

Indoor smoking has been banned in government offices and the offices of the Communist Party of China in Wuhan, Hubei province, and is also prohibited for those performing official duties, under a directive issued on Sunday.

The directive, issued by government and Party officials, signals the start of a campaign that will run until Dec 31, focusing on Party and government offices, hospitals, schools, hotels, restaurants, public transport, theaters and internet cafes.

Officials should abide by the smoking ban, actively advocate tobacco control and set an example by not smoking in public places, the directive said.

It ordered Party and government organs to establish smoking control regulations and come up with detailed measures to carry them out, including anti-smoking logos in conference rooms, corridors, cafeterias and washrooms. They should also name tobacco-control supervisors to discourage officials from smoking indoors, and set up clearly identified outdoor smoking areas.

An official surnamed Ming, who joined the Organization Department of the CPC in Wuhan in March, said: "During my couple of months working here, I barely saw any of my colleagues smoking in the workplace. It seems everyone working in government and Party organs is used to not smoking."

A 50-year-old official who works at the local TV station and identified himself as He, said that he was not a fan of tobacco and was often irritated by some of his workmates' smoking habits. But he tolerated it, he said, because there were no regulations effective enough to protect people from the harm of secondhand smoke.

"I'm more than thrilled to hear about the ban on indoor smoking. And the station is now in discussions to make further arrangements," He said.

Organizers of official activi-



A resident smokes outside Wuhan Citizens Home on Tuesday as no-smoking signs were placed indoors.

YANG TAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

ties are barred from providing tobacco products, accepting sponsorships from tobacco companies or publishing tobacco advertisements, and ashtrays and lighters should not be provided, the directive said.

Those taking part in official activities are not allowed to smoke, give cigarettes to others or persuade others to smoke. The use of public funds to pay for tobacco consumption is strictly forbidden, it said.

Yang Jie, a tobacco control researcher at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, said, "Smoking is addictive. Regulations, law enforcement and health education are important in the bid to attain a clean, smoke-free environment."

"The examples that local government and Party officials set will have a positive influence on cultivating an anti-smoking atmosphere and enhancing public awareness. As such, it will boost legislation to totally ban smoking in all indoor public places."

The local health and family planning commission should bear the responsibility to receive and investigate complaints from the public and announce punishments in a timely manner, the directive said.

Li Junlin, director of the Wuhan Health Exchange, said: "The tobacco control campaign involves more than 100,000 public places in the city and more than 2 million smokers. It is obvious that anti-smoking law enforcement by the health and family planning department is not strong enough. It's a real challenge."

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With mountain added, China leads natural heritage count

By SHI YANG
Xinhua

Mount Fanjingshan, a natural habitat for a number of rare plants and animal species in Guizhou province, has joined 12 other locations in China on UNESCO's World Heritage list.

The decision was made on Monday by the group's world heritage committee in Bahrain.

The addition gives China the most natural heritage sites globally. Guizhou is now home to several natural heritage sites including the Libo Karst, Shibing Karst, China Danxia and Mount Fanjingshan.

"The inclusion of Mount Fanjingshan on the World Heritage list showcases to the world the natural beauty of China," said Qin Changwei, secretary-general of China's National Commission for UNESCO.

It is an international acknowledgment of China's achievement in protecting the ecological environment and biological diversity, he said.

In the evaluation report by the International Union for Conservation of Nature published in May, the commission argued that Mount Fanjingshan has proved its

aesthetic value as a natural heritage site, achieving the criteria requiring sites to demonstrate outstanding biological diversity and integrity.

However, the report had recommended that the nomination be referred back to China until concerns were addressed about the proper relocation of residents living around the mountain, the management of an increasing number of visitors to the site when listed and the overlap of regulatory bodies.

"We have convinced the IUCN that our plans to manage the increasing flow of visitors is sound," said Liu Yuan, an official at China's Forestry and Grassland Administration. "We also emphasized that the relocation of residents will be based on voluntary principles."

Residents were willing to move after feeling they could benefit from relocation, Liu said.

After moving from mountainous areas of Fanjingshan and accepting resettlement by the government, many residents who were living in poverty managed to improve their living condition, he said.

Mount Fanjingshan, the

highest peak in the Wuling Mountain range at an altitude of 2,572 meters, covers 402 square kilometers with a buffer zone of 372 sq km.

The ecosystem includes large numbers of ancient plants, rare and endangered species and unique species. It is home to 4,395 species of plants and 2,767 species of animals.

In addition, it is the only natural habitat of the rare Guizhou snub-nosed monkey and an important reserve for the Fanjingshan fir tree in Asia.

In October 2013, China listed Mount Fanjingshan as a national natural heritage, after which it was proposed as the country's only natural heritage nomination for the 2018 World Heritage meeting.

"We will continue to make efforts to protect and manage the natural heritage site of Mount Fanjingshan and to improve the basic infrastructure there, based on the decision of the World Heritage committee and the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage," said Song Xiaolu, head of the Guizhou delegation to the World Heritage committee meeting.



Unusual rock formations attract tourists at Mount Fanjingshan in Guizhou province. The shape is a result of longtime weathering. YANG ENUO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Rules aim at death sector misconduct

Funeral-related fraud, cemetery speculators among the targets

By LI LEI
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China will crack down on cemetery speculators and funeral-related fraud in a three-month campaign starting this month to address the most acute problems in the sector, the Ministry of Civil Affairs said on Monday.

The crackdown will cover all funeral parlors, cemeteries, morgues, rural nonprofit burial sites and ash storage facilities affiliated with religious sites. And it will address issues the public is most concerned about that have received a lot of media attention, the ministry said.

The move came after nine departments, including the Ministry of Civil Affairs, National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Public Security, released an action plan last month for punishing misconduct in the sector.

In China, burying bodies has been banned in the most populous areas. The only exceptions are for 10 ethnic minorities. Most urban residents opt for cremation after death, with their ashes interred in spaces purchased in cemeteries.

Despite the government's effort to encourage ecological burials — encouraging the scattering of ashes rather than buying burial sites — demand for cemetery space runs high. There has been a surge in cemetery prices over the past few years, with some spaces in Shanghai reportedly reaching 300,000 yuan (\$44,800).

The planned crackdown will focus on the rectification of 10 violations, including eight related to the construction and operation of cemeteries and two related to funeral services and the sale of funeral items.

The authorities will target unauthorized cemeteries and those with incomplete legal documents, cemetery managers who expand construction beyond what was approved, people who sell graves without asking for proof of death, grave relocation and the building of oversized graves.

National standards require that graves for cremated remains be less than 1 square meter. Graves must not exceed 4 sq m for single graves and 6 sq m for joint burials.

Overcharging for graves will also be targeted, as well as misconduct such as profiting from rural nonprofit cemeteries or charging fees for keeping cremated remains at unauthorized religious sites, the plan said.

In addition, misconduct in funeral-related services, including lack of transparency in price, coercive sales or monopolies will be targeted, it said.

Yang Anrong, a former cemetery manager in Hubei province, said the crackdown will ensure that related policies and regulations will be carried out, but she also noted that some problems are historical leftovers.

"Some cemeteries lack necessary documents because they were established when there was no requirement for such documents," she said.

Yang said the nature of a cemetery requires it to be in place for a long time, and the lack of knowledge of the industry has led many speculators to enter the sector for quick money.

"But in fact, most projects require several decades to recover the cost. So many of them resort to high prices," she said.

Gobi offers fine climate for wineries in Xinjiang

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Wineries in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region are helping to bring agriculture to the Gobi Desert and boost the local economy.

Yanqi Hui autonomous county, a major wine-producing area, sits on the southern slope of the Tianshan Mountains. The mountains interrupt the eastward flow of humid air that originates as far away as the Atlantic Ocean. By the time it reaches Xinjiang the moisture is reduced considerably, and the mountains' northern slope blocks most of the final remnants, leaving the southern side arid. This creates a friendly environment for grapes.

Despite getting more than 3,600 hours of daylight a year, the dry weather and raging sandstorms have hampered the county's farming industry.

Yet winemakers have spotted potential in the endless desert and installed drip irrigation systems.

"In 20 years, we have transformed the boundless Gobi Desert into a sea of grapes," said Zou Jiyun, CEO of Xinjiang Xiangdu Winery, which was founded in 2002. Its vineyards now cover 2,700 hectares.

"The soil conditions and local weather conditions, including the low rainfall, have kept diseases and pests away from the grapes, thus reducing the use of pesticides," he said.

The vast vineyards have

helped conserve the environment, while providing job opportunities and boosting the local economy, Zou said.

"At the peak of production, we employ more than 500 workers a day. Since we started, we've also paid more than 200 million yuan (\$30 million) in taxes."

Yanqi began to foster wineries in 1998. In 2009, the wine industry was included in the local government's economic development plan and has been supported by multiple policies.

Qi Hongshen, a manager at Tiansai Vineyards, said the county government began investing heavily in a wine industry park almost 20 years ago that incorporates functions of grape-planting, wine-making and tourism.

"The government has introduced favorable policies for winemakers in terms of acquiring land, water and electricity," she said.

China has a long tradition of consuming alcohol, yet Zou said that as people become more conscious of their health, more will turn to wine for its health benefits. Many already have a growing appreciation of wine culture, he said.

"The Chinese began to make wines thousands of years ago, but for some reason it didn't have the same appeal as other liquors. As people become wealthier and more conscious of the health aspects of the things they consume, the industry is bound to become lucrative," he added.