

《Threat of floods over next few days draws warning》

Minister advises checks of repaired works that haven't yet faced real test

China's national weather observatory issued a blue alert on Sunday, the lowest in a four-tier weather warning system, for rainstorms in the central and eastern parts of the country in coming days, after recent floods in Guangdong province brought direct economic losses of 39 million yuan (\$5.7 million).

It was the third consecutive day that the National Meteorological Center issued a blue alert. China has a four-tier color-coded warning system for severe weather, with red being the most serious, followed by orange, yellow and blue.

According to the Guangdong flood control and drought relief headquarters, the province's Dapu county was hit by its biggest flood in a decade after heavy rainfall on Friday and Saturday in at least five cities. As of Saturday evening, 227 of the 2,200 people affected in the county had been evacuated.

The headquarters also said that 240 hectares of farmland in Dapu had been flooded and 13 sections of river dikes were damaged or destroyed. No casualties were reported.

On Monday, the storm front will move from the west to the central and eastern parts of the country, and some areas will see torrential rain accompanied by thunder or hail, the Meteorological Center said on Sunday.

Rainfall in Guangdong is expected to continue until Tuesday.

According to the Ministry of Water Resources, 20 to 40 millimeters of rain is expected in the central and eastern regions of China from Saturday to Tuesday, with rain reaching up to 120 millimeters in some areas, creating a chance that water in some rivers may reach the danger warning level.

Chen Lei, the water resources minister and deputy head of the State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters, called on local authorities at a recent flood control conference to take precautionary measures against disaster.

"In South China, soils are near saturation point after continuous rainfall, and water levels in some rivers have also been very high," Chen said. "All these raise the possibility of mountain torrents and mudslides."

Although the 50 sections of dikes along the Yangtze River and the 175,700 water conservancy projects across the country that were damaged in floods last year have been repaired, none of them has been tested by a major flood yet. More inspections should be made to ensure safety, he said.

Chen also asked local authorities to pay more attention to small and medium-sized rivers.

The State flood authorities dispatched six teams to guide work in Hunan, Jiangxi and Guangdong provinces to avert disaster during the current spate of storms.

