

《习近平：中国需提高综合赈灾能力》

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China must further improve its overall disaster relief ability in view of the frequent natural disasters it experiences, which often cause great damage, President Xi Jinping said on Thursday.

After mourning victims of the earthquake in Tangshan, Hebei province, that claimed more than 240,000 lives 40 years ago, Xi said disaster relief is a matter of life and death as well as social stability.

It can also determine if governments are sufficiently competent, he said.

Authorities need to know how to handle multiple natural disaster relief work, rather than just one incident, and gradually shift their focus from disaster relief to prevention, he said.

Xi also called for the enforcement of an early warning system for natural disasters and for efforts to ensure that buildings in urban areas, houses in rural areas and infrastructure can resist different kinds of disasters.

He placed flower baskets in front of walls bearing victims' names at Tangshan Earthquake Memorial Park to honor them and rescuers who lost their lives in one of the most destructive earthquakes in history on July 28, 1976.

Xi bowed three times to pay his respects while people gathered at the park, which opened to the public in 2008, to mourn loved ones.

Official figures put the death toll at 242,769 with 164,000 injured after a magnitude-7.8 earthquake hit the city at about 4 am when most people were asleep. Tangshan had an urban population of about 1 million before the quake, which left 3,817 people paralyzed.

Xi visited a clinic for paralyzed patients in Tangshan in the afternoon and met Gao Zhihong, who has been receiving treatment there.

"I was delighted and extremely excited to meet President Xi, but strangely I was not nervous. It was like seeing a family friend?he is such a kind and gentle man. He asked us many questions, like what we were doing for a living before the quake and how our lives were now," said Gao, 65.

Gao's husband, Yang Yufang, wrote a novel and poems to share his experience of surviving the quake. Yang presented Xi with two newly published books as gifts.

Gao added, "If the government had deserted us, I would have been dead long ago."

