

# Henan floods spark questions over early warnings

Issues raised by netizens include why TV station failed to provide public safety info

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Questions are being raised online in China on whether sufficient warnings were issued ahead of the deadly flooding in Henan that has claimed 33 lives so far.

Another eight people are missing and nearly 400,000 people have been relocated following heavy rain from last Saturday.

The single deadliest incident recorded so far involved a flooded underground subway carriage in the provincial capital, Zhengzhou, in which 12 commuters died. Video footage on social media showed commuters up to their necks in murky flood water.

This year's rainy season has hit China particularly hard, with Henan province recording the highest rainfall to date. Over 200mm of rain fell in one hour in Zhengzhou on Tuesday. Rainfall between Saturday and Tuesday in Zhengzhou hit 624mm, near the annual average of 641mm.

Two dams in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region in north-east

China collapsed after heavy rain on Sunday. In neighbouring Hebei, two people were killed when a tornado struck Baoding city.

Accounts on microblogging site Weibo showed many Henan residents had taken the train as buses had stopped operating.

A netizen asked why trains were running when buses had stopped. Another netizen – journalism professor Zhan Jiang – posted a complaint on Weibo, saying local broadcaster Henan Radio and Television Station continued with regular programming instead of giving viewers public safety information.

President Xi Jinping on Wednesday said that the systems for early warnings and forecasts of extreme weather must be improved. He cited traffic management as another area to work on.

The authorities must also ensure that detailed and practical flood prevention and disaster relief measures are taken, he added.

The Transport Ministry has ordered an immediate review of subway flood controls following reports on the trapped commuters in Zhengzhou. "They must take emergency measures such as suspending trains, evacuating passengers



Cars sitting in flood waters following heavy rain in Zhengzhou in China's central Henan province yesterday. The rainy season has hit the country hard, with Henan province recording the highest rainfall to date. Over 200mm of rain fell in one hour in Zhengzhou on Tuesday. PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



A damaged bridge seen on Wednesday after heavy rain caused severe flooding in Gongyi in Henan province.

and closing stations in atypical situations such as excessively intense storms," the ministry added.

The provincial weather bureau told state media that it had warned residents of the torrential rains.

Some 120 million text messages had been sent to mobile phone users, warning them of the storms, the Henan weather bureau said.

A China Daily editorial yesterday, citing media reports, said residents had ignored the messages because "initially the downpour was not as heavy as predicted".

An editorial in the Global Times urged policymakers to improve the drainage in cities and take other disaster relief measures to allow for "valuable time for deployment and response" in emergencies.

Professor Asit Biswas, a distinguished visiting professor from the University of Glasgow and chief ex-

ecutive of the Third World Centre for Water Management in Mexico, said flooding in China this summer was "eminently predictable".

He said he expected "heavy and very serious flooding", given the climate changes brought about by global warming.

"China and all other Asian monsoon countries have no other choice but to make implementable plans to adapt and live with climate change," he said.

Associate Professor Alfred Wu of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy said the local authorities must improve its way of disseminating public safety information.

He added that netizens' questions on flood warnings and measures came after posts on Weibo showed citizens trying to get help.

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