

## Village in shambles after downpour

By ZHENG JINRAN  
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On Wednesday afternoon, Yu Guirong, 60, shoveled mud out of her makeshift tent, one of the 30 tents in a small primary school campus in Beicheying village of Beijing's Fangshan district, which witnessed large rainfall on Saturday.

Floodwaters spilled over the ditch and cascaded through the main street village on Saturday night, washing away 66 cars, rushing into houses and shops along the street and destroying more than 100 houses in hours.

Yu's house is one of them. "We climbed to the roof of our house with the help of my neighbors, and stayed there for four hours until the flood retreated," she said, "All of our possessions were gone."

Pi Jinping, the owner of a convenience store at the end of the main street, suffered more. More than 70 percent of her goods were washed away or damaged. And her two cars, which were swallowed by the water, cannot be driven again.



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RESIDENT AT BEICHEYING VILLAGE OF BEIJING'S FANGSHAN DISTRICT

"And my computer and account books are gone, leaving me no records to collect debts," she said, adding that her shop has operated for 22 years. "My economic loss may reach 500,000 yuan (\$78,000)."

But Yu still kept her smile to welcome volunteers to her tent for a break, in which there were only three beds.

"They helped us a lot and deserve our thanks," she said. When she talked, a team of



Xu Shuzhen, 67, looks at her family's remaining furniture and appliances saved from the flood on Saturday, under a bridge at Beicheying village of Fangshan, Beijing, on Wednesday.

people wearing white shirts walked in. They were organized by Wang Bin, a local restaurant owner, to clean the mud on the main street. "That's what we can do, and we'll come back on

Thursday," he said. According to the local government, more than 100 volunteers have come here, bringing about 100 boxes of bottled water, food, medicines and other daily

necessities. Zhai Ruisheng, Party secretary of the village, said they planned to remove the 200 families on the mountains that may be at risk in floods. "But the

investment will be a problem." He said the focus for now is to prevent sickness. Medicines and disinfectant fluid have been distributed to every family, and the debris and mud will be removed as soon as possible.

"It will take some time, because the next rainstorm is coming," he said. "We have prepared for the coming rainfalls. Rebuilding the ruined houses will be the following issue, after we get through the rainstorms."

Yu said that when she went back to her house, and found that her preserved foods had spoiled, "I couldn't help crying. What can we do after such a time?"

Pi worried more, especially when she and her family cleaned the shop. "The cleanup may continue for a month. It's chaos in every corner of my shop as well as in my house."

Nobody was killed by the floodwaters in this hard-hit village, and residents and the local government attribute that to their ability to help each other.

"Life goes on. I'll reopen my shop," said Pi. "We'll get over it."

Ji Jin contributed to this story.

## Heavy storm left migrants in the lurch

By PENG YINING  
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The 20-hour storm that hit Beijing on Saturday swept away the dreams of many migrant workers who came to the capital for opportunities.

In Beicheying village in Beijing's suburban Fangshan district, the hardest hit area over the weekend, Zhao Lupo and his family have been making a living for more than 20 years by carrying bricks in construction sites.

The 40-year-old has been dreaming of living a decent life that he wasn't able to pursue in his hometown in Anhui province by wheat farming.

To Zhao, "decent" means having a television, a refrigerator and a washing machine.

Now all those household appliances, together with all of Zhao's other belongings, furniture, clothes and the 3,000 yuan (\$480) in cash he hid under his pillow, were washed away by the deluge.

The refrigerator he bought two months ago for 2,000 yuan was caked in mud. Zhao didn't even bother to clean it.

"It's a piece of garbage now," he said. "All efforts I put in over the past 20 years are now in a pile of garbage."

Zhao's wife, Zhang Wenping,

said they still have hope for their children, a 7-year-old girl and a 6-year-old boy.

"We want our kids to grow up in Beijing. This is the main reason we moved here," said Zhang. "My husband and I are both illiterate. We can't even write our names, but our children will be educated in the capital."

She said during the downpour on Saturday, their daughter was scared.

"She cried and begged me to take her back to our hometown," the 34-year-old mother said. "But we have come so far. How can we give up everything and go back?"

Among the army of migrant workers in Beijing, a large number can't afford the expensive costs of living downtown so they dot the suburbs on the edge of the capital.

The 20-square-meter apartment for the family of four costs 50 yuan a month, compared with the 1,500 yuan average rent for an apartment of similar size downtown. Doing back-breaking work as bricklayers, Zhao's family can make 60,000 yuan a year, three times as much as they can earn at home.

Su Liping, a 52-year-old vegetable vendor from Shandong province, said most migrant workers in the village live together to take care of each



Seven-year-old Zhao Jingjing (left) and 10-year-old Li Jianing walk on the muddy road at Beicheying village, Beijing's Fangshan district, on Wednesday.

other. In the village of 2,800 people, dozens of them have a small but close community.

On the stormy night, when the floodwater was up to his waist, Zhao guided his family to a safe place and went back to help neighbors.

"I heard them calling for help, so I broke down their door and pulled out a 63-year-old woman and a 10-year-old girl," he said. "I carried them on my back."

"Most of the locals have gone to live with their relatives, but we have no place to go," said Su. "Some of the villagers are kind and offer us food and water, but it won't last in the long term."

She and other migrant work-

ers took shifts at night in case further downpours brought another flood. While off duty, she has to sleep on the cold, wet concrete floor in her soaked house.

The village's public shelter is not open to migrant workers. Relief supplies such as bottled water, instant noodles and blankets are also not available for people without Beijing hukou, or a permanent residence permit.

"This is so unfair. I have also contributed to the society," Su said. "I donated 200 yuan when the earthquake happened in Sichuan in 2008. We are all victims of natural disasters. Why do origins matter?"

However, Zhai Ruisheng, Party chief of the village, said people complained as supplies were limited but migrant workers had never been left out. As more materials are coming to the disaster area, all villagers, locals and migrant workers, have been given food and water.

According to the official, 260 of 1,400 households were badly damaged, but only 30 tents were built in a local primary school as shelters. But the local authority has never set a locals-only rule.

Liu Zhen, a 79-year-old villager and former village head, said it was just a misunderstanding between local resi-

dents and migrant workers. Some people had a little friction with migrants while distributing supplies, and someone called out "don't give supplies to people from other places".

Wang Wei, 54, who came from Heilongjiang province 14 years ago, was air-drying his daughter's college diploma, one of the few things they rescued from the debris.

His 24-year-old daughter recently found work as a secretary in Beijing and became the pride of the family.

"People always say there are more resources in the capital," Wang said. "We thought we would be well-protected and taken care of."

## Army rescue team assists Fangshan flood victims

By ZHENG JINRAN  
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In a Beijing district battered by Saturday's downpour, soldiers with mud on their pants and shovels on their shoulders arrived at a primary school in Beicheying village on Wednesday.

On the campus of the school in Fangshan district, 24 makeshift tents house more than 20 families. Many of the tent-dwellers' houses are on the street where the floodwaters rose up to 3 meters on Saturday night, severely damaging their homes.

Gu Haihua, 26, whose house

was destroyed, said the soldiers helped her clean up the mud and damaged cars in front of her house.

"They came to help us from the early morning till night. They are ready to help us whenever we asked," she said.

The soldiers are from the China International Search and Rescue Team, a professional quake-relief group that conducts rescue missions home and abroad.

The team previously worked at the scenes of the Wenchuan earthquake in 2008 and Yushu earthquake in 2010, and the earthquake and tsunami in Japan last year.

On Wednesday, about 50 rescuers from the team came to help the flood victims in Fangshan.

Putting down their tools, some of the soldiers began to set up more tents on the campus and check the existing ones. A team leader talked through the intercom.

"We have 18 soldiers now. Need more? No problem," said Qin Xiaogang, the team leader. They immediately got in cars and left for a pig farm. On the road, two more soldiers joined them.

A guide car took the lead on the mud-filled road, followed by a car with equipment and

another filled with soldiers. The average rainfall in this district reached 281 mm on Saturday, triggering floods in its mountainous areas and affecting more than 800,000 residents.

Even after three days, roads were still impassable, and forklifts had to work around the broken riverbanks.

Half an hour later, the rescue team arrived at a pig farm. More than 3,200 pigs at the farm drowned in water 3 meters deep on Saturday. The high temperatures rotted the corpses, creating a disease risk.

As soon as they arrived, the 20 soldiers joined other rescu-

ers from the local force who had arrived two days earlier to pull out the pigs' corpses.

"Our soldiers have been taking turns dealing with the rotting carcasses, since 3 pm on Wednesday," Qin said.

The flooded area in this farm is 3.7 hectares with 1.5-meter-deep water. "The mission may last for another two days," he said, adding that they had pulled out animal carcasses in other villages on Tuesday.

"It's a reasonable rescue sequence. After people, it's time to deal with animals," he said.

They are also among the first rescue forces rushed to Fang-

shan after the flood because their training center is in the district.

More than 400 students and teachers were trapped in a school in Shangwan village on Saturday night.

"There was only one large hole to discharge the floodwater, making it difficult to get close to the victims because of the torrential water," said Qin about that night. The soldiers had to send an advance team of seven members to set up pilings step by step.

The trapped people were finally rescued after three hours that rainy night.

## Peking Man site damaged by heavy rainfall

By PENG YINING  
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About 160 historical sites, including the Peking Man World Heritage Site at Zhoukoudian, were damaged in storms that lashed Beijing on Saturday. The direct economic losses reached 800 million yuan (\$125 million), according to Beijing Municipal Administration of Cultural Heritage.

The deluge caused several small-scale landslides at the Peking Man site and disabled its security system, according to Li Yan, senior administrator at Zhoukoudian, located in a village 50 kilometers southwest of Beijing. A museum at the site was flooded, but the major exhibits are all safe.

Dirt and mud washed by the heaviest rainfall in six decades covered part of the archaeological dig at Zhoukoudian and halted researchers' work for at least three days, according to Zhang Shuangquan, an archaeologist at the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Zhang said he was concerned most that a potential landslide caused by the downpour might destroy the whole dig site, which is on a cliff.

If the rock stratum were to collapse, it would lose its value for archaeology, because researchers learn how people lived in the past by taking account of the depth of objects and human remains embedded in the rock.

"A period of human civilization would be buried in mystery forever," said Zhang, who has been excavating the site since 2009.

Zhoukoudian's administrators covered the site with plastic sheets two years ago, but Zhang said the protection would be ineffective unless the whole mountain top were covered, because rain slowly permeates rocks, making the stratum fragile.

"The geological movement is very slow, but it might reach a breaking point at any moment, maybe tomorrow or 10 years from now," Zhang said. "I hope we can build the protection before the end of this summer."

Zhoukoudian has already contacted experts at Beijing's cultural heritage administration about drafting a protection plan, but there is no timeline for the project.

"We improved our fences and buildings in 2006, and thanks to that, we didn't have serious damage in this flood," Li said.

The security system is working again and the site is still open to the public, he said. Only a couple of sightseeing spots are closed because of safety concerns.

Every year, Zhoukoudian attracts more than 120,000 visitors and researchers from around the world, he said.

Discovered by the Swedish archaeologist Johan Gunnar Andersson in 1918, Zhoukoudian has yielded many archaeological breakthroughs, including one of the first specimens of *Homo erectus*, dubbed Peking Man. Several skulls were found at the site in 1920s and 1930s, but were lost in War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression.

In 1987, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization named it a World Heritage Site.

"Any damage to Zhoukoudian will be a loss for China and the world," Li said.

The 1,400-year-old Yunju Temple, another historical site in Beijing's hard-hit Fangshan district, was also damaged by the deluge. Floodwaters washed down its walls and uprooted trees in the temple.