

No power, no clean water: cleanup begins in Beijing's flood-hit suburbs

August 3 2023, by Peter CATTERALL



A resident walks on a broken wall after flooding battered swathes of northern China.

On the banks of the Yongding River west of Beijing on Thursday, Chen Xiaoyuan stared at the remains of a bridge that once led to his village.

Cleanup has begun after the region's worst rainfall in years battered northern China, killing at least twenty people, destroying infrastructure and deluging swathes of Beijing and its surrounding areas.

In the village of Chenjiazhuang west of Beijing, the deluge ripped up trees and sent debris crashing into a bridge Monday, causing it to collapse, Chen said.

"Everyone in our village used to use this bridge each day," Chen, 50, told AFP.

"I've never seen anything like this here, even in 2012," he said, referencing [heavy rains](#) over 10 years ago that left 79 people dead.

His home still lacks electricity and [water](#).

But Chen was lucky that his house was situated at a high enough level to not be affected directly by the surging floods.

Others weren't so fortunate: Chen told AFP that one of his former classmates was missing and that he was feared to have been swept away by the torrent.

Further upstream, AFP journalists found the hard-hit village of Shuiyuzui struggling with the aftermath of the historic rains, which tore down a perimeter wall, sending waters flooding into residential buildings.



Workers repair a railway line in the aftermath of the flooding at a village following heavy rains.

At the entrance to the village, downed [power lines](#) were propped up by logs to allow [emergency personnel](#) to deliver water and food to besieged residents.

Locals waded through [muddy water](#)—in some places waist-deep—salvaging their belongings in bags to take to temporary accommodation.

Dozens of large vehicles belonging to the People's Armed Police were seen lined up along the road outside the village, providing assistance to affected residents and helping cope with damage in the area.

Heavy rain was replaced by a muggy heat on Thursday, and locals took a break from collecting their belongings to eat watermelon by the village bridge, whose railings had also been swept away by the floods.

Around 100 meters above the [village](#), landslides triggered by the rains sent giant heaps of soil and rock over two railway lines.

Emergency workers deployed bulldozers to mend the tracks, hauling equipment and material up the mountainside.

Standing on a pile of debris atop a railway line situated between two tunnels, an emergency worker told AFP that just last week trains had been able to pass through unhindered.

"It all came down through here," a local woman surnamed Ma, 43, told AFP, indicating up to where the landslides had overrun the railway lines.

"I've just come today to deal with my belongings," said Ma, who is temporarily sleeping at another location.

"There's nothing at our house now, no electricity, no water."

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