

## Heavy snow affects 77 million in China

by UPI

BEIJING -- Emergency officials in China said more than 77 million people have been adversely affected by unprecedented heavy snowfall in 14 provinces. Since the snowfall began Jan. 10, at least 24 deaths have been blamed on the weather, the Ministry of Civil Affairs told reporters in Beijing. The problems are compounded by the tradition of millions of citizens to return to their hometowns for Spring Festival, or the Chinese New Year celebrations that fall on Feb. 7, the Shanghai Daily reported. Some 200,000 people remained stranded at the main train station in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong Province, down from 500,000 two days ago, the newspaper said. The provincial railway authority began running ads urging people to give up their annual trips home, Dragon TV reported. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao flew and then had to take a train to Changsha City, the capital of Hunan Province Monday night to assess the disaster relief situation, Xinhua said. At the city's main train station, Wen used a megaphone to wish the stranded passengers a happy Spring Festival and said everything that could be done to keep travel moving was being done, the report said.

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