

## China suspends ferry service as tropical storm approaches

China issued Friday an order suspending ferry service the country's southern Qiongzhou Strait as Higos, the 17th tropical storm of the year, was about to make landfall.

According to the weather observatory in Hainan province, the eye of the storm was monitored at 18.4 degrees north latitude and 111.2 degrees east longitude at 3 p.m, and it was located about 130 km to the southeast of Wenchang city on the east coast of Hainan.

The forecast said Higos was moving northwestward at a speed of 20 km per hour and would make landfall anywhere on the eastern coast from Wenchang, Qionghai to Wanning or shave the area and approach western Guangdong province Friday night.

The observatory also said that the storm would affect the sea off the east coast of Hainan, the Qiongzhou Strait and Beibu Gulf and other adjacent areas. Ports in these places would get strong wind beginning Friday night trough to Sunday.

In addition, the whole Hainan province would experience torrential rain from Friday night to Saturday daytime, the observatory said.

The National Meteorological Center (NMC) Friday issued an orange alert, the second highest warning, warning vessels to take shelter in ports. It urged local authorities to prepare for emergencies with the upcoming strong wind and rainstorms.

The State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters also activated a third degree emergency response on Friday to warn of possible flooding.

Meanwhile, authorities in two airports in the province - Meilan International Airport in Haikou, the provincial capital, and Fenghuang (Phoenix) International Airport in Sanya, a seaside resort on the southern tip of the island - said arrivals and departures at their respective airports were not affected for the time being.

Higos was formed Tuesday in the Pacific Ocean, coming on the heels of storms Jangmi and Hagupit, which combined had killed about 20 people in China.

Qiongzhou Strait separates Hainan from the Chinese mainland. Apart from flights, ferry services on Qiongzhou Strait are the only way to access Hainan Island.

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