

# FLOODS IN

**T**hroughout its history, China has been subject to severe flooding and the need for flood precautions has in turn shaped its history. The economic dislocation brought about by flooding on the major rivers, particularly the Yellow River and the Yangtze, hastened the downfall of several dynasties. The importance of flooding continues into this century. From 1949 to 1988 about one million people died as the direct result of flooding. Fortunately, losses on this scale are no longer observed because of the enormous efforts that have been made by the Chinese people in recent decades to prevent the major catastrophes caused by collapse of dykes in times of flood. However, despite these efforts the death toll and damage caused by floods are still very high.

The year 1996 was the worst for flooding for several decades with over 3,000 deaths, more than a million evacuated, 5 million homeless, 100,000 km<sup>2</sup> of farmland under water, enormous damage to crops and total losses estimated at US\$ 20 billion. The flooding started in June with heavy rain lasting several weeks over the middle reaches of the Yangtze River. Three typhoons, Gloria, Herb and Kirk, then brought even more rain with some regions recording up to 300 mm

