

China starts 2nd scientific expedition to Tibet plateau

China on Saturday began its second scientific expedition to the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau to study changes in climate, biodiversity and environment over the past decades.

The last expedition of similar scale was conducted in the 1970s.



Tibet plateau

This time, the expedition will last five to 10 years and the first stop will be Serling Tso, a 2,391-square-kilometer lake that was confirmed to have replaced the Buddhist holy lake Namtso as Tibet's largest in 2014.

In the coming month, Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) will take more than 100 scientists to the lake area and the origin of the Yangtze, China's longest river. They will be divided into four groups and make a comprehensive survey of the plateau glaciers, climate change, biodiversity and ecological changes, said Yao Tandong, an academician with the CAS.

"Great changes have taken place in the plateau's resources and environment since the first scientific expedition," said Yao, director of the CAS Institute of Qinghai-Tibet Plateau Research. "We need further research to find out ways to cope with these changes."

China's first comprehensive scientific expedition to the Tibet plateau began in the 1970s and covered more than 50 disciplines including geologic

structure, prehistoric life, geophysics, climate, zoology and botany.

"The scientists reported major discoveries and filled many gaps in plateau research," said Yao.

The new round of research, he said, will focus on changes.

Zhu Liping, a CAS researcher leading the lake observation team, said the surface of Serling Tso Lake, for example, had expanded 40 percent between 1976 and 2009.

Since 1990, water in the plateau's 1,000 lakes has increased by 100 billion cubic meters.

"The volume is equal to three times the water in Three Gorges Dam," Zhu said. Study will measure the impact on the ecology and its potential link to flooding and drought in the low-lying eastern monsoon region.

Zhu said data will be collected by scientists using automatic boats for the first time and a topographic map will be drawn.

"The plateau climate is becoming warmer and more humid," said Xu Baiqing, who leads another team to the glaciers. The team will drill ice cores at three major plateau glacier groups. Buried in the cold interiors of glaciers, ice cores contain well-preserved and detailed records of climate change in a century.

The impact of climatic changes would be assessed and proposals for conservation and rational development of resources formulated.

On the archaeological front, scientists will look for evidence that can prove an earlier archaeological discovery of a Paleolithic ruins in the Serling Tso suggesting that humans might have been lived on this part of the world since some 30,000 years ago.

Archaeologists will try to answer why humans came to this plateau, where did they come from, and how did they adapt to high altitude living, according to team leader Deng Tao, deputy director of Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology, under CAS.

A fourth team will research the biological diversity on the plateau and draw up a habitat map for preservation and tourism purposes.

A national park might be set up in Serling Tso.

The expedition will also take scientists to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and a pass linking to south Asia.

China punishes drivers for not giving way to pedestrians

China's Ministry of Public Security (MPS) has urged police nationwide to strengthen checks and punishment on the motorists who do not give way to pedestrians.

During the past three years, 3,898 people were killed in 14,000 accidents happened on crosswalks in China, 90 percent of which involved motorists failing to give way to pedestrians, according to the Traffic Management Bureau of the MPS.

Traffic police should step up patrols and strengthen monitoring with surveillance cameras on streets, said the bureau, calling for tougher enforcement and sterner punishment.

For a safer environment for pedestrians, traffic bureaus nationwide will provide better traffic signs, install more traffic lights, and help build more underground passages or pedestrian bridges.

Beijing traffic police on Thursday began enforcing a fine of 200 yuan (\$29) for motorists who fail to give way to pedestrians on crosswalks.

The violation will also result in a loss of three demerit points. When motorists lose all 12 points they must retake the driver's license test.

The enforcement of the fine comes days after surveillance camera footage went viral showing a woman in Central China's Henan province being hit by a taxi while on a crosswalk. Lying on the crosswalk, she was run over by a second car.

China's college English test adopts papers in Braille

Five blind students joined their peers Saturday to sit the national college English test in Changchun, capital of northeast China's Jilin Province, where test papers in Braille were used for the first time.



The five students, from Changchun University's School of Special Education, were given test papers in Braille in a separate classroom away from other students.

The five students, from Changchun University's School of Special Education, were given test papers in Braille in a separate classroom away from other students. Their test lasted 195 minutes instead of the standard 130 minutes, as it takes longer to read and write in Braille.

In a classroom next door, three other visually impaired – but not totally blind – students were given large-font test papers and 169 minutes to answer with the help of magnifying lenses and reading lamps.

"All the visually impaired students were put in well-lit classrooms on the first floor and provided with power cords, bottled water and snacks," said Li Meng, an exam official with Changchun University.

Two teachers, one of whom knew Braille, stood by in case the students needed help, he said.

For Luo Qian, a senior student majoring in acupuncture and massage, Saturday's test was a dream come true.

"If I pass the test, I will be one step closer to graduate school," said Luo, from central China's Hunan Province. She stayed up until after midnight revising for the test over the past few weeks.

Luo said she dreamed of becoming a teacher to help disabled children in her hometown earn their own living.

Luo wrote to education authorities in Jilin Province last September, asking for test papers in Braille to be made available for blind students, but her plea was unanswered and she failed to take the test last December as she hoped.

She repeated her request to Ministry of Education earlier this year and in May was told test papers in Braille would be available in the June test.

“This is the second major landmark for visually impaired students after test papers in Braille were used in the national college entrance exam in 2014,” Luo said after the test.

That year, Li Jinsheng, a student from central China’s Henan Province, became the first blind candidate to take the college entrance test. The move encouraged thousands of visually impaired students to study harder, enter higher education and live with dignity.

Changchun University’s College for Special Education is one of China’s largest higher education institutions for disabled young people. More than 370 of its students are visually impaired, according to Liu Haihan, a top college official.

The biannual College English Test, better known as the CET, is a national English as a foreign language test, which includes listening, reading and writing.

CET-4 or CET-6 is a requirement for university students.

Many universities will not allow a student to graduate without obtaining such a certificate, and it is often a prerequisite for those entering the job market.

Highlights of the 24th EASO Management Board meeting, 13-14 June 2017

On 13-14 June 2017, EASO held its 24th Management Board meeting at the Agency’s headquarters in Malta.

EASO’s Executive Director and Management Team updated the members of the Management Board on progress of work achieved in the implementation of the Agency’s Annual Work Programme and the situation of Asylum in the EU+ 2016.

Highlights from the 24th EASO Management Board Meeting by Jose Carreira, EASO Executive Director

Among main topics discussed included recent developments such as the EASO Asylum Intervention Pool System, new training modules and the development of support tools to enhance operational support activities on the ground and in particular in Italy and in Greece.

In view of the negotiations on the draft proposal for Regulation on the

European Union Agency for Asylum and the repealing Regulation, EASO also briefed the Management Board on its internal preparations in view of the implementation of the European Union Agency for Asylum, which is currently discussed by the co-legislators.

On situation of Asylum in the EU+, Mr. Ward Lutin, Head of EASO's Information and Analysis Unit commented that the increased number of asylum decisions at first instance in 2016 was a "record year". This led to a decrease on the number of backlog cases. As also reported during the MB meeting Germany, Italy, France and Greece were some of the main receiving countries of asylum applicants in the last 12 months.

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[Top political advisor stresses 1992 Consensus in cross-strait relations](#)

Top political advisor Yu Zhengsheng has stressed adherence to the 1992 Consensus and opposing "Taiwan independence" as the key to ensuring the peaceful development of cross-strait relations.



Yu Zhengsheng (R), chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, shakes hands with Hung Hsiu-chu, chairperson of the Taiwan-based Kuomintang (KMT) party at the ongoing 9th Straits Forum in Xiamen of southeast China's Fujian Province, June 17, 2017. (Xinhua/Ma Zhancheng)

Yu, chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, made the remarks Saturday while meeting representatives of the attendees at the ongoing 9th Straits Forum.

The core of the 1992 Consensus is the one-China policy, which states that both the mainland and Taiwan belong to one and the same China. It explicitly sets out that the fundamental nature of relations across the Taiwan Strait are not state-to-state relations.

After clarifying this, many issues between the two sides could be solved through consultation, said Yu.

By refusing to endorse the 1992 Consensus, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) administration has undermined the political foundation of the peaceful development of cross-strait relations, said Yu.

Yu called on the DPP to clarify the nature of cross-strait relations and implement it through action. "It is an issue that cannot be avoided," said Yu.