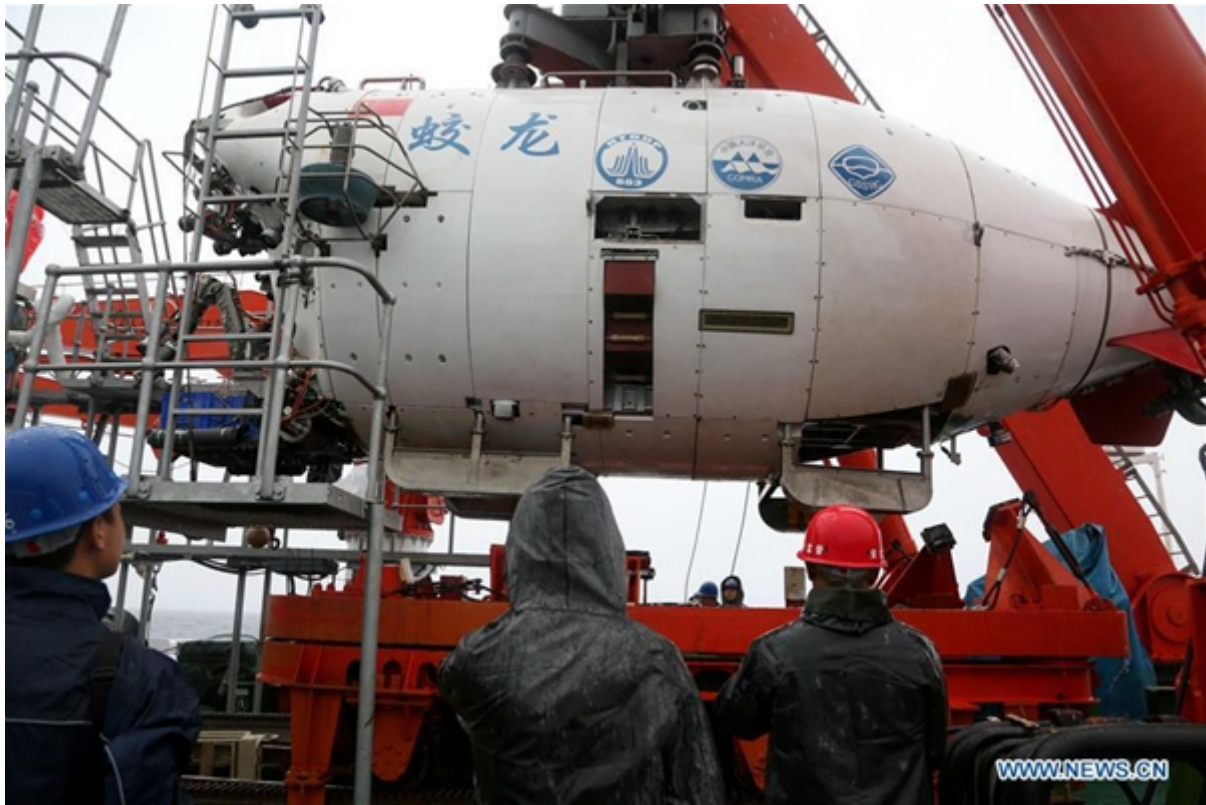


Chinese submersible Jiaolong dives in Yap Trench



Manned submersible Jiaolong is put into the sea to conduct its first dive in Yap Trench, June 4, 2017. [Photo/Xinhua]

On Sunday, China's manned submersible Jiaolong conducted its first dive in the Yap Trench of the year.

Jiaolong began diving at 8:43 a.m. local time on a rainy day, reaching a depth of 4,177 meters.

Jiaolong was not afraid of the bad weather, but the rain did make it a bit more difficult for the dive, said Wang Xiangxin, a staff member on board.

"We cannot hear each other clearly due to the rain, so we have to be extra careful during the operation," Wang said.

There will be five dives for Jiaolong in the Yap Trench, and the last dive is planned for June 12.

The dives will focus on research in deep-sea biotic communities and gene resources, according to scientists on the ship.

Jiaolong completed a series of dives in the Mariana Trench on June 1 and was transferred aboard Xiangyanghong to the Yap Trench afterward.

The Mariana and Yap trenches are located in the west Pacific Ocean. The Yap Trench has a depth of 8,527 meters, and the Mariana Trench, the deepest known

point of Earth's oceans, has a depth of 11,034 meters.

This is the third and final stage of China's 38th oceanic scientific expedition, which started Feb. 6 and is scheduled to finish on June 18. The two previous stages were successfully completed in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.

Sunday's operation was Jiaolong's 148th dive.

Named after a mythical dragon, Jiaolong reached its deepest point of 7,062 meters in the Mariana Trench in June 2012.