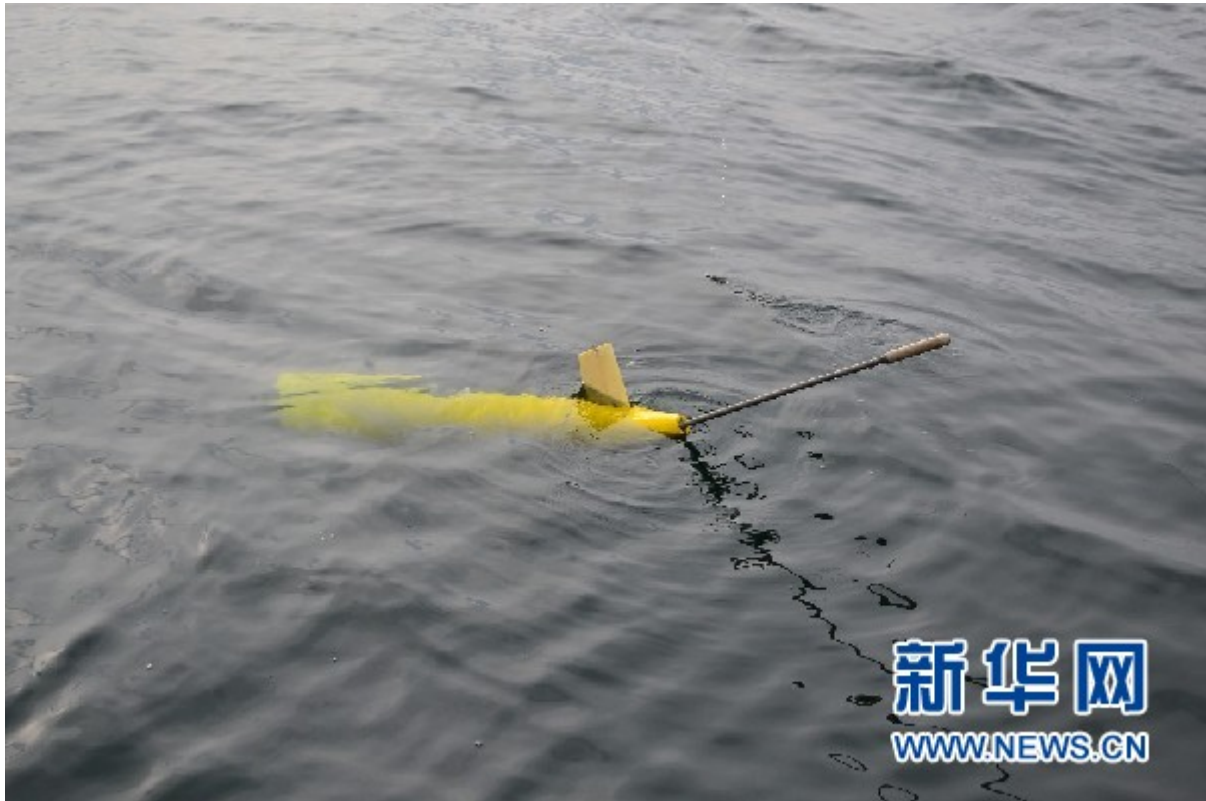


Records broken at ocean's lowest depth



Records broken at ocean's lowest depth [File photo/Xinhua]

Amid deputies attending the annual meetings of the top legislature and the top political advisory body, Chinese scientists have broken two world records at the ocean's lowest depth – the Mariana Trench, a scythe-shaped clef in the western Pacific Ocean seafloor that plunges nearly 11 kilometers deep.

China became the first country to collect the artificial seismic stratigraphy of the Challenger Deep, the deepest section of the trench measured at more than 10 kilometers, the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Geology and Geophysics said on Friday. The stratigraphy is used to study the Earth's movement, layers and geologic history.

China also set a new world diving record for underwater gliders at 6,329 meters with Hai Yi, a glider designed by the academy's Institute of Automation in Shenyang, Liaoning province, the academy said on Sunday. The previous recorder holder was a US glider at 6,000 meters.

"These experiments prove that China's deep-sea exploration technologies have reached an advanced level," the academy said in a statement.

"Data collected from these experiments are invaluable to the study of continental movement and its transformation," said Qiu Xuelin, a researcher at the academy's South China Sea Institute of Oceanology.

Both experiments were carried out by Chinese scientists onboard the academy's Explorer-I TS03 scientific surveying ship. They departed Sanya, Hainan province, en route to the Mariana Trench on Jan 15.

Upon arrival, they deployed 60 ocean-bottom seismometers to collect data for the stratigraphy on Jan 25. Some seismometers had sunk to 10,027 meters, the academy said, which is enough to submerge Qomolangma (8,850 meters), known as Mount Everest in the West.

These instruments can capture sound waves generated by earthquakes or human activities. These waves, combined with the motions of the Earth, can provide details about the geometry of the Earth's structure, said Wang Yuan, an engineer at the academy's Institute of Geology and Geophysics.

The glider is an autonomous underwater vehicle designed to survey marine conditions, such as temperature, salinity and currents, across large bodies of water.

Apart from breaking the world record, Hai Yi also completed 12 observation missions across 130 kilometers of water. The data it collected from the abyssal sea is "valuable for oceanologists studying the region", the academy said.

It took Chinese scientists 13 years to design and build the Hai Yi and its variants, it said, adding that there are more than two-dozen types, covering use in shallow sea, deep sea and abyssal sea.

[China's defense budget transparent: Finance Minister](#)

Chinese Finance Minister Xiao Jie Tuesday shrugged off concerns over China's military transparency, saying there was no opacity in the country's defense budget. "Let me be very clear, there is no such thing as opacity in China's military spending," Xiao told a press conference on the sidelines of the country's annual parliamentary session.

China's defense budgets used to be included in a report on the draft central and local budgets submitted to lawmakers for review and approval during the National People's Congress (NPC) session.

This year, however, the report available to media made no mention of the exact figure.

"We made some new changes in the way we compiled the files," Xiao said.

The minister explained that the defense budget, along with the budgets for foreign affairs and public security, was included in a draft budget submitted to lawmakers.

A finance ministry official told Xinhua Monday that the defense budget this

year would stand at 1.04 trillion yuan (about 152 billion U.S. dollars), up 7 percent year on year.

How could the Chancellor help raise productivity?

The budget is billed as helping drive productivity higher. That would be a good idea. If we work smarter as a country then each person can earn more. The government seems to have in mind labour productivity in its plans, though making productive use of capital, energy and other inputs also matters and can help make a country richer if done well.

The way to encourage smarter working and higher earnings must begin with fair taxation with low rates of tax on enterprise and effort. Politicians of all parties regard work as a good, yet all agree it must be taxed. Given the volume of public service we want as a country, it is true there has to be some tax on work. It is also true that if you tax work too highly you send it abroad, you persuade higher earning people to value leisure time more, you encourage early retirement. I trust the leaks about higher National Insurance for the self employed are just Treasury officials greedy for revenue and not inspired briefing. Starting a productivity drive with a big increase in taxes on some of the most productive people in the economy is not a great idea. Small and new business offers us scope for major adjustments in our economy and improvements in its performance. It is the new fast moving smaller businesses that often pioneer the modern more productive techniques and technologies, offer the new goods and services, and use labour well. Cutting marginal rates of tax on enterprise, employment and business success will encourage more of what we need.

In both manufacturing and clerical work providing more machine power and computer power at the elbow of each employee raises productivity. UK productivity in factories in recent years has surged as elsewhere in the advanced world. What was done by hand and arm power in a sixties factory is now often done by robot or mechanical power. What was done in an office by people on typewriters, calculators and adding machines is now done by computers and electronic programmes with less human intervention. The full internet revolution has further to run to automate and take more of the routine out of office and factory working. The new jobs will be in machine minding, programming, managing and reviewing the output, and in designing and selling.

The waves of change that are often ascribed to imports and foreign competition also have been driven by automation. A more productive economy has to welcome these waves of technical progress and adopt more machine power to compete. It is then equally important that those who have lost their jobs

as a result are helped and trained to undertake the many new roles a machine driven culture produce. What can a Chancellor do to bring this about?

He can and should concentrate on helping the public sector to adopt the new ways of doing things that will be smarter, higher quality and more efficient by using computer power. Productivity performance has been disappointing in the public sector this century. He can and should with the rest of government to do more to ensure the casualties of such changes are also winners, by backing retraining and recruitment into the new more productive jobs investment can spawn.

[In Somalia, UN chief Guterres urges global support to avert famine, tackle cholera](#)

7 March 2017 – Visiting Somalia, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today urged international support to avoid a famine in the drought-hit African country and curb the spread of cholera while also highlighting some hopeful developments there.

“It is exactly because it is tragic and because it is hopeful that it makes sense to make a very strong appeal to the international community to support Somalia at the present moment,” Mr. Guterres told reporters in the country’s capital, Mogadishu.

With almost half of the Somali population in need of assistance, including 330,000 children who are acutely malnourished, the UN chief reiterated an appeal for \$825 million for the support of 5.5 million people for six months.

“There is a chance in Somalia to avoid a situation like the one we had in 2011,” he said, referring to the previous famine that killed many in that country.

He said that 3.3 million people are in need of health support and that cholera has been developing and making hunger even worse and more dangerous. In the last two months, there were 7,731 cases of cholera with 183 people dying. Just last week, there were 1,352 cases of cholera and 38 people dying. “It’s a process in acceleration,” he warned.

But now is also “a moment of hope” because Somalia is turning the page, with a new President elected and a new Prime Minister appointed, he said.

“There is a very strong commitment to enhance security and at the same time to enhance the capacity of the government to start to provide effective

services to the population,” he said.

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which is doing a job that the world should be grateful for because it is not only protecting Somalis, but protecting all against terrorism, has not been effectively helped by the international community, he said.

[UN migration agency seeks \\$25 million to aid families in Eastern Ukraine](#)

7 March 2017 – To meet the emergency needs of 180,000 people in Eastern Ukraine, the United Nations migration agency today announced plans to provide aid ranging from blankets to money to cover electricity costs and psychological support at a cost of \$25 million.

“Many of the people who need urgent help are trapped in villages along the contact line without fuel for heating and cooking, hot water, food, or basic necessities,” said said Manfred Profazi, the Chief of Mission for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Ukraine.

Since April 2014, nearly 10,000 people have been killed in fighting in Eastern Ukraine and nearly 23,000 injured.

In addition, an estimated 3.8 million people are in need of humanitarian aid, according to IOM figures. More than half of those people are displaced across the country “jobless, struggling to pay their utility bills and lacking funds for food and medical expenses,” according to information released today.

One of the worries is that mass displacement elevates the risk of human trafficking. In addition to humanitarian concerns, the UN agency is aiming to help the displaced communities come together to strengthen mutual trust.

“Traffickers know the market and cynically move in to exploit vulnerable people who are desperate to provide for their families. We will work with communities both to prevent it happening and to assist victims,” Mr. Profazi said.