

China unveils leading research vessels to boost marine survey

China unveiled two domestic state-of-the-art marine geological survey vessels in Shanghai Tuesday.

One ship, Haiyang Dizhi-8 (Ocean Geology No.8) uses world-leading techniques to create high-resolution three-dimensional images of the seabed's geological structure.

Haiyang Dizhi-8 is 88 meters in length, can cruise for up to 16,000 nautical miles and has a maximum speed over 15 knots per hour.

The other ship, Haiyang Dizhi-9, comes with the world's best deep-water drilling system, able to dig 160 meters into the seabed at a water depth of 2,500 meters.

"The launch, one year ahead of schedule, will boost the fleet of long-serving ships," said Zhong Ziran, head of China Geological Survey.

The new ships are also a great boost to China's marine exploration for oil and gas.

Both ships are seaworthy in all kinds of waters.

China now has six marine geological research vessels in service, launching Haiyang-6 in October 2008.

It plans to unveil Haiyang Dizhi-10 at the beginning of May and put the three new vessels into service by the end of October.

China's large lakes face water shortages

Two of China's largest lakes along the Yangtze River, the Poyang and Dongting, face extreme water shortages, local authorities and environment observers have said.

Last year, Poyang, China's largest freshwater lake, entered its low season 54 days earlier than in previous years. By Tuesday, the water level at Xingzi station was 8.37 meters, 2 meters lower than the average in the low season.

The overall water area of the Poyang Lake is currently 351 square kilometers, about one-fourth of what it is in flood season, according to the local water

resources department.

The Dongting Lake in Hunan Province is also drying out. The drinking water supply of residents and local animals is also under threat.

Hu Zhenpeng, director of the Jiangxi provincial ecological civilization association, said aquatic vegetation on the Poyang Lake had reduced by 400 square kilometers and many animals had died due to the drought.

"As the lake beds are exposed, lake species such as the Yangtze dolphin have an even smaller space to live in," Hu said.

"I did not catch much big fish for the whole of the winter," said Zhang Donggun, a 57-year-old farmer in Lushan City, Jiangxi Province.

"Usually fish lay eggs in the Yangtze, and around the beginning of April they come to the Poyang Lake to grow. But if water levels are too low, they do not have room to grow," he said.

Facing stark water shortages around the two lakes, farmers have had to switch from a double crop rice to a single crop breed.

There have been proposals to establish sluice gates to regulate water for the two lakes, but experts have warned that gates could create more problems than they could solve.

"The management of the two lakes could impact the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River and even impact the economic and social development of the whole country," said Chen Jin, an expert with the Yangtze River Research Institute.

"Waste water discharged into the lake area must be controlled, and the efficiency of water use needs to be improved," he said.

Xi stresses stability, progress in China's economic work

China will stick to the basic tone of "seeking progress while maintaining stability" in this year's economic work to ensure stable and healthy development, Chinese President Xi Jinping said Tuesday.

"China will strive to improve the quality and efficiency of the economy and deepen supply-side structural reform," Xi said at a meeting of the Central Leading Group on Finance and Economic Affairs.

It was the 15th conference of the leading group, which is headed by Xi. Premier Li Keqiang, the deputy head, also attended the meeting.

The country's economic regulators reported their work plans in excess capacity cutting, financial risk control, property market regulation and the revival of the manufacturing sector.

After hearing the reports, Xi highlighted the handling of loss-making "zombie companies" in excess capacity cutting.

"The government should make more efforts to guarantee subsistence allowance and re-employment for those laid-off, and grab effective methods to dissolve corporate debts and prevent moral hazard," Xi said. "China will accelerate building a supervision coordination mechanism and strengthen macro-prudential regulation to prevent systemic risks."

He also pointed out the role that financial supervision could play in improving the economy.

"Financial supervisors should fix weak links and act hard against illegal activities," he said, calling for reform and innovation to help the financial sector better serve the real economy.

"Houses are built to be lived in, not for speculation," Xi said, when making instructions on house market regulation.

"A long-term mechanism will be established to ensure market stability, with improved policies to stabilize home buying, guide market expectations and enhance land supply systems," Xi said.

Xi stressed quality in reviving the manufacturing sector, saying the sector should shift from the expansion of quantity to the improvement of quality.

"China will channel more energy into reducing prices and administrative fees in monopolized sectors, and strive to lower business burdens," Xi added.

During the meeting, policymakers discussed the work report of the leading group, which has rolled out more than 400 measures to improve economic regulation since 2012.

[H7N9 patient leaves hospital in southwest China](#)

A 58-year-old male patient who had tested positive for the H7N9 avian flu virus in southwest China's Sichuan Province has been cured and left the hospital on Tuesday, provincial health authorities said.

The man was treated in a hospital in Suining city of Sichuan. He was the first H7N9 patient in Sichuan, the provincial health and family planning commission said.

"His temperature is normal and he shows no symptoms of infection," said He Zhengguang, head of the Suining city H7N9 prevention experts' team.

As of the end of last week, at least 270 H7N9 human infections had been reported in China, with 87 fatalities. Most cases were around the Yangtze and Pearl river deltas.

China's State Council called for continued efforts in prevention and control of the H7N9 bird flu outbreak.

The government ordered better management of live poultry markets, including closure, sanitation and quarantine.

H7N9 was first reported in humans in China in March 2013 and is most likely to strike in winter and spring.

Bus currency counters: Counting US\$2,900 daily

In Kunming, there is a group of female bus currency counters who wear blue uniforms and count tens of thousands of small bills and coins every day.

There are 4,000 buses receiving about US\$174,000 in cash daily, which means that each of the bus currency counters needs to count at least US\$2,180 in small bills and coins daily. Xiao Qiong, who has been working as a bus currency counter for 10 years, said the average daily counting amount is US\$2,900, and US\$3,633 at most.

The counting center of Kunming Bus Group is located in an ordinary building. All of the bus currency counters are female. They all wear blue uniforms and count the small bills and coins under the surveillance of more than 10 security cameras.

Xiao Qiong comes to the counting center at about 8 a.m. She needs to put on her blue uniform before entering the office. She has to stick her fingers with adhesive plaster because sometimes hard paper cuts her fingers.

It takes less than one minute for her to count more than 60 one-yuan banknotes. "The biggest trouble is folded banknotes, because it takes so much time to open the folded banknote," said by Xiao Qiong.

These bus coin counters only rest half an hour at noon and they can only leave work after finishing the counting of the cash received from the previous day. Many of them suffer from occupational diseases, such as shoulder periarthrititis, tendovaginitis and lumbar protrusion. According to Xiao Qiong, it is easier to get cramps in hands after coming back from

holidays.

For final review, the bills and coins are handled automatically by machines. The machines can distinguish the money that can still be used from the money that should be destroyed automatically. Coins will be sent to an automatic coin sorter. The small bills and coins will be handed to People's Bank of China after final review by the bus counting center.

Sometimes, passengers may put their identification cards or other belongings into bus fare box by mistake. According to the head of the counting center, passengers can demand the bus team of the line to issue a certification and bring it to the counting center. The counting center can return the personal belonging to the passengers.