

Chinese Scientists Start 38th Ocean Expedition Trip

Chinese scientists started their 38th ocean scientific expedition on February 6, with the country's first deep sea manned submersible *Jiaolong*.

The mother ship, *Xiangyanghong 09*, left Qingdao in east China carrying the sub and more than 150 personnel for a 124-day trip, the longest *Jiaolong* has yet undertaken.

The researchers will carry out surveys in the northwest Indian Ocean, the South China Sea, the Yap Trench, and the Mariana Trench in the west Pacific Ocean.

With *Jiaolong*, more discoveries are expected in the northwest Indian Ocean, said chief scientist Han Xiqu. The trip will run until June 9.

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

Hailong 2, or *Sea Dragon 2*, and *Qianlong 1*, both unmanned submersibles, were officially deployed at the National Deep sea Center in Qingdao. *Hailong 2*, which is linked to the support ship via a wire, can work at a maximum depth of 3,500 meters. In 2009, the homemade underwater robot discovered a deepsea hydrothermal "chimney" vent near the equator in the eastern Pacific. Wireless *Qianlong 1* can operate at a depth of 6,000 meters. The three types of subs are all domestically-made and each has its own specialties, according to researchers.

A new mothership for *Jiaolong* is estimated to be put into use in March 2019. It will be capable of carrying all three sub types, said Yu Hongjun, director of the center.