

China to build two new Antarctic bases

December 19 2013



This file photo, obtained from NASA on November 14, 2012, shows a view of Sheldon Glacier with Mount Barre in the background, seen from Ryder Bay near Rothera Research Station, Adelaide Island, Antarctica

Chinese workers are on their way to build the country's fourth Antarctic research base and a fifth is being planned, state-run media said on Thursday as the country expands its imprint on the icy continent.

Construction on the main building of the fourth camp, named Taishan, will be completed next year, the state-run China Daily reported.

It will be used during the summer season for research into "geology, glaciers, geomagnetism and atmospheric science", the report said, adding that its main building will be shaped "like a Chinese lantern."

Pictures showed a Chinese icebreaker heading through sheets of broken ice towards the frozen continent, carrying a reported 256-strong crew.

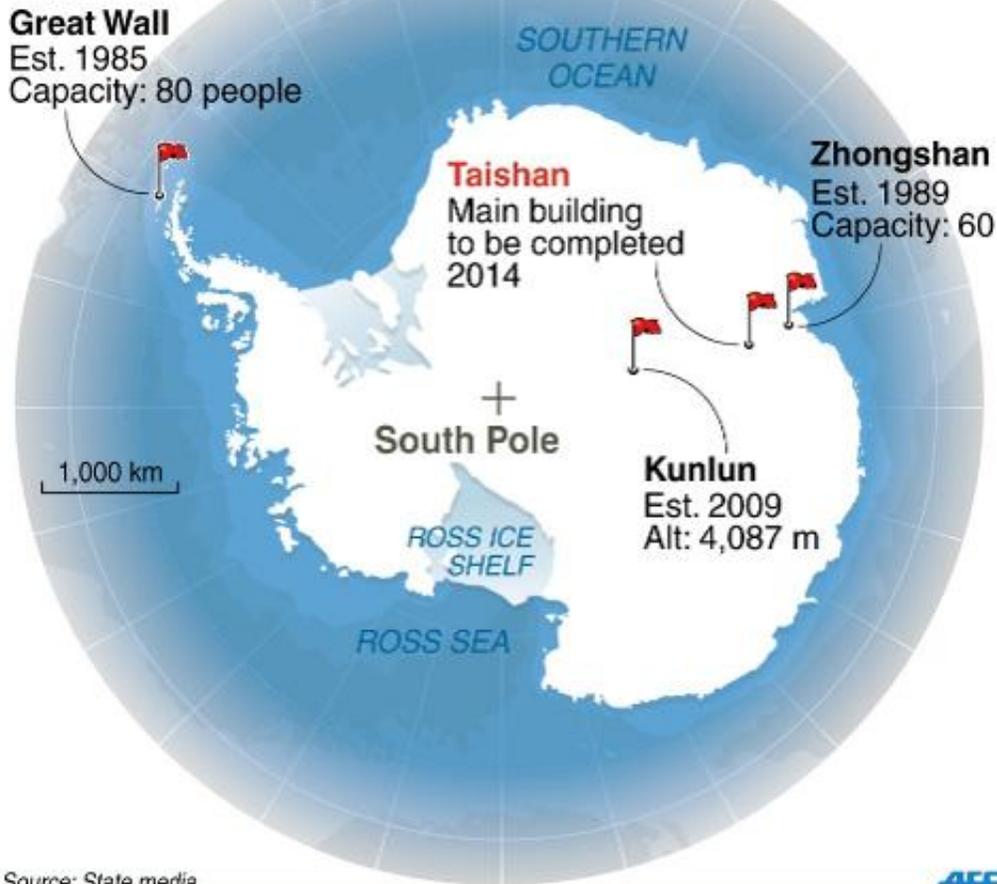
The expedition will also carry out site inspections for another [research station](#), the report said.

The report came a month after Russia and China blocked proposals for two vast ocean sanctuaries in Antarctica to protect its pristine wilderness.

Environmentalists slammed the "stubborn self interest" of nations opposing the plan, saying that an ocean wilderness home to 16,000 known species including whales, seals and penguins was at stake.

China in the Antarctic

Research stations



Source: State media

AFP

Graphic showing China's Antarctic research bases

China is a relative latecomer to Antarctic exploration, sending its first exploration team to the remote continent in 1984 and establishing its first research base a year later.

Approximately 30 nations operate permanent research stations in Antarctica including the US, China, Russia, Australia, Britain, France and Argentina.

Argentina, one of the closest countries to Antarctica, has 13 facilities on the continent, more than any other country, according to 2012 data from the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP).

The US maintains six facilities, while Russia has 12 and Japan five, according to COMNAP.

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