

The drilling foreman on duty, Vladilen Ismagilov, stood before the main drilling panel like a captain on the bridge of a ship. Lights and numbers flickered while the television screen on which I saw how the next braid of the tube was fed to the base of the borehole, lit up. Let's take a look at it.

"The entire process of operating a super-deep borehole," says Vladilen Abdulovich, "is completely computerized. There are programs for drilling, lowering, raising and other operations. On the panel I have information from 32 channels.

"How do you find out what's going on at the 12-kilometer level?"

"A hydraulic communications channel is provided. What kind of a thing is this braid made from lightweight alloy tubes 147 millimeters in diameter and 12-kilometers long? Take an ordinary thread, measure off five meters, and put a needle on the end. This will be a simplified mock-up of the ultra-deep borehole. If we didn't have information from the turbo-drill, then how would we know whether it was working or not, and whether well or poorly? We also have in operation a program for identifying a pre-breakdown situation."