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FAST opens up to world's scientists



Above: A bird's-eye view of the Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical Radio Telescope, the world's largest tiled-aperture and most sensitive radio telescope, is seen on Wednesday. The facility, in Pingtang county, Guizhou province, officially opened for use by scientists around the world starting Wednesday.

Left: A researcher works in the control office of the telescope on Saturday.

PHOTOS BY OU DONGQU / XINHUA

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FAST officially opens up to world's scientists

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China's Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical Telescope, the world's most sensitive and largest single-dish radio telescope, officially opened for use by scientists around the world on Wednesday.

Astronomers can visit its website (fast.hao.ac.cn) to submit applications for observations, the National Astronomical Observatories, a subsidiary of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said in a statement.

Results will be announced on July 20 after evaluation of the applications, with international observations to kick off in August.

Approximately 450 hours — 10 percent of this year's observation time — are expected to be allocated to foreign scientists.

The first round of opening for overseas applications will close on May 15, said Jiang Peng, the telescope's chief designer. He told China National Radio the applications will then be submitted to FAST's scientific committee and its time allocation committee for screening and evaluation.

He said proposals first need to be technically feasible, meaning the telescope will be able to achieve its purpose of observation. Scientists will then evaluate the scientific value of the proposals — what results they could produce.

"It is also important to consider, for example, who can produce better results in less time. This is also one of the evaluation criteria,"



FAST will provide its research facilities to the world with an open attitude, offering more observation options for the international astronomical community."

Observatories of the radio telescope

Jiang added.

FAST, in southwestern China's Guizhou province, has been operating stably and reliably since passing national technical and performance assessments early last year.

It has discovered more than 300 pulsars and made breakthroughs in fields such as fast radio bursts.

The observatories said FAST will provide its research facilities to the world with an open attitude, offering more observation options for the international astronomical community.

The project will contribute Chinese wisdom to the construction of a community with a shared future for humanity, and strive to promote international science and technology development and the progress of human civilization, it added.