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## Anhui space lab to foster local talent

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China has established a deep-space exploration laboratory to serve future lunar and interplanetary programs, according to the China National Space Administration.

The lab, headquartered in Hefei, capital of Anhui province, is managed by the CNSA, the provincial government of Anhui and the University of Science and Technology of China in Hefei.

It was registered in Hefei in February and preparatory work finished earlier this month, the administration said on Tuesday, adding that it has started research operations.

The establishment of the laboratory is an important step toward implementing an innovation-driven development strategy and

increasing the country's strength in science and technology, Zhang Kejian, head of the CNSA, said at the laboratory council's first workshop held last week via video link.

He urged the entity to attract top-tier scientists from home and abroad, explore new management approaches for research work, find new international partners for China's space programs, and use its expertise to boost economic development and the science and technology capability of Anhui.

Wu Weiren, chief designer of China's lunar exploration program and academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, has been selected as the director of the laboratory.

He said the lab will take part in the country's major deep-space exploration programs and will engage in research on cutting-edge science and technology.

"It is an open platform for both domestic and overseas experts. Deep-space exploration is a shared endeavor for all people around the world so there are no limits in this regard," he said.

Zhang said in February the lab will be involved in the planning for China's coming lunar and interplanetary missions and the construction of an asteroid defense system.

Pang Zhibao, an observer of China's space program, said the lab will act as a research and development hub for space programs in southern China and recruit and train local professionals.

"Anhui and its neighboring provinces have many fine research institutes, manufacturing, and science and technology professionals. The lab can take advantage of them and will play a leading role in future projects," he said.