TOP NEWS

Astronomical satellite detects gamma-ray bursts

By ZHAO LEI
zhaolei@chinadaily.com.cn

A cutting-edge astronomical satellite jointly developed by China and France has begun to produce scientific payoffs, as it recently detected three gamma-ray bursts, according to the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

The academy, the nation's top science body, announced this week that the Space Variable Objects Monitor, or SVOM, detected a gamma-ray burst on the morning of June 27, soon after its Gamma-ray Burst Monitor, one of the four mission payloads, was activated for tests earlier that morning.

The apparatus also detected two other gamma-ray bursts, on June 29 and July 2. The data of the three gamma-ray bursts has been sent to the General Coordinates Network, an international collaboration platform for astronomy research, according to the academy.

Gamma-ray bursts, immensely energetic explosions in distant galaxies, are the brightest and most extreme explosive events in the universe and the most energetic and luminous electromagnetic events since the Big Bang.

Before the scientific detection, the satellite had undergone in-orbit tests and established real-time connections with over 40 ground communication stations. All of its four mission payloads had successfully completed their power-on tests, said the academy.

Wei Jianyan, a scientist at the CAS' National Astronomical Observatories and the SVOM mission's Chinese principal investigator, said the detection results have testified to the monitor's capability.

"Other mission payloads on the satellite are still being fine-tuned and will undergo scientific capability tests. If the results are satisfactory, then we can expect exciting findings by the satellite in its ensuing operations," he said.

Initiated in 2005, the SVOM project is the result of a long-term collaboration between the China National Space Administration and France's National Center for Space Studies. It has involved scientists and engineers from multiple institutes, including the Research Institute in Astrophysics and Planetology in Toulouse, France, and the Institute of High Energy Physics in Beijing.

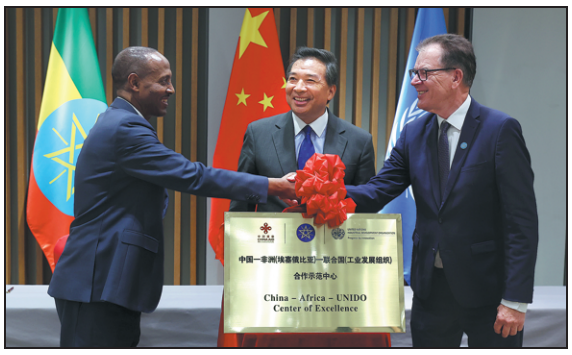
The SVOM is a combination of small telescopes. It was placed in a low-Earth orbit by a Chinese Long March 2C carrier rocket launched on June 22 from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in Sichuan province.

The 930-kilogram satellite was built by the CAS' Innovation Academy for Microsatellites in Shanghai. It carries four scientific payloads: the ECLAIRs coded mask camera and the Microchannel X-ray Telescope made by French scientists, and the Gamma-ray Burst Monitor and the Visible Telescope built by the Chinese team.

The satellite, the best ever built for multiband comprehensive observation of gamma-ray bursts, is expected to play an important role in space-based astronomical exploration, according to the China National Space Administration.

The main scientific objectives of the mission include searching for and rapidly locating various gamma-ray bursts; comprehensively measuring and studying their electromagnetic radiation properties; using the bursts to study dark energy and the evolution of the universe; and observing electromagnetic signals associated with gravitational waves.

Sharing prosperity



Luo Zhaohui (center), head of the China International Development Cooperation Agency, Melaku Alebel (left), Ethiopia's minister of industry, and Gerd Muller, director-general of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, jointly unveil the name plate of the China-Africa-UNIDO Center of Excellence. The center, which was established under the framework of the Global Development Initiative, aims to promote shared development and prosperity.
ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

Reform: Further financial opening-up anticipated

From page 1

Wu Xiaoqiu, dean of Renmin University of China's National Academy of Financial Research, said the guideline has set the right tone for future capital market reform, urging "tough laws and harsh punishments" to stem violations and address the prominent issues of fraudulent listings and false disclosures.

The compensation system for small investors affected by those malpractices and induced delistings should also be improved on both the civil and judicial fronts, Wu said.

China's A-share market rallied on Thursday, with the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index rising 1.06 percent on Thursday to close at 2,970.39 points, following a policy measure issued on Wednesday to restrict short-selling.

At the Central Financial Work Conference in November, Xi called for giving full play to the pivotal role of the capital market, advancing the registration-based initial public offering system and steadily expanding institutional opening-up in the financial sector.

Experts also underlined the need for China to widen opening-up to strengthen the financial system's ability for resource allocation, expecting the upcoming reform meeting to call for ensuring a transparent, predictable regulatory environment for foreign investors and reinforcing the role of Hong Kong as an international financial hub.

Zhang Xiaoyan, a chair professor of finance at Tsinghua University's PBC School of Finance, said she expects the country to further drive financial opening-up to attract more foreign institutional investors, whose global perspective and investment expertise will help channel more resources to technological companies with real strength.

Thierry Leger, CEO of Paris-based global reinsurer SCOR, said that China's step-by-step financial opening-up has helped shape a high level of confidence, and it is important for the country to continue to build a stable regulatory environment for foreign investors.

Eugene Qian, China country head of UBS and chairman of UBS Securities, said the Swiss financial giant, having benefited from China's capital market reform and opening-up, will continue to leverage its international experience and local expertise to support China's further reform in the capital market.

Contact the writers at zhoulanxv@chinadaily.com.cn

Goodwill meeting



Peng Liyuan (second from right), wife of President Xi Jinping and the World Health Organization's goodwill ambassador for tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, meets with Winnie Byanyima (second from left), executive director of UNAIDS and undersecretary-general of the United Nations, and Jerome Salomon (left), assistant director-general for Universal Health Coverage, Communicable and Noncommunicable Disease at WHO, on Thursday at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

Nation vows to boost ties with Solomon Islands

Mutually beneficial cooperation, common development emphasized

By CAO DESHENG
caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

Premier Li Qiang pledged on Thursday to enhance ties between China and the Solomon Islands, and expressed Beijing's commitment to working with Pacific island countries to build an even closer community with a shared future.

Li made the remarks during his talks in Beijing with Jeremiah Manele, prime minister of the Solomon Islands. Manele is making a weeklong official visit to China that started on Tuesday.

China will continue to uphold the principles of mutual respect, equality, mutually beneficial cooperation and common development to promote the steady development of comprehensive strategic partnerships with Pacific island countries, including the Solomon Islands, Li said.

During the meeting, Li highlighted the robust growth of bilateral relations over the past five years since the two countries established diplomatic ties, saying that political mutual trust between China and the Solomon Islands has continuously deepened and their exchanges and cooperation in various fields have been fruitful.

China supports the Solomon Islands in independently choosing a development path that suits its national conditions, and is willing to work together to firmly support each other's core interests, he said.

China is ready to share more development experiences with the Solomon Islands and strengthen cooperation in infrastructure, rural development, communication and low-carbon transformation, Li said. He also noted that the nation is also willing to import more high-quality agricultural products from the Solomon Islands and encourage eligible Chinese enterprises to invest in the country.

Both sides should enhance exchanges and cooperation in education, healthcare, culture, sports and youth development, deepen subnational partnership, and further facilitate people-to-people exchanges, in order to solidify the foundation of public support for bilateral cooperation, he added.

Manele expressed his appreciation for the fruitful cooperation between the Solomon Islands and China over the past five years, and thanked China for its strong support for the economic and social development of his country.

The Solomon Islands steadfastly adheres to the one-China principle, supports President Xi Jinping's vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind, and highly appreciates China's contributions to promoting world peace and development, he said.

It is willing to deepen cooperation with China in the fields of economy and trade, infrastructure construction, healthcare, culture and poverty alleviation, and jointly address global challenges such as climate change, he added.

Following their talks, the two leaders witnessed the signing of multiple bilateral cooperation agreements on jointly building of the Belt and Road, economy and trade, education, the digital economy, green development, and inspection and quarantine.

Egyptian leader greeted

In another development, Premier Li congratulated Mustafa Madbouly on his reappointment as Egyptian prime minister on Thursday.

In a congratulatory message sent to Madbouly, Li highlighted the deep-rooted friendship between China and Egypt, emphasizing the robust development of the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two nations in recent years, which he said has brought tangible benefits to the people of both countries.

The Chinese government attaches great importance to the development of Sino-Egyptian relations, and is willing to work together with the new Egyptian government to implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of both countries to deepen political mutual trust and enhance friendly cooperation in various fields to drive bilateral relations to new heights, Li said.

Robotaxis: Legal onus yet to be spelled out

From page 1

The Beijing municipal government recently announced plans to support the use of autonomous vehicles for urban public electric bus transportation, ride-hailing services and car rentals. So far, more than 20 cities nationwide have introduced policies supporting autonomous driving tests, with more than 60 enterprises having obtained self-driving test licenses.

However, there are still some obstacles to integrating the self-driving vehicles into the existing road traffic safety management system, as the legal obligations of relevant subjects involving autonomous vehicles have not been clarified under current laws and regulations, said Huang Jinjing, head of the regulation office at the Road Traffic Safety Research Center of the Ministry of Public Security.

Furthermore, the rising prominence of robotaxis in China has drawn complaints from taxi drivers as they fear that their jobs might be replaced by driverless ride-hailing cars, given that the fees for robotaxis are typically cheaper than those of traditional taxis.

Pan Helin, a member of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's Expert Committee for Information and Communication Economy, said, "Currently, driverless cars will not pose a challenge to the traditional taxis sector because people are only inclined to experience this emerging technology, and the number of robotaxis on the road is still far smaller than those of taxis."

He noted the pressure on taxi drivers mainly comes from intense competition between private ride-hailing cars and traditional taxis, adding that the autonomous driving vehicles will not have a serious impact on the job market and replace human drivers in the short term.

The development of the self-driving industry will bolster the intelligent transformation of the auto industry, rev up the sales of vehicle-mounted devices, and accelerate the construction of vehicle-road coordination systems, which support the transfer of information from vehicles to roadway networks as a way to improve traffic efficiency, he added.

According to research company BloombergNEF's "Electric Vehicle Outlook" report, China will operate the world's largest robotaxi fleet of about 12 million self-driving vehicles by 2040, followed by the United States with around 7 million such vehicles.

Fugitive on wanted list repatriated to US

By YANG ZEKUN
yangzekun@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese police handed over a United States citizen, wanted by Interpol for alleged child sexual abuse crimes in the US, to US authorities at Shanghai Pudong International Airport on Wednesday, China's Ministry of Public Security announced on Thursday.

The act was made in response to a request from US law enforcement agencies, and the suspect was escorted back by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security of the US Department of State, according to the ministry.

This follows successful cooperation between law enforcement agencies of China and the US in June, with the escorting of two fugitives suspected of serious crimes from the US to China.

According to the ministry, in May 2014, the suspect was wanted by US law enforcement for alleged child sexual abuse, and in October 2018, Interpol issued a red notice against him.

In response to the US request, Chinese police conducted a thorough investigation into the fugitive, eventually locating and detaining him according to the law. After the investigation, it was determined that the fugitive did not commit any crimes related to child sexual abuse within China, the ministry said.

An official with the ministry said that based on the consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries at the San Francisco summit in November, the law enforcement agencies of both countries have recently engaged in practical cooperation in areas such as drug control, the repatriation of illegal immigrants, pursuit of fugitives, and combating transnational crimes.

Report notes lasting hazards of South China Sea award

By ZHANG YUNBI
zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese think tanks released a detailed report on Thursday pointing to the lasting hazards made by a decision of the so-called South China Sea Arbitration Tribunal in The Hague in 2016.

The decision, instead of providing a solution to the disputes of the South China Sea, "has made the already complicated South China Sea issue even more difficult to resolve", according to the report released by the Huayang Center for Maritime Cooperation and Ocean Governance, the National Institute for South China Sea Studies and the Chinese Society of International Law.

The Philippines unilaterally initiated the South China Sea arbitration case, and "the Arbitral Tribunal exceeded its jurisdiction", the report said.

It warned that the decision "has brought shocks to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea as a balanced and serious 'package agreement', and has shaken the confidence" of the parties to the convention "in the proper use of the dispute settlement mechanism of UNCLOS in practice".

China has stated on various occasions that it opposes and does not accept any claim or action based on the award.

In addition, Beijing has spared no efforts in settling disputes with the Philippines and other countries directly concerned through bilateral negotiation and consultation in accordance with international law and practice.

In recent years, some individuals and groups, both within and outside the region of the South China Sea, have called for or taken steps toward having the decision accepted as international law.

That "reflects the attempts of certain countries in the region, based on false strategic judgments, to affirm the award and strengthen their unilateral claims", the report said.

Such efforts made by some forces outside the region aim to "stir up trouble in the South China Sea by seeking to drive a wedge between" China and member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, it added.

Wu Shicun, chairman of the Huayang Research Center for Maritime Cooperation and Ocean Governance, said the current Philippine administration "has substantially backpedaled on the effective approaches and efforts made by Beijing and Manila in recent years for properly tackling the South China Sea issue and managing their maritime differences".

"As Manila has kept asking China to accept the arbitration every year when it celebrates the arbitration's anniversaries, it is necessary to once again highlight China's position on the arbitration," he added.