

Press release

For immediate release

HKU Establishes Hong Kong Institute for Astronomy and Astrophysics Elevating Hong Kong as a Global Hub for Cosmic Discovery

16 November, 2025



Plaque-unveiling ceremony of the Hong Kong Institute for Astronomy and Astrophysics. From left: Professor Bing Zhang, Founding Director of HKIAA; Professor Matthew Bailes, 2023 Shaw Prize Laureate in Astronomy; Professor Sun Dong, Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry; Professor Xiang Zhang, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hong Kong; Professor Yipeng Jing, Academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Shanghai Jiao Tong University; Professor Shengcai Shi, Academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Purple Mountain Observatory.

The University of Hong Kong (HKU) announced the inauguration of the Hong Kong Institute for Astronomy and Astrophysics (HKIAA) with a plaque-unveiling ceremony on 3 November. The event gathered world-leading scientists and government dignitaries to herald a new era of astronomical research in the region.

In his opening address, Professor Xiang Zhang, President and Vice-Chancellor of HKU, remarked that astronomy and astrophysics stand at the frontier of science, with far-reaching impacts across disciplines, and represent fields where international collaboration is both essential and achievable. Professor Zhang emphasised that the Institute would unite astronomers across Hong Kong and the Greater Bay Area, reinforcing the city's role as a dynamic hub for global scientific advancement.

The HKSAR Government's strong support was affirmed by Professor Sun Dong, Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry. Professor Sun positioned the HKIAA as a vital platform that will strengthen Hong Kong's role as a global hub for scientific excellence, attracting top talent and fostering partnerships with leading international institutions.

“The establishment of HKIAA aligns with the Government's vision to cultivate a thriving innovation and technology ecosystem and provides academic, and research and development support to building a robust space economy in Hong Kong,” Professor Sun said.

Professor Bing Zhang, Founding Director of HKIAA and Chair Professor of Astrophysics, outlined his vision for the Institute’s launch. Professor Zhang highlighted emphasised Hong Kong’s distinctive potential to drive progress in astronomy and astrophysics across East Asia.” Hong Kong should become known not only for awarding top astrophysicists but also for pioneering cutting-edge research,” Professor Zhang stated. In light of the nation's rapid scientific and technological advancement, Professor Zhang further emphasised that HKIAA would become a pivotal contributor to the burgeoning national astronomical research landscape.

The ceremony was attended by over 20 representatives from astronomical institutions across the Chinese Mainland, including four academicians from the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Professors Yipeng Jing from Shanghai Jiaotong University and Professor Shengcai Shi from the Purple Mountain Observatory delivered congratulatory speeches at the event. They expressed confidence in strong future collaborations between HKIAA, their institutions, and other astronomical research centres in the Chinese Mainland.

The Institute also garnered strong international recognition through an inspiring address by Professor Matthew Bailes, 2023 Shaw Laureate in Astronomy. Drawing upon his distinguished career as both a leading scientist and institutional director, Professor Bailes highlighted the unifying power of science. “Scientists really lead the way on diplomacy,” Professor Bailes stated. “The Institute can be a great avenue for scientists from both the East and the West to work together.”

The inauguration concluded with video messages from global leaders in the field, followed by the inaugural HKIAA Symposium. The Symposium featured HKIAA members from four universities presenting their cutting-edge research across diverse areas of astrophysics.

The HKIAA currently comprises nine Faculty members from HKU’s Department of Physics and Earth & Planetary Sciences, along with 14 affiliated members from institutions across Hong Kong. With plans for significant expansion and a new, spacious facility at Cyberport opening in early 2026, the Institute is poised to become an international centre of research excellence, a platform for global collaboration, and a central hub for astronomers throughout Hong Kong and the Greater Bay Area.

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