

Astrosat to open doors to international community

By Sunderarajan Padmanabhan

Jaipur, March 9 (India Science Wire): Astrosat, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)'s satellite exclusively devoted to astronomy studies, is all set to go global.

ISRO has decided to allow scientists and research organisations across the world to use the satellite if they require it for any research studies. To begin with, global researchers will get 10 per cent time. The allotment will begin from October this year.

An announcement inviting proposals from scientists and research organisation from other parts of the world would be made soon, Dr S Seetha, Director of the Space Science Programme Office at ISRO, said while speaking to India Science Wire on the sideline of the ongoing 35th annual session of the Indian Astronomical Society (ASI) here.

The researchers from abroad would be free to use the data they collect the way they want. However, they will have to place the data in the public domain after one year for use by others. The same rule applied for Indian scientists.

Asked about the work that has taken place so far, she said large quantities of data have been collected and are currently analysed. Results would start coming out soon.

Researchers have already studied several astrophysical objects from nearby solar system objects to distant stars and objects at cosmological distance. Also, timing studies of variables ranging from pulsations of hot white dwarfs to those of active galactic nuclei, with time scales ranging from milliseconds to days have been conducted.

Launched in September 2015, the satellite had been so far open to use only by Indian researchers. During the first six months, performance of the various instruments on the satellite were verified and the next six months was allocated to research organisations like IUCAA, which were involved in designing and developing the instruments. Since September last year, part of the time was allotted to Indian scientists. Now, scientists from abroad will also get a chance to use it.

Astrosat is a multi-wavelength astronomy mission on an IRS-class satellite into a near-Earth, equatorial orbit. It has five instruments on board: ultraviolet imaging telescope covering far ultraviolet to optical bands; three units of large area xenon proportional counters; a Soft X-ray Telescope (SXT); a Cadmium-Zinc-Telluride coded-mask imager and a Scanning Sky Monitor. (India Science Wire)