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[South Africa Inaugurates the Largest Telescope in the Southern Hemisphere](#)

In the presence of 1,000 guests

The South-African authorities inaugurated yesterday in the presence of 1,000 guests the largest single optical telescope in the south hemisphere, Associated Press informed. "Even those of us who know nothing about astronomy have awaited this day with great anticipation, feeling, perhaps instinctively, that this giant eye in the Karoo would tell us as yet unknown and exciting things about ourselves", said South African President Thabo Mbeki. "The great minds gathered here today ... have the possibility to peer into ordinarily unimaginable vistas of time and space, to discover what the universe was like, when the first stars and galaxies were forming", added Mbeki. SALT is the largest optical telescope in the southern hemisphere, and equals the largest in the world. Gathering more than 25 times as much light as any existing African telescope, SALT can detect objects as faint as a candle flame on the moon. A major recent milestone was the installation in May of the last of the 91 hexagonal mirror segments that comprise SALT's mammoth primary mirror array, stretching 11 meters across. Another major milestone was the "first light" attained with the telescope's full array of mirrors and its new imaging camera, SALTICAM. The construction of the "giant eye in the Karoo" required a 20 million dollar investment and six years of efforts.