China boasts world's fastest supercomputer

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Hundreds of ethernet cables are connected to rows of laptops for Flashmob 1, the first flashmob supercomputer, at the University of San Francisco in 2004. China is set to trump the US to take the number one spot for the fastest supercomputer ever made in a survey of the world's zippiest machines, a report says.

China is set to trump the US to take the number one spot for the fastest supercomputer ever made in a survey of the world's zippiest machines, it was reported Thursday.

Tianhe-1, meaning Milky Way, has a sustained computing speed of 2,507 trillion calculations per second, making it the fastest computer in China on a list published Thursday.

But it is also 1.4 times faster that the world's current fastest ranked supercomputer in the US, housed at a national laboratory in Tennessee, according to the New York Times.

Tianhe-1 does its warp-speed "thinking" at the National Center for Supercomputing in the northern port city of Tianjin -- using mostly chips designed by US companies.

The Tianjin Meteorological Bureau and the National Offshore Oil Corporation data centre have both started trials using the computer.

"It can also serve the animation industry and bio-medical research," Liu Guangming, the supercomputing centre's director, told state news agency Xinhua.

According to Jack Dongarra, a University of Tennessee computer scientist who maintains the official supercomputer rankings which are due to be released next week, the Chinese beast "blows away the existing number one machine".

"We don't close the books until November 1, but I would say it is unlikely we will see a system that is faster," he told the New York Times.

It is not the first time, however, that the US has had its digital crown stolen by an Asian upstart. In 2002, Japan made a machine with more power than the top 20 American computers put together.

Japan is also working on a new machine called "K Computer" in a bid to take the supercomputing crown.

Computer designer Steven J. Wallach is not overly worried by China's rise to computing superpower.

"It's interesting, but it's like getting to the four-minute mile," he told the New York Times. "The world didn't stop. This is just a snapshot in time.

"They want to show they are number one in the world, no matter what it is."

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