

India's largest solar telescope to be ready by 2013

Proposal submitted to the Centre for the Rs. 150-crore project

Staff Reporter

BANGALORE: A high resolution two-metre class solar telescope, the largest of its kind in the country, will soon be in place to help scientists study the sun. The telescope will be developed by the Indian Institute of Astrophysics in collaboration with the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics, Pune, and the Aryabhata Research Institute of Observational Sciences, Nainital.

S. Siraj Hasan, director of IIA, told presspersons here on Monday that a proposal had been submitted to the centre for the Rs. 150-crore project.

The telescope was still in the design stage and would be operational by 2013, he said. "We are in the process of identifying a suitable location to station the telescope. It will be one of the three places: Leh (Ladakh), Devasthal (near Nainital) or Hanle (Ladakh).

The telescope would have to be located in a place where the air was thin, and had no pollutants or the affect of city lights, said R.C. Kapoor, Professor at IIA.

"Ideally, it would have to be a place 13,000-14,000 feet above sea level," he said.

Delivering the Founder's Day lecture of IIA, C.N.R. Rao, Linus Pauling Research Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research, said that most of the country's talent was



A MEETING OF MINDS: Scientist C.N.R. Rao and Siraj Hasan, director of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, at a lecture in Bangalore on Monday.

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untapped in rural India.

"The villages represent the future of India and they will make us the knowledge centre of the world. We are the youngest nation in the world with 54 per cent of the population being 25 years or younger."

Alluding to the scientific brain drain, he lamented that not one engineer from the IITs was in the space programme or in the atomic energy programme.

Much had changed since

the time when people "did good work with little money", he said.

"The amount of money going into science has increased 300 per cent this year. But often the first casualty of money is creativity." India needed more non-conformists. "The crazy guy — the kind of scientist I knew — we are short of those in India."

Prof. Rao said that the gap between the quality of work here and in the West had not been bridged despite the de-

velopment of a host of institutes. "In terms of the number of research publications, the United Kingdom roughly equals the United States and the third pillar, Asia, is not far behind. However, within Asia, India lags behind considerably, while China is the biggest contributor."

More than 60,000 PhDs came from the U.S. last year, as many 23,000 from China and only 4,000 from India, he said.