Observatory in Kodaikanal Made Autonomous

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

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The Astrophysical Observatory at Kodaikanal, which was under the administrative control of the Indian Meteorological Department, has now been made into an autonomous institute and will now be known as the Indian Institute of Astrophysics.

The elevation of the Kodaikanal Observatory into an autonomous unit has been effected by the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism while implementing the recommendations of the Committee on Organisation of Scientific Research, headed by Dr. Bhagavantam. Appropriate budgetary provisions have already been made to enable the Observatory to function as an autonomous institute. The Committee had recommended an autonomous set-up to facilitate research and free it from routine departmental control.

The Kodaikanal Observatory has designed and constructed highly refined and sophisticated optical parts for astronomical instruments, effecting a substantial saving in foreign exchange expenditure. It has been specialising in the photographic and visual patrol of features on the sun. Recently, the Observatory deputed a two-member team to Mexico for photographing the solar corona and its spectrum during a total solar eclipse.

Two other institutions, which have also been taken out of the administrative control of the Meteorological Department on the recommendations of the Bhagavantam Committee are the Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Poona and the Colaba and Alibag Laboratories, Bombay. The Poona Institute has installed an I.B.M. computer for processing meteorological data. The Colaba Observatory has been engaged in the study of geomagnetism and atmospheric electricity.

The Bhagavantam Committee had also recommended the constitution of the Seismological Division of the Meteorological Department into an autonomous unit. The Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry will consider this question after the completion of the current study undertaken by the Planning Commission to draw up an integrated plan of work in respect of seismological research.