

IIA astronomers for Shanghai

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BANGALORE: Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) Director Siraj Hasan on Wednesday said that he was leading a team of astronomers from the country to set up an observation centre at Hangzhou near Shanghai in China to study the longest total solar eclipse of the century on July 22.

Mr. Hasan was addressing science enthusiasts after inaugurating a month-long science festival organised by the Bangalore Science Forum at the National College in Basavanagudi here. He said the duration of the total eclipse would be about six-and-a-half minutes.

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• IIA to acquire a helioscope

In India, the eclipse starts from the beginning itself in the west coast and moves over to places such as Varanasi and Patna. The astronomers, throughout the world, were visiting these towns, where the duration of the eclipse was around four minutes.

However, the astronomers from the IIA were going to China, because of fear that the eclipse could not be seen due to the clouds as the mon-

soon had already started in these areas.

The foreigners were visiting India, as it would be cheaper.

Prof. Hasan said the IIA was going to acquire a helioscope, whose objective had a diameter of two metres. Already, the IIA had set up a high altitude telescope at Hangle in Ladakh for observing the sun in the infra-red radiation.

He said that the U.S. and

other European countries were planning to set up similar telescopes. However, the Indian scientists were hoping to commission this telescope by 2013.

If this came through, he said this would be the largest in the world at least for seven years as the other countries were making efforts to commission them by 2020.

On Thursday, the forum president A.H. Rama Rao released a book on S. Seetharama Iyengar, Chairman, Department of Computer Science, Louisiana State University; authored by H.R. Ramakrishna Rao, a former physics professor and treasurer of the forum.