

IIA to set up facilities in Hoskote for next-gen telescope

India among select countries building Thirty Meter Telescope in Hawaii, US

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BANGALORE: As part of a global pact to build the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT), one of the world's most advanced and next generation telescopes, the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) here is likely to set up facilities at its Hoskote campus to begin work on making 100 mirror sensors.

That will be one of its contributions to the project. Approval for setting up the facility is expected in a week, and it is likely to be ready in the next year, according to Dr P Sreekumar, director, IIA.

"Other responsibilities of IIA will include providing sensors, actuators, segment supporters that will hold the mirror, as part of this global contribution system of the project. This will be done with significant industry contribution. Formal approval of the project is expected next week," Sreekumar told *Deccan Herald* after delivering a talk here on Sunday.

In 2010, India became a part of the TMT project that aims to build the telescope at Hawaii, USA. The aim is to



IIA director Dr P Sreekumar delivers a special lecture on Sunday. DH PHOTO

make it functional by 2018. Besides the US and India, Canada and Japan and China are also

part of the project. In India, there are three institutes that are spearheading efforts as part of the project, namely, the IIA, Aryabhata Research Institute of Observational Sciences (ARIES), Uttarakhand, and the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA), Pune. The project is supported by the Department of Science and Technology of the Union government.

India's share

"India's share in the project is to the tune of 10 per cent, and work has to be completed in the next 10 years. It is a big leap in astronomy in observation capability and we hope to build a similar large facility in Ladakh.

A 10-meter telescope is being considered," according to Sreekumar.

MOM: 'Exciting time'

On India's Mars Orbiter Mission, Sreekumar said that it was an "exciting time" for the country.

"A lot of work and effort has gone in realising the mission. There are numerous challenges. We hope to make it a success," he said.

On the possibility of finding life on the Red Planet, Dr Sreekumar said that while the MOM "was driven by the aim to find life", other future places that could be explored were the moons of Enceladus and Europa.

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