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# Installing world's largest solar telescope

## City experts studying Leh site

FROM KALYAN RAY  
DH News Service

**NEW DELHI:** Over the next one year, astrophysicists from Bangalore will observe weather conditions around a pristine lake in the cold desert region of Ladakh to find out if it is an apt place to set up one of the world's largest telescopes for studying the Sun.

At an altitude of 14,000 ft, areas close to Pangong Lake, 160 km from Leh, is one of the potential sites identified by Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), Bangalore for its proposal to come up with the Rs 150-crore National Large Solar Telescope (NLST).

Hanle in Leh where IIA already has a two-metre telescope for night sky observation and Devasthal, 50 km from the picturesque Nainital, are the other probable sites.

"We will study the Pangong Lake area for a year before finalising the site. We have already collected the



**Pangong lake: A potential site for the solar telescope**

weather data from Hanle and Devasthal. The NLST will be a telescope of two-metre diameter," IIA scientist Dr Jagdev Singh told *Deccan Herald*.

The institute has procured equipment from the US National Solar Observatory for collecting the seeing condition data from the proposed sites.

Trials are going on at a site close to Pangong Lake, a 130 km long blue lake bisected by the international border between India and China. "We plan to instal the telescope by 2012,"

Dr Singh said. If realised, the NLST will be one of the two major solar observation facilities coming up in India after almost half a century. The 38-cm telescope at IIA's Kodaikanal observatory was the last dedicated solar facility, which came up in the 1960s.

The second new solar telescope will be a 50-cm aperture instrument for the Udaipur Solar Observatory which currently houses several smaller telescopes. "The Rs 15-crore multi-application solar telescope funded by the Department of Space is expected to be installed by the end of 2009," USO scientist Dr Ashok Ambastha said, adding that a Belgian company is making it.

"There should be a national policy on manpower so that the existing and new telescopes are not under-utilised. Better coordination among the institutions is needed for optimal use of these instruments," pointed out Dr Rajesh Kochhar, a former IIA scientist.

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