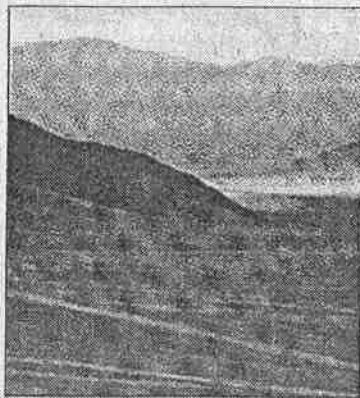


China wants to build observatory in Aksai Chin

Saibal Dasgupta | TNN

Beijing: China is pushing Japan and South Korea to establish an astronomical observatory in Aksai Chin, a remote part of Jammu & Kashmir that Beijing occupied after the 1962 war and had Islamabad cede parts of the region to it a year later.

A Chinese scientist on Sunday said the East Asia Core Observatories Association (EACOA) — with China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan as its members — has identified a site in Aksai Chin for the observatory. Yao told the official Xinhua news agency that the association had also surveyed sites in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and the Pamirs Plateau in Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, but the new observatory is likely to be established in "Tibet" this year.



Aksai Chin is a remote part of Jammu & Kashmir that Beijing occupied after the 1962 war and had Islamabad cede parts of the region to it a year later.

The association's website shows one of its proposed sites in Aksai Chin (Shiquanhe in Chinese) in Tibet. Ali in Tibet's Ngari Prefecture that falls within Aksai Chin is the proposed site for the observatory.

"EACOA directors reached a consensus that a re-

view and evaluation meeting are urgently needed among regional experts, aiming to update EACOA on relevant site survey progress, particularly focus on the site-testing metrology, instrumentations, procedures and data analysis performed on the candidate site at Ali (Aksai Chin) Tibet," the association said about a recent meeting.

The move comes as Beijing has been asking India to pull out of oil exploration from the disputed areas of the South China Sea off the Vietnamese coast. Both China and Vietnam claim the South China Sea.

Experts see the Chinese proposal for the observatory as an attempt to complicate the Aksai Chin dispute by drawing in Japan and South Korea. The move will legitimize Beijing's claim over the disputed area.