

Astronomical Society of India holds four-day meet

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

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A FOUR-DAY meeting is being held at National Centre for Radio Astrophysics (NCRA) of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (NCRA-TIFR) by the Astronomical Society of India. The event which includes paper presentations, lectures and discussions is being attended by about 350 Indian Astronomy researchers and students from across the country.

“Around 36 percent of the registered people are research students and 14 percent are MSc students. This means that there is an increased interest in youngsters for the science of astronomy. Last year, this meeting was held in Mohali and next year, we are planning to do it in Srinagar,” said president of ASI Ajit Kembhavi, who is also the director of Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA), Pune. The event started on February 17 and will continue till February 20.

“There are a lot of mega projects coming up which will start giving results in 10-15 years. This means today’s students will be tomorrow’s re-

SCIENCE CENTRES IN VILLAGES

The NCRA is planning to set up science centres in all villages across the state. “What we are planning is to make a science centre that is built and operated by the village itself. We will ask the panchayat to allocate some government land for it and then give the local school a telescope model to build,” said JS Solanki, administrative officer, GMRT. “This will increase their interest in astronomical science. We will guide the students in making it. To make it more useful, we will also make a soil testing facility and a small health check-up facility in that room. Soil testing facility will help them understand composition of soil and how much of what fertilizers need to be put,” said Solanki. The entire system would be self sustained by the panchayat samiti, added Solanki.

searchers and they will be at a very big advantage to use these projects for their research work. The biggest challenge we have now is to have that kind of human resource. In ten years’ time, we will need three times the astronomers we have today,” added Kembhavi.

Talking about the participation of youngsters in astronomical sciences, HP Singh from Delhi University said, “This is the golden era for Astronomy. The situation is not like how it was 10 years ago and even students are realising this.”

Biman Nath from Raman Research Institute added to the thought and said, “Around 30 years ago, only about 10 universities taught Astronomy but now over 30 universities have ded-

icated courses on it. Our aim is to increase the number of students. Hence, we have made a public outreach and education committee that organises such projects for interaction between public and the scientific community.”

“We are giving special preference to students coming from far off and rural places with travel and accommodation arrangement done by the ASI,” said Anupama from Indian Institute of Astrophysics.

Kembhavi said, “The biggest participation of students in astronomy as far as I have seen is from Kerala. Even in IUCAA alone, any time 20 students will be from Kerala. Even North Eastern states and J&K students show big interest in astronomy,” said Kembhavi.