

Summer camp gives kids insight into astrophysics, astronomy

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AFTER an entire exciting week at the summer camp at Inter University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA), many of its participants are now looking forward to the telescope-making workshop and become proud makers and owners of their personal telescopes by the June 2.

Around 60 students from 24 schools in Pune participated in the camp that started in the second week of April and concluded on Friday. Most of the participants were winners of the quiz contest organised on the National Science Day on February 28.

For many like Dhiraj Gaikwad, a class X student of Singhad Springdale School, learning about elementary concepts of calculus was a fun way of utilising his summer vacations. "It was great fun working on the Fermat's principle of least time, using concepts of differential calculus. Ideally, we would be introduced to calculus in class XI. But we got to work on it much before many others."

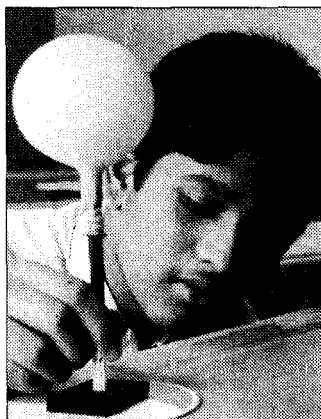
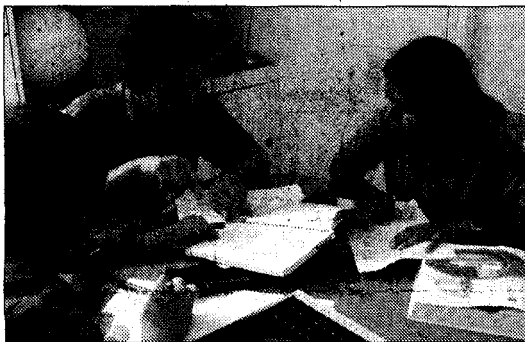
Even before the summer camp ended, many have already jumped into making telescopes from Friday. "I could not wait to begin work on the reflecting telescope. Only a few of us were

selected for it and I feel privileged to be a part of the group. It is much better than sitting at home and getting bored the entire summer," said an ecstatic Atharva Pathak, another participant at the camp.

Many like Dhiraj and Atharva think that it has helped them realise their inclination towards astronomy and astrophysics and will help them concentrate on taking up higher studies in related area. Other feel while it was possible for them to attend the camp, not many can afford to pay something to the tune of Rs 5,000 for the telescope-making workshop.

Arvind Paranjypte from the Public Outreach Programme at IUCAA said, "At the end of the summer camp, we have a presentation by students where they have to defend their work. We also question their findings, results etc. This would train them to present their work to the world as it is also an important part of a scientist's work."

Samir Dhurde, a research scholar guiding the students at the summer camp, said, "Some of them worked on topics as interesting as the social impact of telescopes. Subjects like these are rarely discussed by the science fraternity and it was interesting to observe the kind of explanations these schoolchildren came up with."



Children explore their creativity at the summer camp at Inter University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics.

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