

American astrophysicist in city, to shed light on Astrosat satellite

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Giuseppina Fabbiano

Astrosat, India's first multiwave satellite that will focus specifically on the Milky Way, will lead to a better understanding of the binary sources, said Giuseppina Fabbiano, senior astrophysicist Harvard-Smithsonian Centre for Astrophysics, Cambridge, Massachusetts, US, while talking about NASA's Chandra X-Ray observatory. She will deliver a lecture on Chandra at Inter-University for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA) on Sunday.

“After BeppoSAX, the Italian-Dutch satellite, that was launched in 1996, Astrosat will be the next multi-wavelength satellite that the astronomy community will get. However, it will have a much larger data collection range and will also have the advantage of having more advanced technology,” said Fabbiano.

Astrosat is a joint mission by various space research institutions in India, including Indian Space Research Organisation, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research Mumbai, IUCAA, Pune, Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bangalore and others. It is expected to be launched by the later half of this year.

“My work includes looking at binary sources outside the Milky Way, in various other galaxies, and how these sources vary with time, including understanding the physics behind these sources for which I heavily draw data from Chandra. The clarity of images with Chandra is very high and one can study the faint objects in the universe. In layman terms, it is like being able to read a signal on the road when you are 20 km away from it,” she said.

Fabbiano, who began her journey in X-Ray astrophysics in 1973, feels that while the excitement then was immense as it was a new discipline, today it has come a long way with a large number of institutions having it as a formal discipline.

With October 2010 being the birth centenary of Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar, the lecture is a part of the awareness programmes being organised by Astronomy institutions worldwide. Chandra X-ray Observatory, NASA's advanced X-ray astrophysics satellite was launched on July 23, 1999, and named the Chandra X-ray Observatory in honour of Chandrasekhar.

On Sunday, Fabbiano will elaborate on the role played by the Chandra observatory including the 100,000 data sources already available on the web of the NASA Chandra data centre.

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