



भारतीय ताराभौतिकी संस्थान INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ASTROPHYSICS

विज्ञान व प्रौद्योगिकी विभाग, भारत सरकार के अधीन स्वायत्त निकाय

(An Autonomous Body under Department of Science and Technology, Government of India)

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Justification Report

Indian Institute of Astrophysics is dedicated to research in Astrophysics and Astronomy and it traces its origin to Nungabakkam Observatory setup in 1786. The Government of Tamil Nadu allotted 40 acres of land in 1965 to our institute in order to set up an Astronomical Observatory for research and training purposes in Kavalur, Javadhu hills. The site was chosen based on a site survey conducted throughout the southern part of the country for the installation of optical telescopes. The location of the observatory greatly help national and international astronomers to effectively access celestial bodies across the sky. The astronomical observatories are usually set up in forest lands since light and other pollution in cities render them unusable for research activities. Since the nature of the work is purely of academic interest, there is no hazard to flora and fauna of the place. For expansion activities which included setting up of the National Facility of 2.34 metre optical telescope, which is the largest of its kind until recent times, our institute acquired a land of 60 acres in 1976. The Prime Minister of India Shri. Rajiv Gandhi inaugurated 2.34 metre Telescope on 6th January,1986 and named the telescope and the observatory as Vainu Bappu Telescope and Vainu Bappu Observatory in honour of the founder Prof. M.K. Vainu Bappu. A number of scientific discoveries have been made from the observatory and around 400 research papers have been published in national and international journals and generated more than 30 Ph.D's. The observatory has created employment for local population and exposed them to scientific research through public outreach programs.

Telescopes of various sizes have been installed and operated in the observatory. We occupy a small part of the land (7.5%) which was deforested while the rest of the area is maintained as forest in order to provide conducive environment for astronomical research and to avoid any kind of disturbance to the observatory. The institute keeps planting additional trees from time to time to compensate for the area used for infrastructure. In addition to maintaining 92.5 % of the forest to promote original darkness in the area, the observatory also attracts and supports animals and birds of various species which move freely within the campus for their food and water. The cool temperature nature of the forest is maintained as it is required for the efficient functioning of the telescope and instruments. It is due these considerations an area of 100 acres was allotted to the institute. The scientific usage of the telescope facilities is during the darkness hours. The larger telescopes are placed 200 to 300 metres away from each other so that emergency use of lights does not affect the usage of the others. Under no circumstances the provisions of Forest Conservation Act 1980 has been violated.


Shripathi K
Administrative Officer