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EVOLUTION OF UNIVERSE EXPERIMENT

# World waits for India's biggest science facility

**Snehal Rebello**

snehal.rebello@hindustantimes.com

**MUMBAI:** The scientific community in the US has written to Mumbai's Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), stating its intention to participate in the second phase of the India-based Neutrino Observatory (INO), billed as the country's largest-ever basic science facility.

But the project has not even taken off the ground because the site in Tamil Nadu where it is supposed to come up has not received a forest clearance from the state government. The lab is to be built 1,300 metres below the ground in the Nilgiri mountains.

On August 7, scientists from across the world wrote to the Prime Minister, urging him to intervene.

More than two years delayed, the laboratory will help scientists study neutrinos, elemen-



■ **The letter which scientists from across the world have written to the Prime Minister.**

tary particles whose properties and behaviour are key to understanding how the universe evolved and how suns and other stars generate energy.

"The international scientific community is waiting for the observatory to be set up," said Professor Naba Mondal, the spokesperson for INO at TIFR,

adding that Japan has already signed up to share its technical expertise.

"We also want to approach scientists in Europe like France, Germany and Italy," he said. "What will we tell them?"

Earlier this month, Mondal made a detailed presentation on the project to Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh, who is scheduled to visit the site on October 10. For two weeks, *Hindustan Times* phoned and sent several text messages to Ramesh, but he did not respond to our queries.

While the task of setting up the laboratory and installing the infrastructure in the first phase rests with India, the second phase of the experiment will call for international participation.

World-renowned neutrino physicists will not only study data emerging from the experiments, but will also develop equipment for it.

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