

IIA tableau marks astronomy year

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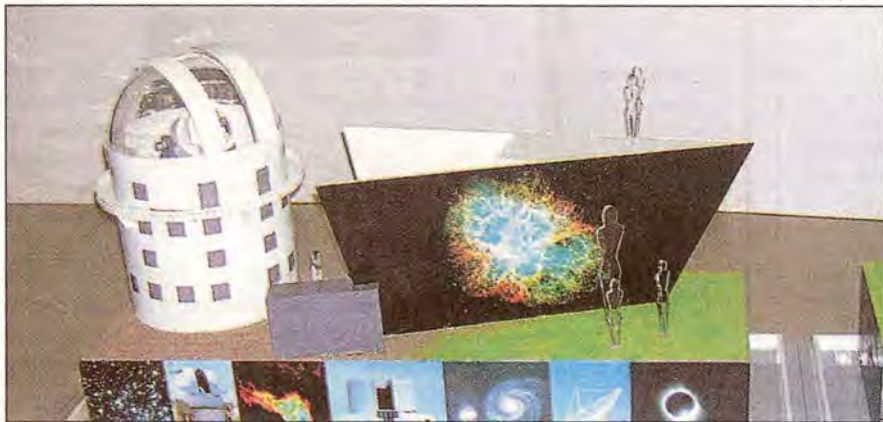
FROM KALYAN RAY
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NEW DELHI: Among the 18 tableaux depicting India's cultural diversity and technological progress, there was one showpiece conceived at the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), Bangalore.

The tableau with models of two of India's best known astronomical facilities was planned as a symbol to mark 2009 as the international year of astronomy.

The optical telescope in the tableau is modelled to represent IIA's Vainu Bappu telescope at Kavalur, the largest of its kind in the country. The 2.3 mt telescope is also India's oldest optical telescope and a contribution of the legendary Vainu Bappu, father of Indian astronomy.

The second model is that of the Giant Meter-wave Radio Telescope (GMRT) located near the Pune, which is being run by the National Centre for Radio Astrophysics. A labour of love for renowned astronomer Govind Swarup, this is the world's biggest



The astronomy tableau conceived at the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bangalore.

facility in its category.

Though the tableau was conceptualised at the IIA, it was made in Delhi under the constant and closely guarded supervision of the defence ministry officials.

"We had seven meetings with officials to get the tableau cleared for the parade," IIA scientist G C Anupama who supervised the tableau told *Deccan Herald*.

The proposal for the tableau came from IIA, an autonomous institute under the department of science and technology. On Friday, Science and Tech-

nology Minister Kapil Sibal also gave his approval.

A place in universe

The vision of the international year is to help the citizens of the world rediscover their place in the universe through the day-and-night-time sky watching thereby experiencing a personal sense of wonder and discovery.

Besides the international year celebrations, the showpiece was also conceptualised keeping in mind India's rich tradition in Astronomy that has seen the

development of world class astronomical facilities in the country. The showpiece had large liquid crystal displays which showed images of some of the cosmic features — Crab Nebula and the centre of the Milky Way galaxy — taken by Indian telescopes.

Astronomy as a theme returned to the Republic Day parade after a gap of 10 years. Also depicted in the tableau is the masses' hunger for knowledge. They are seen interacting with professionals as well as organising themselves to view the heavens.