

India's space journey inspires stargazers

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: The city marked the third National Space Day Sunday with programmes celebrating India's achievements in space while drawing students into astronomy and research.

National Space Day is observed on Aug 23 to commemorate the landing of Chandrayaan-3's Vikram lander near the Moon's southpolar region in 2023. At Jawaharlal Nehru Planetarium, Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) director Annapurni Subramaniam was chief guest at celebrations that included a quiz and model-making workshop. Planetarium director BR Guruprasad said India's achievements should prepare the country for future challenges rather than merely becoming occasions for pride. "While celebrating these seminal achievements, we need to look back at India's several such achievements in space and astronomy. But they should not overwhelm us with pride. Instead, they should prepare us and equip us to face new challenges," he said.

Addressing students, Annapurni traced the decade-long journey of AstroSat, India's first dedicated space astronomy mission. Conceived in the early 2000s and launched in 2015, AstroSat enabled observations across ultraviolet, X-ray and visible wavelengths.

Annapurni, who worked as calibration scientist for Astro-



TO THE STARS: Jawaharlal Nehru Planetarium hosted many events Sunday to celebrate the occasion

Sat's Ultra Violet Imaging Telescope, said ultraviolet instruments posed challenges as even small amounts of contamination could affect observations. The instrument therefore underwent extensive testing and calibration before being sent into space. "Many things come your way for the first time. Either you take it up or someone else will. All you need is to convince yourself: if someone else can do it, why can't I?" she told students.

At Raman Research Institute, around 200 school and college students attended a half-day programme Friday featuring demonstrations, experiments and interactions with researchers. A highlight was Pratush, an RRI-proposed space telescope aimed at detecting signals from the cosmic dawn, when the first stars formed.

Meanwhile, IIA said a new LED-dome planetarium in Mysuru is expected to open within the next 1-2 months.