

'Borderless science' the focus at IISER, Pune

'Botanists weak in Maths make poor scientists'

BY A STAFF REPORTER

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PASHAN: The ambitious Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) to start in Pune from August or September will be a registered society to give it the much-needed flexibility during its formative years. Legal formalities for the same will be completed in a month's time.

The aim is to implement the concept of seamless sciences. Students would not be required to make a choice of any subject at an early age and will concentrate on making their foundations strong. It will enable a student of mathematics to do research in life sciences and vice versa. According to Dr S Sivaram, Director of NCL and head of the committee set up for IISER, Pune, a botanist who is weak in mathematics will be a poor botanist in the future. The proposed building of the institute will reflect this ethos of

borderless sciences.

Sivaram told the *Herald*, "Besides a society, the other options were making IISER an university either under the State government or the Central government or making it an independent autonomous organisation like the IIMs or setting it up by an act of the Parlia-

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ment like the IITs. But registering it as a society was the quickest way," said Sivaram.

Two IISERs, at Pune and Kolkata, will be set up by August 2006. The Scientific Advisory Council to the Prime Minister headed by C N R Rao has framed the charter for these two institutes. The Ministry of Human Resource Development has kept aside a fund of Rs 500 crore for each of them.

After registration as a society, the governing body

will be formed to identify the director and other faculty members, said Sivaram. As the time is less, initially only about 30 to 40 students will be admitted from existing entrance examinations. "The academic committee has prepared a syllabus for the first two years of the four-year course. Students will have to study all the subjects; Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and Life Sciences in these two years. These subjects will be equal to BSc in that subject," said Sivaram. There will be a component of social sciences in the syllabus in order to expand the horizons of the students. Eminent scientist would teach undergraduate students.

Students will work round the year and a credit-based system will be followed. After completing the first two years, students will be able to specialise simultaneously in many subjects, as is the practice in universities like Cambridge.