

INDIA, CO-BUILDER OF HAWAII TELESCOPE, WANTS IT SHIFTED OUT OF PROPOSED SITE

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Sky high:An illustration shows the proposed telescope.APAP

India, a partner in the construction of one of the largest telescopes in the world, has said it wants the project to be moved out of the proposed site at Mauna Kea, a dormant volcano in Hawaii.

The TMT or Thirty Metre Telescope, as it is called, is a joint venture (JV) involving five countries, but the \$2 billion project has been marred by protests for over a decade. The proposed site is considered sacred to indigenous Hawaiians, and also has too many observatories for one more such massive establishment to come up, say groups that have contested the site.

“India’s position has been clear. We would like the project to move to an alternate site if all the procedures and permits there are in place,” Ashutosh Sharma, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, told *The Hindu*. “The difficulty is that even if construction [in Mauna Kea] were to go ahead, there could be future agitations,” he added.

Protests at the site last year saw scientists unable to access other telescope facilities in Mauna Kea. The project has been delayed by nearly five years and should have begun operations by 2025. India has committed \$200 million, which is about a tenth of the proposed cost. The telescope needs 492 precisely polished mirrors and India is to contribute 83 of them. The project delay has meant that these manufacturing contracts have also been delayed.

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