

World watches as science, spirituality set up interesting date in Bangalore

■ Final round of Science and Spiritual Quest from Jan 8 to Jan 11

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FOR years they have loomed at opposite ends, but science and religion – that have hesitantly been inching towards each other for sometime now – could perhaps forge new ground, right here in India's Silicon Plateau.

The giant leap is scheduled between Jan 8 and Jan 11 when the final round of Science and the Spiritual Quest (SSQ) concludes at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) here after similar rounds across the globe, including in the Vatican and in Jerusalem.

The symposium in Bangalore titled 'Science and Beyond' will feature Nobel laureates and internationally-renowned scientists like Sir Roger Penrose, Jane Goodall

and Philip Clayton in dialogue with spiritual leaders like Swami Bodhananda Saraswati.

The presidential address will be delivered by Chief Minister S.M. Krishna and the list of speakers include chief mentor of Infosys Narayana Murthy, Union Minister for Human Resource Development

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and Science and Technology Murli Manohar Joshi.

"We have planned this in such a way that no ideological tilts will emerge. It is basically a dialogue in the academic context that we want to take to a broader audience," said Tom Mackenzie, of the Universite Interdisciplinaire, a co-sponsor.

At a point of time, many men of

science like Galileo and Darwin were branded heretics, when their discoveries challenged the Church leading to a tussle between faith and reason. Since, however, many scientists have found that the universe is just so, to enable and support life, drawing out the miracle behind it all. "Many find it is possible today to be a cutting-edge scientist and have religious faith," said Mackenzie.

At the symposium, emphasis will be placed on understanding the role of consciousness, cosmology and technology especially in the Indic traditions. Agricultural scientist M.S Swaminathan is slated to speak on Science and Development while former CBI director D.R Karthikeyan will speak on Science, Religion and Harmony.

The programme will include 18 presentations from scientists and philosophers on what is science and what is beyond science for each of them. "Some may actually say there is nothing beyond science, so the discussions are bound to be interesting," said Roddam Narsimha, director of NIAS.

The series SSQ is a four-year international programme conducted by the Centre for Theology and the Natural Sciences in Berkeley, California, in collaboration with some partner organisations. SSQ claims not to advocate a particular religious position or a specific outcome for discussions between religion and science. "The discussions would help narrow perceptions between philosophers and scientists in the foundational concepts of knowledge," said Sangeetha Menon of NIAS. It is being felt that philosophers could be the bridge between scientists and religious leaders.