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Dark Night Sky Reserve

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Why is in news? Ladakh to soon have India's first Dark Night Sky Reserve

Ladakh is all set to have **India's first Dark Night Sky Reserve at Hanle village** in Changthang region.

In about eighteen locations in Hanley, powerful telescopes will be installed for stargazing.

A tripartite MoU between UT Administration, Leh Hill council and Indian Institute of Astrophysics in June this year, necessary approvals from Department of Science and Technology and Ministry of Environment and Forests were issued for Dark sky sanctuary.

Sanctuary opens up **personalized experiences** to Astro tourists, economic opportunities for youths through the Telescope operation and villagers from the home stays.

A Dark Sky Reserve is a **designation given to a place that has policies in place to ensure that a tract of land or region has minimal artificial light interference.**

The **International Dark Sky Association** is a **U.S.-based non-profit** that designates places as International Dark Sky Places, Parks, Sanctuaries and Reserves, depending on the criteria they meet.

A dark sky reserve requires a **"core" area that has clear sky without any light pollution**, which can enable telescopes to see the sky in its natural darkness.

Why Ladakh was selected?

The Hanle Dark Sky Reserve (HDSR) will come up within the **Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary**, situated **4,500 metres above sea level**, which makes it a perfect host for telescopes.

Ladakh is also **ideal for long-term observatories and dark-sky sites** because of its **large arid area, high elevation, and sparse population.**

The Milky Way Galaxy is visible through the night in the Hanle region due to its **cloudless skies and lower atmospheric disturbance.**

Hanley is **home for the second-highest optical telescope in the world**, established in 2001 by Indian Institute of Astrophysics.

The Department of Science and Technology and Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) in Bengalure providing support for the facility.

How many such reserves exist in the world?

A **dark sky reserve is only one of the designations given by the IDSA**, others being international dark sky parks, communities, reserves, sanctuaries, and urban night sky places.

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At present, there are **20 dark sky reserves around the world**, seven in the United Kingdom; four in France; two each in the USA and Germany; and one each in New Zealand, Canada, Namibia, and Australia.