

Regional centers extend ICTP work in South and Central America

The Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) is celebrating the launch of its first mirror site, in São Paulo, Brazil. The nearly 50-year-old ICTP in Trieste, Italy, aims to advance science in the developing world. It gets about 5000 visitors a year, but many more want to come, says ICTP director Fernando Quevedo. "They can't come because we cannot afford to pay their expenses. We think the best way to proceed is to partner and expand the mission of ICTP on a regional level." The ICTP South American Institute for Fundamental Research (ICTP-SAIFR) "will play the same role [as the ICTP], but for South America," says ICTP-SAIFR director Nathan Berkovits. It kicked off in January with a 12-day school on mathematical biology, and held opening ceremonies a few weeks later. A center in Chiapas, Mexico, is also in the works.

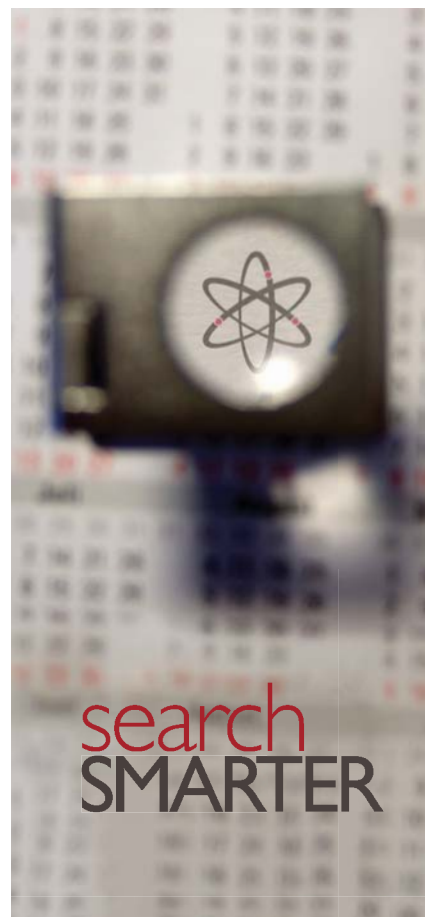
The ICTP-SAIFR is located at the São Paulo State University's Institute for Theoretical Physics. The university will hire five permanent researchers, a computer systems manager, and two other administrative people for the center. The other major backer for the center is FAPESP (the State of São Paulo Research Foundation), which has committed funding over five years for schools and workshops, nine postdocs, and 180 months of visitor time. The ICTP in

Trieste is contributing €50 000 (about \$67 000) annually for Latin Americans from outside Brazil to travel to the São Paulo center. Like the main ICTP, the ICTP-SAIFR will provide a framework, including a location and administrative services, for workshops proposed by the community.

Brazil is growing fast economically, says Berkovits, "but there are still many bottlenecks. One big problem is that only people who speak Portuguese can be hired at most universities, which restricts access to international influences." The ICTP-SAIFR will not be bound by the same rules, and its "international school and workshops will raise the level of students," he says. (See the story on physics in Brazil in *PHYSICS TODAY*, September 2011, page 26.)

Chiapas promotes science

Ocozocoautla de Espinosa, in Chiapas, is not the booming megacity that São Paulo is, but both the president of the university there and the state governor are keen to promote science, and last December various bodies in Mexico signed an agreement with ICTP to start an ICTP Meso-American Institute for Science (ICTP-MAIS). Located in Mexico some 1000 km southeast of Mexico City, the site has the advantage of proximity to the rest of Central America and the Caribbean, the area the Chiapas center aims to serve.



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Opening ceremonies for the first offshoot of the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics took place in São Paulo, Brazil, in February. Among those present were (left to right) Carlos Brito Cruz, the scientific director of the state's funding agency FAPESP; Juan Maldacena, an Argentinian physicist at the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) in Princeton, New Jersey; ICTP director Fernando Quevedo; Julio Cezar Durigan, acting rector of São Paulo State University (UNESP); Juan Montero, director of UNESP's Institute for Theoretical Physics; Jacob Palis, president of the Brazilian Academy of Sciences; and IAS director Peter Goddard.

The ICTP-MAIS will address the specific needs of the region, says acting director Arnulfo Zepeda. "That is why, in addition to applied mathematics and theoretical physics, we are focusing on energy and the environment." The center will start by offering a course to prepare physics bachelors for top-level PhD programs, and in the longer term will create a physics PhD program; the highest physics degree currently available at the local university is a master's.

With funding from the state of Chiapas, the federal ministry of energy, and Mexico's main science funding agency, the ICTP in Mexico will hire five researchers, and Zepeda says he hopes to attract about a dozen visitors in the first year. "There are very few physics schools in Central America. We think [people] will be attracted when we provide the opportunity."

Quevedo, who is from Guatemala, chairs the steering committees of the new centers. The key factors in going ahead with the sites in Brazil and Mexico, he says, were scientific quality and a "natural generosity toward the neighboring countries. They will be able to lift the level of science in their regions." The brand-name of the ICTP, he adds, "provides prestige and experience gained over the years." **Toni Feder**

news notes

Hats off to Japanese center. The Institute for the Physics and Mathematics of the Universe (IPMU; see photo) at the University of Tokyo appears to be the first national research institute in Japan ever to receive a substantial gift from a non-Japanese donor. In February the Kavli Foundation announced a \$7.5 million endowment to the IPMU, making the institute the foundation's 16th—its 6th in astrophysics and 3rd in theoretical physics.

"Within just four years, IPMU has established itself as a world-renowned institute starting from zero," said Daisuke Yoshida, director general of the research promotion bureau in Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. The Kavli IPMU, as it is now called, was launched as part of a Japanese initiative to internationalize the country's scientific community (see PHYSICS TODAY, December 2008, page 28). The center has grown to 200 researchers, more than half from outside the country.

"I am super excited!" says Kavli IPMU director Hitoshi Murayama. The center's new visibility will help attract



IPMU

scientists, he says. And the flexibility of the Kavli money will be especially helpful for such things as inviting potential recruits' families to visit and seeding new research concepts. "All in all, it is a great honor to be recognized internationally for our excellence and globalization effort." **TF**

Herschel archives. A collection of papers from astronomer siblings William Herschel and Caroline Herschel, and from William's son, John Herschel, is now open to scholars, thanks to \$10 000 from the Friends of

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