# Students learn solstice & astronomy

**NT Bureau**

Chennai, June 22:

It was a big day for students of Vidya Mandir Senior Secondary School and Madras Christian College Higher Secondary School here as they had the opportunity to learn and experiment the method to measure the circumference of the Earth with day-to-day instruments they use.

Space Technology and Education Pvt Ltd conducted, 'Project Paridhi,' a flagship programme to celebrate Summer Solstice at Vidya Mandir school and MCC HSS.

S Venkata Narayanan, zonal business manager - south, Space Technology and Education, Prabhakaran, instructor, Project Paridhi, Space Technology and Education were present.

Speaking on the occasion, Venkata Narayanan, said, 'Space is working towards development of science and astronomy in India. We are providing services and products in the area of astronomy and space sciences to schools, colleges and various other institutions. We are organizing Project Paridhi to help children take actual measurements of the shadows made by the Sun to measure the circumference of Earth as done 2300 years back by astronomer Eratosthenes.'

Explaining the method to the children, Prabhakaran, said, 'The Solstice is an astronomical event that happens twice, once in the summer and once in winter, each year when the Sun reaches its highest position in the sky as seen from the North or South Pole. During Solstices the tilt of the axil of the Earth with respect to the Sun is the maximum at 23Â° 26'. Solstices occur on 20th or 21st June and 21st or 22nd December each year. During summer, the day of the solstice is the longest day of the year and during winter the day of the solstice is the shortest day.'

Regarding the process, he said, 'The circumference of Earth can be calculated by a simple calculation. The angle subtended by a pillar's shadow with a known height is enough to compute the circumference of the Earth.'

Shoba Raman, principal, Vidya Mandir School, said, 'This may be a small initiative but it is a stepping stone for children to discover many more things in the future.

Students from various schools participated in the event and prizes were given to the teams which computed the closest value of the true circumference of the Earth.

Students of PS Senior Seondary School and Vidya Mandir recorded more than 98 per accurate values.

Sabarika Mani, a class nine student of PS Senior Secondary School, who won the event, said, 'Project Paridhi provides a great platform for students like me to think beyond books. It has inspired me to develop great interest in astronomy. Hope initiatives like these are conducted regularly in schools.'