

## Bid to develop biggest telescope

PRETORIA: South Africa has been shortlisted to develop the world's largest and most technically advanced telescope.

The Square Kilometre Array (Ska) radio telescope will generate more data in one week than has been collected over 500 years of astronomy and will give scientists a glimpse of what the universe looked like billions of years ago.

South Africa and Australia are bidding to host the R20 billion project.

The government has pledged R900 million for the construction of the prototype and Ska demon-

strator, called the Karoo Array Telescope (Meerkat), near Carnarvon in the Northern Cape.

The Department of Science and Technology's science platforms manager, Tsepho Seekoe, said the prototype would be launched in the Karoo in October.

He said if South Africa won the bid, the Meerkat would be developed into the full Ska telescope, which is expected to be commissioned in 2022.

The international Ska steering committee is to decide in 2012 which country will host the project. – *Mercury Correspondent*

