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Aliens too busy to visit

COPENHAGEN: Earth may not be visited by aliens for a long time to come, a new mathematical model suggests.

In 1950, Nobel laureate Enrico Fermi posed the famous question: "so, where is everybody?" He wondered why, if the universe was teeming with life, no one had seen any evidence of alien civilisations.

Now Rasmus Bjork, from the Niels Bohr Institute in Copenhagen, believes he has a solution to the "Fermi paradox" — aliens simply haven't had the time to come visiting.

He calculated that eight probes travelling at a tenth of the speed of light, and each capable of launching up to eight sub-probes, would take about 100,000 years to explore a region of space containing 40,000 stars.

When he scaled up the search to include 260,000 such systems in our galaxy's habitable zone, the probes took almost 10 billion years. *New Scientist* magazine reported: "Bjork's answer ... aliens haven't had the time to find us yet."

PA The Australian

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