

Physics world shifts focus to Switzerland

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Scientists at Fermilab in Illinois are racing to find the elusive Higgs boson particle before a giant new Swiss lab opens next year.

The Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, currently the world's most powerful particle accelerator, will be rendered obsolete when the much more powerful Large Hadron Collider opens on the Swiss-French border next year, the Chicago Tribune said Monday.

The newspaper said Fermilab scientists are racing to prove the existence of a tiny, theoretical particle called the Higgs boson -- "a linchpin of prevailing ideas about how the universe is put together."

The \$10 billion Swiss lab features a 17-mile underground ring where particles will travel at nearly the speed of light. It is four times larger in circumference than the main ring at Fermilab and should yield more than 100 times the number of subatomic collisions seen at Fermilab's Tevatron ring.

Scientists expect the collider to discern the Higgs particle within a year or two of starting up -- compared with the Tevatron, which is only now getting getting close after six years of operating at full capacity, the newspaper said.

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