



LOOKING AT THE STARS

Chennai kids shine in nationwide asteroid hunt, make 3 discoveries

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Chennai

IN A rare feat, Chennai school students have made three provisional asteroid discoveries as part of a nationwide campaign of International Astronomical Search Collaboration (IASC) programme, United States, to popularise astronomy in the country.

The students Vishwath Ramachandran (class 9) and Vishweshwar Ramanakumar (class 10) of Hiranandani Upsacale School in Kelambakkam made two discoveries. The team comprising class 11 students Kishore Kumar and Siva Magadev of Natesan Vidyasala Metriculation High Secondary School in Mannivakkam discovered one more.

This provisional discovery has been confirmed and formally recognised as asteroid discovery, as endorsed by international agencies concerned, having the highest value among all discoveries/observations credited.

They have been given designated numbers and will be named after the students, claimed

SPACE, a Delhi-based NGO which acts as the nodal agency for organising asteroid search campaigns.

Initially, the SPACE facilitated the students with necessary orientation, trained in advanced data analysis and astrometrical

Named after finders

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software, which provides the ability to easily compare astrometrical images for the purpose of moving object discovery and also given hands on practice to hunt for asteroids. Later, students were provided with exclusive access to astronomy images to conduct the

actual research and analysis.

Under the project, participants got access to the images of the sky taken by 24 inch and 34 inch telescopes positioned in Astronomical Research Institute (ARI) Observatory in the United States.

Students search for asteroids after downloading and analysing data with specialise software. All observations contribute to the near earth object (NEO) data compiled by NASA and Jet Propulsion Lab (JPL), said S Venkata Narayanan, South Zonal Business Manager, SPACE.

In the last seven years, 600 students got opportunity to participate in the search campaign resulting in the discovery of 46 provisional asteroids, 2 special discoveries, 1,462 preliminary discoveries, 62 near earth object confirmations and 1,636 near earth object observations.

Elated students of Hiranandani school said, "We have thoroughly enjoyed and would like to pursue programs in space science."





Finance minister O. Panneerselvam on Saturday offered prayers at the Venkateswara temple in Tirumala

City school students discover three asteroids

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 3

Four students from Chennai have discovered three asteroids during the astronomy campaign held nationwide from July 26 to August 23 this year.

Viswath Ramachandran, a class nine student, and Vishweshwar Ramanakumar, a class 10 student from Hiranandani upscale school in Egattur in Kelambakkam have discovered two asteroids. These asteroids are designated as 2016 OL4P10w65E and 2016PR2P10w89g.

T. Kishore Kumar and Siva Magadev both studying class 11 in Shri Natesan Vidyasala Matriculation Higher Secondary School in Mannivakkam discovered another asteroid, which is designated as 2016 OP4 P10w65D.

"We thoroughly enjoyed it and would like to pursue programmes in



City school students who discovered the asteroids (from left to right) Kishore Kumar, Sivamagadev, Vishweshwar and Vishwath. —DC

space science," Viswath and Vishweshwar said.

"The provisional discovery has been confirmed and formally recognised as asteroid discovery," said S. Venkata Narayanan, south zonal business manager, Space.

The Science Popularisation Association of Communicators and Educators (Space) acts as the nodal agency for organising asteroid search campaign and provide training to students and amateur astronomers

for asteroid hunting. It is part of International Astronomical Search Collaboration (IASC) programme.

Totally, 90 teams from all over India and three teams from Chennai participated in the asteroid hunting.

The participants got access to the images of the sky taken by 24-inch and 34-inch telescopes positioned in Astronomical Research Institute (ARI) Observatory in the United States.