

Students search in space for real asteroids

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Chennai: Students of Sri Natesan Vidyasala Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Mannivakkam, Chennai, had the opportunity to find real asteroids in outer space through SPACE Tech's internationally acclaimed programme, All India Asteroid Search Campaign (AIASC) 2016, in collaboration with International Astronomical Search Collaboration (IASC), conducted by Dr Patrick Miller of Hardin Simmons University, USA as an educational outreach programme.

AIASC workshop for three teams nominated under SPACE Tech was conducted in Chennai recently.

Speaking on the occasion, zonal manger of SPACE, S Venkata Narayanan said, "All India Asteroid Search Campaign, a unique and exclusive International platform created by SPACE for Indian students and amateur astronomers across India since 2010. Over the span of six successful years, SPACE provided this opportunity to more than 500 participants across India, which has resulted in several achievements and discoveries, and many for the first time in India by school children."

"Through the training, students have achieved a remarkable number of 19 Provisional (Confirmed) Discoveries of Asteroids, 2 Special Discoveries, 96 Preliminary Discoveries of Asteroids, 62 Near Earth Object Confirmations and 1636 Near Earth Object Observations. Through this campaign, students have made confirmed discoveries of Main Belt Asteroids and important observations that contribute to the NASA Near Earth Object (NEO) programme at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (Pasadena, CA)," he added.

Kishore Kumar T, 10th standard student of Natesan Vidyasala, who participated in the event, said, "The campaign helped me get exclusive access to astronomy images, which are otherwise not accessible till the post graduate level. Also, I got training in advanced data analysis and software as well as interact with international scientists, all of which builds up to an invaluable real time research experience."

Siva Magadev M, 10th standard student of Natesan Vidyasala school who also participated in the event, said, "It helped me relive my passion in astronomy. I was given training on the Astrometrica 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. It's indeed a memorable day in my life."

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