

**CITY ANCHOR**

TABASUM BHAT IN PUNE AS PART OF IUCAA PROJECT, KINDLES INTEREST IN SCIENCE IN STUDENTS OF A POKHRI SCHOOL

# Lessons in archaeoastronomy, from a Kashmiri researcher

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AUGUST 9

**A** FEW lines marked on a piece of stone in Srinagar had prompted Tabasum Bhat to take up archaeoastronomy. "The lines on the stone could not be read by archaeologists after they were excavated in 1937. And when I heard about it, apart from wanting to know what the lines meant, I even wanted to know about those who had made them," Bhat, a research student from the University of Kashmir, was interacting with students at Pandharinath Secondary and Higher

Secondary School, Pokhri.

Bhat's experiences as an archaeoastronomer and cosmologist were a revelation for the students in Pokhri, a tribal belt located 100 km from Pune. The research student is in Pune as part of a research project at the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA).

The lines on the stone were pictorial representations of astronomical observations when someone saw both the sun and a half moon in the sky at the same time.

Her latest project pertains to studies of nine large stones nearly four km away from her university campus. "Though the stones are



so large that they cannot be moved now, if erected they will form a circle. They have cup marks on them denoting stars, which are similar to the ones present on the Stonehenge (a prehistoric monument, composed of earthworks surrounding a circular setting of large stones, in the English county of Wiltshire). So, using techniques of potassium dating, we're looking at the possibility of the origin of these stones being at the same time."

The questions from students

**Tabasum Bhat with students of Pandharinath School.**

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ranged from those on predictions of Earth facing an apocalypse in 2012 or 2020, the science of astrology, life on Mars to meteors. And, Bhat fielded them well.

She urged the students to continue to attend school and aim towards higher education.

"I had got through the engineering entrance examination and my father had paid my fees. After 12 days of college, I realised I wanted my name to have 'Dr' written before it. Coming from a middle class family and awash with guilt at wasting so much money, I was propelled to go on till I reached a certain point in my life."