

# Accessing GMRT archives now just a click away

Swati Shinde | TNN

**Pune:** You must have seen the planet Venus in the evening sky. But ever wondered what it looks like up, close and personal? Now is your chance to observe it right on your computer screen and without having to trudge to an observatory, what with the archives of the world's largest radio telescope, the Giant Meterwave Radio Telescope (GMRT), going online soon.

Available just a click away are going to be sky maps, galaxy clusters, planets, other celestial objects and even the planetary system. All this and

## At A Glance

- ▶ Sky maps, galaxy etc archived by GMRT scientists since 1997
- ▶ GMRT is used by astronomers world wide
- ▶ Archives to be available through the international communication server

much more has been archived by the GMRT scientists during their various projects since its inception in 1997.

"Sourcing even the basic GMRT data was not easy for common people, but now one can access interesting obser-

vations made by the GMRT scientists," Ajit Kembhavi, director, Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA), told TOI. All the data has been put together by a team of 10 members, he added.

The GMRT, which is a joint collaborative initiative of the IUCAA and the National Centre for Radio Astrophysics, is located around 80 km north of Pune. It is the most powerful radio telescope operating at low radio frequencies and is a national facility. The GMRT is used by astronomers across the world.

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Also, the archives will be made available through the international communication server, said Kembhavi, who was instrumental in initiating virtual observatories in India. "People can log on to the GMRT website, register themselves and access all the data available for the public from anywhere in the world. People seldom get to see our data. Now, it will benefit students, budding astronomers, researchers and even those seeking general information," he said.

There are several amateur astronomy clubs in the city and astronomy departments in colleges that could pick up a tip or two through the GMRT archives, Kembhavi said. "Even students can peruse our data for self study or general interest."

Meanwhile, Arvind Paranjpye, scientific officer of the public outreach programme at the IUCAA, said, "All over the world, observatories are going virtual. It was Kembhavi who initiated this idea in India. Virtual observatories enable users to sit before their computer anywhere in the world and take a virtual tour of the universe, thereby opening up astronomical education to a larger group."

Kembhavi said, "Earlier, scientists would work on a project and keep the data in their own computers or machines for personal use. This new system makes observation recorded by GMRT scientists more centralised and unified."

Speaking about the world wide telescope (WWT), a virtual observatory launched by Microsoft Research for which a workshop will be held at IUCAA on September 4, Kembhavi said, "The WWT has many of the virtual observatory concepts that exist currently. What is unique about this initiative is that even a layman can go around the WWT and study the universe. This is not always possible with other virtual observatories."