

INNOVATE AND HAVE A PLANET NAMED AFTER YOU!

REPORTER

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Students with original thinking, and ideas have more than an incentive of monetary award



to participate in the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF).
City girl Hamsa

Padmanabhan, who won the ISEF award in 2006, now has a minor planet named after her!

The largest pre-college Science fair in the world, ISEF promotes scientific research among youth, and around 56 countries participated in the 2009 fair. The Science fair, organised by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Lab, has in the recent past, started a tradition to name an asteroid (minor planet) in the solar system after the recipients of the ISEF Grand

Awards. The honour has been bestowed on six Indian students between 2006 and 2009. Hamsa was bestowed with this honour for her ISEF award in 2006, and has a minor planet (21575) named after her. The honour is bestowed on those students, who have received first or second Grand Award in ISEF. Besides Hamsa, other students to receive this award are Hetal Vaishnav (2009), Debarghya Sarkar (2009), Anish Mukherjee (2009), Vishnu Jayaprakash (2009) and Rishin Behl (2007). The ISEF also grants various prizes, internships and scholarships in other categories for young student scientists.

Arvind Paranjpye, Scientific Officer, Public Outreach Programme at the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics said, "Traditionally, the asteroid is named after the person discovering it. Earlier, discovering asteroids

required physical efforts, while now it is easier with the use of electronic detectors (CCD). As a result, a huge number of asteroids are being discovered. MIT Lab has discovered more than 2,00,000 asteroids, and has the right to name them. So, they are honouring ISEF student awardees.

He said the international competition was not well-known in India. "Not many children know about this Science fair. Secondary and Higher Secondary students can participate as they only need to submit an idea to the organisers. If the idea is found acceptable, the student may be provided with financial assistance and guidance to execute the project," added Paranjpye.

Students first need to apply to the Initiative for Research and Innovation in Science (IRIS), which in turn selects students to represent the Indian contingent at the ISEF.