

Asteroid named after city researcher

This is in recognition of Jayant Murthy's work in NASA New Horizons Science Team

The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

International Astronomical Union (IAU) has named an asteroid after Jayant Murthy, who was acting director of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics before his retirement in 2021.

The asteroid 2005 EX296 has been designated as (215884) Jayantmurthy. The announcement was made on March 18 by the IAU through its Working Group on Small Bodies Nomenclature. According to IIA, "This working group is the designated body to provide official



Jayant Murthy

names to all asteroids, comets and other small objects in the Solar System. The asteroid (215884) Jayantmurthy was discovered by M.W. Buie at Kitt Peak National Observatory in Arizona, USA, in 2005 and has been named after Prof. Murthy in recognition of his work in the NASA New Horizons Science Team to observe the ultraviolet background

radiation in the universe. The asteroid goes around the Sun in an orbit that lies between that of Mars and Jupiter once every 3.3 years."

New Horizons was launched by NASA and flew past Pluto in 2015. It studied it in unprecedented detail and has since gone far beyond.

Prof. Murthy said, "I am thrilled to have an asteroid named after me in connection with my work on the New Horizons team led by Dr. Alan Stern. I am working on the cosmic ultraviolet background, including the extragalactic light from Alice, on New Horizons. This work, to measure the UV

background, is best done from far out in the Solar System, where light from the Sun and the interplanetary medium is minimised."

Prof. Murthy joins the ranks of earlier directors of IIA – Prof. M.K. Vainu Bappu and Prof. J.C. Bhattacharyya – who also have asteroids named after them – 2596 Vainu Bappu (1979 KN) and 8348 Bhattacharyya (1988 BX).

Prof. Murthy's primary research interests are the interstellar medium and dust, ultraviolet astronomy, and space missions. He has been an honorary professor at the institute since his retirement.

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