

# Mumbai University to reach out to pupils via virtual classroom

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MUMBAI: Mumbai University will start an automated virtual classroom this weekend, probably the first traditional public university in the country to have the facility.

On Saturday, when the chief guest inaugurates the classroom at the university's Kalina campus, the event will be live-streamed across affiliated colleges through the facility. Supposed to be modelled on the virtual classroom at Harvard University, the room with 58 seats will also be connected to an auditorium with a capacity of over 300.

While initially the classroom will be used to live-stream special lectures by eminent resource persons, workshops and conferences, it can also bring a sea change in academic activities at the university and its affiliated colleges. The facility will solve the problem of shortage of qualified teachers and make interactive learning possible with limited resources. Participation in events with restricted entry can now be thrown open to

all university students. Students and teachers of colleges in remote places such as Raigad and Sindhudurg can now attend important conferences/meetings that will be conducted at the university and transmitted in their classrooms.

"Once the facility is ready, we can use it for multiple academic activities. It will also help us connect to universities world over. We also plan to offer online courses in future," and the facilities will also be extended to students from other universities soon," said pro-vice-chancellor Naresh Chandra. The inauguration will be held in the presence of the governor, chief minister and the minister for higher and technical education minister.

A university official claimed that the virtual classroom was designed on the lines of a similar facility at Harvard University. "Everything in the classroom is automated and can be controlled using a touch panel.

Even the sliding of writing boards and adjustment of lightings in the classroom can be done at the click of a button," said the official. The facility has been developed by the university's in-house computing team under the leadership of vice-chancellor Rajan Welukar.

Of the 700 colleges affiliated to Mumbai University, 420 have already enrolled for the digital system, A-VIEW. While academic sessions/conferences can be live-streamed across colleges, videos will also be available on the university's site for students who wish to view it later.

All the facilities on the internet will be made available under the NME-ICT (National Mission Education through Information and Communication Technology) of the ministry of human resources development, and the A-VIEW virtual learning tool designed by Amrita University. IIT-Bombay already has a virtual classroom, through which it reaches out to students afar.