



# Jupiter Like Protoplanet

## Why in News?

Recently, the [Hubble Space Telescope](#) has photographed a [Jupiter](#)-like **protoplanet** forming through a process that researchers have described as **intense and violent**.

- The Hubble Space Telescope is a project of international cooperation between [National Aeronautics and Space Administration \(NASA\)](#) and ESA (European Space Agency).

## What is the Newly Forming Planet?

- The **newly forming planet** captured by Hubble is called **AB Aurigae b** and embedded in a protoplanetary disk with distinct spiral structures swirling around and surrounding a young star that is estimated to be about 2 million years old.
  - That is also about the **same age our solar system** was when planet formation was underway.
  - It is **531 light-years away from our sun**.
- This protoplanet is probably around **nine times the size of Jupiter** and orbits its **host star at a distance of 8.6 billion miles**, over two times the distance between our Sun and [pluto](#).

## What is a Protoplanet?

- Protoplanets are small celestial objects that are the size of a moon or a bit bigger. They are small planets, like an even smaller version of a [dwarf planet](#).
  - Astronomers believe that these objects form during the creation of a solar system.
- The most popular theory of how a solar system is formed says that a **giant cloud of molecular dust collapsed, forming one or more stars**.
- Then a cloud of gas forms around the new star. As a result of gravity and other forces, **the dust and other particles in this cloud collide and stick together** forming larger masses.
- While **some of these objects break apart on impact, a number of them continue to grow**.
- Once they reach a certain size - around a kilometre - these objects are large enough to attract particles and other small objects with their gravity. **They continue to get larger until they form protoplanets**.

## What is NASA's Disk Instability Theory?

- According to NASA, this discovery supports a long-debated theory called "**disk instability**," which tries to explain how planets similar to Jupiter are formed.
  - The model is for giant planet formation where a protoplanetary disk becomes dense and cool enough to be unstable to gravitational collapse and thereby resulting in the formation of a gaseous protoplanet.
- According to the Disk Instability theory, **matter slowly moves inwards in this disc as dust particles grow to centimetre-sized pebbles**.
- This is seen as the first step towards the formation of **kilometre-sized planetesimals** that

eventually come together to form planets.

- **Planetesimals** are solid objects thought to exist in protoplanetary disks and debris disks.

**Source: IE**

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