ASIA
INC. 500

In conversation with Mr. Vishal Hegde Pro-Chancellor AIC NITTE

Accelerating the Startup Ecosystem in India: Connecting Academia and Industry

FOSTERING DIGITAL ADVANCEMENTS IN INDIA

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

AIC NITTE Incubation Centre Launch

Vinaya Hegde
Chancellor

Vishal Hegde
Pro-Chancellor

Dr. Sateesh Kumar Bandary
Vice Chancellor

Dr. A.P Achar
CEO, AIC NITTE Incubation Centre

Augmented analytics and artificial intelligence

NGO HOANG ANH CHIEF EDITOR

Technology has been evolving from year to year, as a staggering promise and opportunity. Over the last few decades, massive technological development and opportunities have transformed people's lives. The digital advancements continue to reshape our world in ways that encourage people to form new habits, find new ways to work together and become better human beings. And, in most cases, these changes translate into a range of opportunities and disruptions across every industry.

The pace of innovation and change is mind-numbingly fast with emerging technology trends. These game-changing technologies form the backbone of innovation today whose applications are becoming more pervasive and their adoption is growing steadily. Blockchain, quantum computing, augmented analytics and artificial intelligence are driving disruption and new business models. Autonomous artificial intelligence (AI) is fueling a new era of people and machines working together with data-driven insights and highly strategic and outcome-focused processes.

Advanced networks open the door to the future of connectivity, Intelligent interfaces reimagine how people, machines, and data interact and attention to brand experience goes beyond marketing. These top tech trends poised to reshape industries in 2019 driving business innovation. As technology continues its rapid evolution and as we witness the proliferation of new age developments across software and hardware, here we are with an exclusive edition of Asia Inc.500 magazine. This special magazine edition harnesses the potential of technology, its emerging trends, and extensive applications across various industries.

About **ASIA Inc. 500**

Asia Inc. 500, along with its valued partners lays emphasis on exploring and recognizing 5000+ individuals and organizations every year across Asia and helps to reach out to a wide audience, prospective clients & investors.

Our platform is a great source of information and connect in areas of AI, Blockchain and other upcoming technologies and frameworks. At the end of every quarter, we choose and rank the best 500 organizations in various aspects all throughout Asia.

Address:

In conversation with

Mr. Vishal Hegde

Pro-Chancellor
AIC NITTE

An erudite, industrialist and academic administrator, Vishal Hegde comes with more than two decades of experience in general administration and marketing. He is the Pro-Chancellor of NITTE Deemed to University and is responsible for strategic planning, collaboration and quality management and oversees the philanthropic activities that include community development, healthcare and insurance and empowerment. His impeccable leadership and management has made the educational institutions under the NITTE Trust and the University, one of the most sought after educational destinations for students not only from India but from other countries as well.

AIC Nitte Incubation Center has the advantage of access to Human and technical resources

Lamina is one of the leading manufacturers of leaf springs and brake drums in india.

Leadership and management has made the educational

Great opportunity for Indian universities to go global.

In the present Education System there is a divide between the industry and education institutions

Indian Economy is moving towards being one of the 3 largest economies in the world

Could you tell us about your journey as an Academician and an Industrialist? We would also like to know more about the leadership positions you've held in the past?

I joined the Lamina group of companies as a director in 1992. Over the years I headed the export marketing division for lamina. We grew our export market to developed countries like the USA, Germany, United Kingdom, Netherlands and Mexico. Lamina is one of the leading manufacturers of leaf springs and brake drums in india.

Along with managing my corporate ventures I took up the responsibility of administration of Nitte university and Nitte education trust. Nitte institutions today have more than 25000 students and 5000 staff working in its 3 campuses at Nitte, Bangalore and Mangalore.

Tell us about AIC-NITTE? How do you plan to scale AIC-NITTE?

AIC Nitte Incubation Center is established by Nitte Education Trust and Nitte University with financial support from NITI Aayog under Atal Innovation Mission for promoting innovation and Entrepreneurship in the region. The aim of the center is to motivate young graduates from the professional colleges in the region to take up Entrepreneurship as a career path. The services offered by the center includes a host of

activities ranging from entrepreneurship education to in-depth research into the problems of enterprise development, management, and growth. Moreover, the centre extends support to the existing MSMEs in the region through appropriate intervention strategies like training, Technology transfer and consultancy

AIC Nitte Incubation Center has the advantage of access to Human and technical resources of Engineering, health science, humanities Biotechnology and Management Schools

What are the vision and ideas you have for the incubation centre?

The vision of the AIC Nitte Incubation Center is to be the Resource center that can support budding Entrepreneurs by providing mentoring support for scaling up, state of the art product development Lab and networking with investors The Centre initiated steps to partner with reputed institutions in the country and abroad to promote innovation and entrepreneurship among students in the region

What do you think is the need of the hour to encourage and drive students towards entrepreneurship?

C, there is an urgent need to encourage students to take-up entrepreneurship as a career option. The present digital era couples with emerging ecosystem

Mr. Vishal Hegde

Pro-Chancellor
AIC NITTE

for start-ups, is providing ample opportunities for young graduates to take up entrepreneurship as a career option.Promotion of Entrepreneurship among youth is important not only to improve standards of living for the entrepreneurs, but also important for creating wealth in the nation

Though it is the Make in India wave that is trending, are you planning for any collaborations with foreign universities or companies?

The new education bill has just been announced and I feel it will be a great opportunity for Indian universities to go global. Being one of the leading universities in India, Nitte university would definitely like to look at the opportunity to tie up with foreign universities which can help Nitte University to be one of the top universities in the world.

Many of the graduates coming out of the university are unemployable. What initiatives has NITTE taken in this direction?

In the present Education System there is a divide between the industry and education institutions. Due to this, graduates coming out of universities are unemployable. In this contest NITTE has taken several Initiatives to bridge the gap between Industry and academia by inviting Industry experts to take sessions for students, organizing workshops/symposiums/conferences which are relevant to both industry and academia. The Nitte AIC is another effort which will bridge the gap between academia and industry.

What is your message to the budding entrepreneurs?

World is becoming a global village with economies being interdependent on each other. This provides ample opportunities to budding entrepreneurs. The budding entrepreneurs in order to succeed need to have clarity on their vision and long term plans. The ability of an entrepreneur to anticipate changes and responding to these changes quickly helps him to succeed in his endeavor.
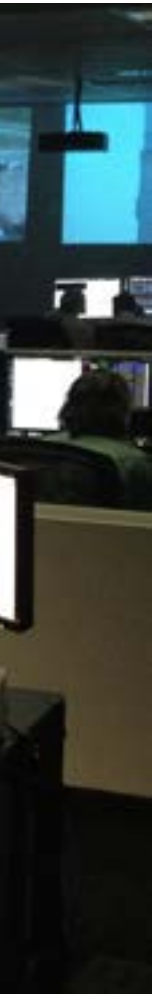
FOSTERING DETERMINATION *AND EXCELLENCE IN ACADEMIA AND* INDUSTRY

From starting his academic journey in Mysore Medical College to the completion of his Masters in ENT from JJM Medical College, Davangere, Dr. Sateesh Kumar Bhandary comes with vast experience from working in various executive and non-executive posts, such as the President, IMA South Kanara branch, President, AOI, Karnataka Chapter and Karavali Branch.

He has contributed immensely to the advancement of his branch through numerous National and International publications and lectures and greatly contributed to research and has received several external grants of more than 20 lakhs from BRNS, Government of India. Dr. Bhandary is involved in many social causes and was instrumental in establishing the "Mangalore Laryngectomee Club" at K.S Hegde Medical Academy, Mangalore which is one among the registered member clubs of "The International Laryngectomee Association (IAL)" in India.

With his quest to contribute more towards education and medical research, here is an excerpt from our interview with Prof. (Dr.) Sateesh Kumar Bhandary.

You have received a lot of accolades and awards such as the 'AryaBhatta Award' for Excellence in the field of Medicine, and you have also authored two books; Could you tell us more about your journey?

Today when I look back I feel extremely satisfied with my academic and professional journey, which was not a cakewalk and filled with struggles and hardships. I had my early education in a remote village of Dakshina Kannada district and it was solely because of the constant support and encouragement that I received from my parents and my primary school headmaster that I could pursue my ambition of becoming a doctor. Despite the financial condition, they never stopped supporting me. Further, incessant motivation of teachers of my govt. primary, higher primary schools, St. Aloysius college and highly subsidised education in the prestigious Mysore Govt. medical college laid the much needed foundation for my academic accomplishments. My rural middle class background helped me understand the problems of the common man and taught me how to address them with compassion and care. My 30+yrs of experience in teaching the undergraduate and postgraduate medical students has kept me academically active and ignited my passion for research deeper and deliver the best of my knowledge to transform my students into brilliant doctors and ENT specialists. Treating several thousands of ENT and head & neck patients to provide relief to their suffering has been a very gratifying experience that I cherish always. It's a matter of pride and honour that I have been given the opportunity to lead one of the prestigious universities of the country by our honourable chancellor Shi. N.V Hegde for which I am indebted. Today NitteDU is accredited with NACA grade A and 74th rank in 1000 odd universities in the country, which has just 12 yrs history.

You have so many years of experience in the field of education, healthcare and academics. How do you see the changes which have taken place in the Indian education system over the years?

There is a saying "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach him how to catch fish, you feed him for a lifetime". Unfortunately our education is mainly classroom oriented, exam centric, and synonymous with entrance exam and marks. Our education system is oriented towards rote learning and not

towards understanding things through application. In a national survey conducted years ago, more than 80% of principals blamed rote learning as the reason for the poor performance of students and 70% felt that the curriculum followed in India did not give sufficient scope for creative learning. It is alarming to note that in the recent global education ranking, India has slipped to 93rd rank and this calls for immediate reforms in our system. Three important reasons for the poor performance of students attributed are: 1) outdated syllabus 2) Lack of infrastructure 3) poor quality teachers because teaching is not considered a lucrative option. Now the government spends 3% of its total GDP on education which should be increased to 6% as per the report.

But there is a silverline and we see changes happening. There is a conscious effort by the government to improve the system and turn India to a knowledge-based economy. The system of accreditation and institutional ranking has introduced a spirit of healthy competition and private Universities like ours are at the forefront of such efforts, striving very hard to improve our ranking and to make a mark in the global ranking system.

What are the reasons for quality being missed out in Indian Education? How are you tackling these challenges at NITTE?
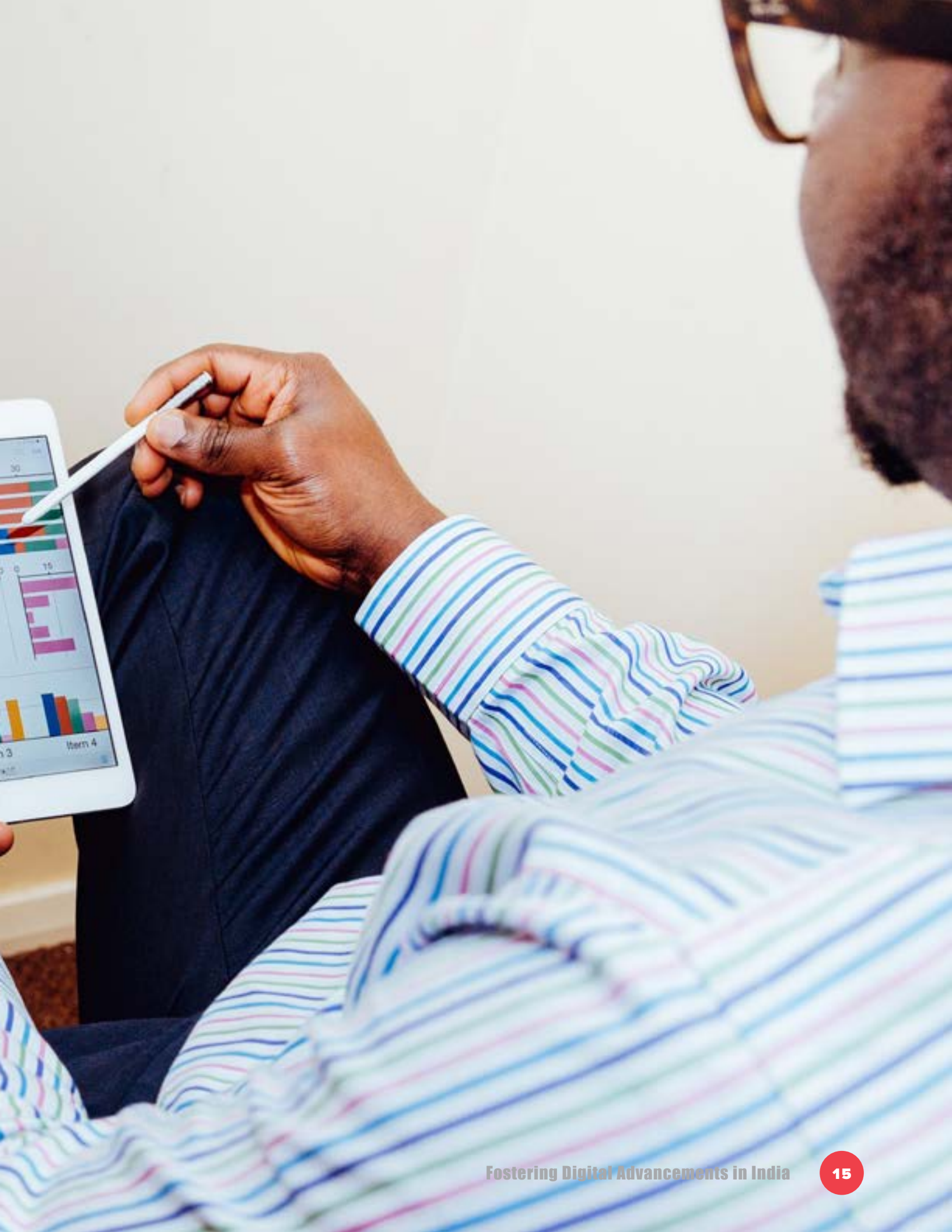
Schools play a vital role in shaping a person's social and professional growth. Our education system should focus on churning out not just engineers and doctors, but also entrepreneurs, artists, scientists and writers, all of whom are interested in the economy of the country. Universities will have flexibility of offering certification after one year such as a diploma and three/four year degree with research component and honours option. Coming to NITTE, we are trying to address the problems faced by the country. Our university has established a state of the art skill lab to impart soft and hard skills to make the students job-oriented and we have 21 rural health centers to orient students for community healthcare. The university is continuously engaged in curriculum improvement and enrichment.

It's heartening to note that in India, higher education enrollment has gone upto 21 GER and universities have succeeded in creating a knowledge society. This knowledge should be converted into skill, wisdom and entrepreneurship. The second most populous country in the world like India should create more entrepreneurs and job givers than job seekers. At Nitte, we have a Patent and Technology Transfer Cell that will help faculty and students protect their inventions and innovations through patenting.

What are the vision and ideas you have for the incubation centre?

Now the whole country is going through an unprecedented public health crisis due to Covid-19. People are suffering due to economic recession

and job loss. Nitte Education Trust has established Atal Incubation Center with support from NITI Aayog, Government of India. We also have New Age Incubation Network to support startups.

Incubation centres have a larger role to play by encouraging young entrepreneurs to create startups and MSMES in the villages. There is a lot of scope for medical devices, instruments and agricultural sector technology innovation. Empowering the women and youth should be our priority particularly in villages to create jobs. The Department of Science and Technology, Government of India has supported a Technology Enabling Center at Nitte University Center for Science Education and Research to help scientists to translate their research findings to technologies.

What opportunities do you see for AIC-NITTE incubation centre to play on the national/international stage?

AIC- Nitte incubation centre should be involved in mentoring young entrepreneurs, scientists and technologists to discover, innovate and move towards commercialization of technologies. The undivided DK district is well known for educational institutions, banking, tourism and hospitality industry and I find that there is immense scope for expanding these and going beyond these into areas such as marine biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, nutraceuticals and many more.

What will be your approach of governance from now on as a Vice Chancellor?

The world is going through the industrial revolution 4.0 and our immediate goal is to adopt technology in education and health care. Preparing the faculty and students for skill upgradation is the immediate task. A number of faculty development programmes are implemented to continuously upgrade their skills. Even during these challenging Covid-19 times, our faculty have been delivering lessons through online NueLearn Gateway which has been recognised at the National level. The university wants to reach out to the communities and improve social relevance by adopting advanced technologies in education and healthcare delivery in order to produce highly competent professionals who can deliver high quality healthcare at reduced cost. Nitte University has started a smart village project and is involved in Unnat Bharat Abhiyan. India lives in villages and empowering village youth should be our priority. The mission of the university is to develop NITTE as a centre of Excellence imparting quality education, generating competent skilled manpower to face scientific and social challenges with a high degree of credibility, integrity, ethical standards and social concern.

Accelerating the Startup Ecosystem in India:
CONNECTING ACADEMIA AND INDUSTRY

Ramanan Ramanathan
Mission Director, Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog

India has a unique opportunity to become one of the most Innovative nations of the world leveraging the rapid convergence of its demographic dividend, fast growing economy creating increasing demands, and availability of affordable advanced technology enabling new solutions and services not dreamt of before. Yes it can!

The startup ecosystem in India gained good visibility in January 2016, when the Startup India Program was launched. The government saw it as an avenue to resolve India's rising unemployment issue and build a culture of innovation in the country cultivating the entrepreneurial culture and providing support to start-ups, which forms the rock-solid foundation for a progressive economy. This culture brings in enhanced scope among Universities, Enterprises, and Governments at large to foster innovative ideas and help them get converted into successful businesses. Conjoined effort by all facilitates an Entrepreneurship ecosystem and thereby creates an incremental gain for the economy.

TO FACILITATE THE STARTUP ECOSYSTEM, GOVERNMENT BODIES LIKE THE ATAL INNOVATION MISSION - NITI AAYOG,

Department of Science & Technology, DBT BIRAC, etc. along with private players have created grants which enable educational institutions to set up world class Technology driven Incubators/Bio-incubators to foster world class startups.

CREATING NEXT-GENERATION START-UPS IS THE NEED OF THE HOUR

This is where we should increasingly leverage the research advances being made by Universities spanning areas such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, big data, medical technologies and AgriTech. Extensive effort to convert these innovations into job-creating commercial products is essential, clearly indicating that it can only happen with effective collaboration between Industry, Academia and the Government. Innovation centers/ Incubators, in this respect, should boost the start-up growth pattern.

THE ATAL INNOVATION MISSION IS A FLAGSHIP GOI INITIATIVE

to create and promote rapidly a vibrant ecosystem of innovation and entrepreneurship across the length and breadth of the country spanning schools, universities, industry at state, district and even village levels. AIM is establishing thousands of state-of-the-art Atal Tinkering Labs in schools equipped with latest do-it-yourself 3D printers, IOT, Robotics, AR/VR kits, Atal Incubators at universities and institutional levels, Atal Community Innovation Centres in rural India, Atal New India Challenges promoting 'Make In India' innovations having national socio-economic impact.

ATAL INCUBATORS OF AIM ARE DESIGNED TO BE WORLD CLASS INCUBATION FACILITIES

with state-of-the-art infrastructure that will support next generation startups in terms of labs, coupled with the availability of sectoral experts for mentoring. Apart from this, we provide business planning support, access to seed capital, industry partnerships, training and other relevant components required through our institutional innovation network which is hyperconnected, agile and flexible.

NECESSARY SCALE-UP SUPPORT AND UPGRADATION

of well-performing Incubation centres to world-class standards is done with a view to augment, enhance and upgrade their incubation capacity and develop a conducive innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem by strengthening linkages with various national and international stakeholders. Our institutional network support enables technology development, deployment and commercialisation in all sectors and makes special efforts in those sectors that are of national importance and can expedite India's transformation to a new age self-sustainable economy. It also has a strong commitment towards building a robust innovation ecosystem in unserved/ underserved regions of India, throughout the complete Innovation cycle from idea and research, problem solving by design thinking, technology development of identified solutions and POCs to pilot implementation, production, market deployment and commercialisation.

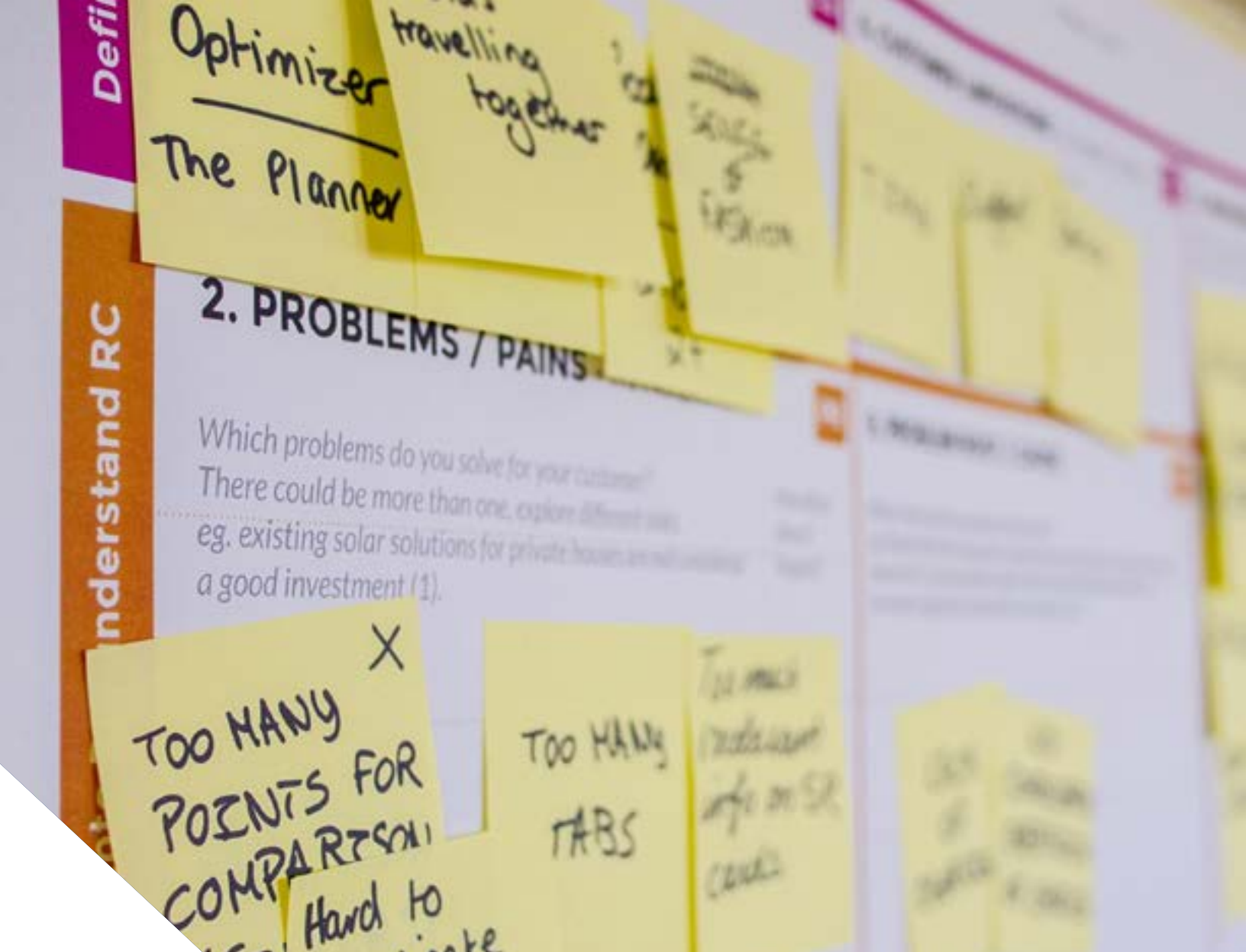## APPLIED RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (ARISE)

initiative of AIM is at an advanced stage of program launch which aims to promote research, innovation and job creation in MSMEs and Startups. ARISE has been modelled leveraging the best practices in the USA, Germany, UK in advancing small business research and innovation through which considerable innovation outcomes have significantly benefited the industry and enabled considerable new job creation. As envisioned by the Honourable PM of India, Shri Narendra Modi, in Atmanirbhar Bharat, MSMEs are going to be the bedrock of economic revival of India especially in the middle of the current pandemic. This initiative will bring about an alignment of funding opportunity, innovation and growth needs for the primary engine of growth for our country for the coming decades.

OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS, AIM WITH A SELECTION OF 102 INCUBATORS,

to be established covering 23+ states of the country out of which 68 are already operational, have incubated more than 1500+ startups. Out of these 1500+ startups in the AIM ecosystem, 547+ startups are women-led startups which has shown AIM's long-term commitment for an inclusive and wholesome development of the country. AIM has provided 6+ crore of seed funding to AICs which have in turn enabled the startups to leverage it to 60+ crore of funding. In addition to supporting 150+ MSMEs for business sustainability, the incubator ecosystem of AIM has generated 27,000+ jobs just in the last 2 years.

INDIA HAS THE 3RD HIGHEST NUMBER OF INCUBATORS

with over 250 being present in India playing an important role in the growth of start-ups. Incubators are responsible for providing a wide range of facilities such as mentoring the start-ups, providing ideation and technical support, providing access to resources which would have been too expensive if purchased individually, providing access to networking events and support for fundraising. A large number of incubators are run by universities and educational bodies, in addition, there are a host of privately-run incubators and accelerators, some homegrown, others set up and run in collaboration with partners from abroad. In the past 3-5 years, many large multinationals have set up incubator and accelerator programmes, seeking the latest in innovation and offering the technical expertise and mentoring young start-ups. IITs and IIMs, and some of the top educational bodies of India, have also initiated in-house incubators to promote entrepreneurship in the country.

THE FIVE PILLARS OF ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT

as eloquently expressed by the Hon. PM namely the pillar of demographic dividend, pillar of physical and digital Infrastructure, pillar of demand, pillar of technology and pillar of socio-economic growth, can only be strengthened through a vibrant ecosystem of startups, innovators, incubators and new job creators.

From an inspiring entrepreneur to a skilled investor, the journey of

AVELO ROY!

Making it seem easier than it looks, Avelo Roy, the Managing Director & Startup Mentor at Kolkata Ventures, has been founding and running startups in style, since the age of 19. Balancing academics at Illinois Institute of Technology with the creation of his first startup, he managed to scale it into a million dollar business within a span of three years. The list of accolades after his name go on from a tech entrepreneur to a four times TEDx speaker as well as a TV Host.

A firm believer in the Bhagavad Gita, Avelo Roy centers all of his business decision-making and mentorship around these guidelines. He went on to establish the Krishna House, Krishna Lunch and Krishna talk projects in Chicago for spreading the wisdom of Bhagavad Gita while continuing to build businesses in the US & India with multi-million dollars worth of products and services ranging from consumer electronics, Artificial Intelligence systems, healthcare process automation, food science, wireless communications, wearable technology and graphical password applications.

He has a flair for mentoring and runs the largest startup incubator in East India called Kolkata Ventures. Under his guidance, over 400+ startups have been successfully incubated resulting in 4500 jobs across East India.

As the great great grandson of Sarojini Naidu (Poet, Politician and first female governor of India), Avelo continues to take her legacy forward by tirelessly serving the Indian youth through entrepreneurship education using lean startup methodology.

Here is an excerpt from a very interesting conversation with Avelo Roy.

1 FROM AN ENTREPRENEUR TO AN INVESTOR, HOW DID THE TRANSITION HAPPEN?

A venture capitalist from Chicago, who invested in one of my US startups, had me sit down one day to hear startup pitches with him. Then, he involved me in the decision-making process, and taught me how to analyze and predict startup success based on various criteria.

It was a whole new world for me. I was in my early 20s. I started watching, learning and then practicing what I learnt.

In brief, the team, trust and talent play a key role here. I realized that investing means partnering with a winning team who will ethically and skilfully grow the value of the equity you bought into.

2 YOUR PORTFOLIO IS IMPRESSIVE- FROM RUNNING THE LARGEST STARTUP INCUBATOR IN EAST INDIA (KOLKATA VENTURES) WITH 400+ REVENUE GENERATING STARTUPS TO BUILDING MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR BUSINESSES, WHAT IS YOUR INVESTING PHILOSOPHY?

One has to understand that someone like me receives around 15-20 investment requests daily via LinkedIn, email and kolkataventures.com. So given the plethora of options, one has to do or say something special to grab my attention.
Most copy-paste messages that sound something like

"Dear Sir/Madam, we are seeking 80 lakhs in seed funding. The pitch deck is attached." go to trash immediately. If you don't know whether I am a sir/madam, and expect me to read 50 slides of your pitch deck, then please know that I have zero interest in doing business with you.

For the 10% of folks that actually care to effectively communicate, build trust and stand out, here are the three things I look for.

- Team is my first priority. A good idea with an average team is bound to fail. But an average idea with a skilled, dynamic, and proven team is more likely to become a scalable startup.

- Tech-enabled scalability is a priority for me. By tech I mean software not hardware. Any business that is high in operational expenses is a deal breaker.

- Lastly, the market problem being solved should be a dire necessity. The urgency of this problem should grow in intensity as time goes by. That's the key. For example, cyber attacks are vicious today but imagine how big of a problem it will be in the post 5G world where hacking a

driverless car can result in loss of lives. Post this stage comes due diligence. If there's any trace of unlawful history, a lie being detected from the pitch constitutes the last layer of filtering.

3 WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST IMPORTANT INVESTING LESSON YOU HAVE LEARNT SO FAR?

If the promoter lies or doesn't mind unethical practices then don't trust him with your money or time.

Ethics, skills, intelligence and energy are key qualities to look for in a startup founder. Without ethics, the rest of the qualities can be extremely destructive to the business.

4 WHAT IS THE MAIN CHECKLIST WHICH STARTUPS SHOULD CONSIDER BEFORE APPROACHING INVESTORS FOR FUNDING?

Before approaching an investor think about what leverage you have built to negotiate with them.

If you come to me with an idea for funding, trust me I have probably heard that idea from 15 other startups. And by the way, I can execute the same idea faster than you. Why should I invest in you? What value are you adding to the table? If you fail, you gain all the experience and I lose my investment. Unfair!

So let's level the playing field a bit. Show the investor what you have achieved with your time, creativity, team, technology, strategic partners and perhaps a little money either from your savings or borrowed from friends and family.

Show traction whether it is active users, month-on-month revenue growth or some other metric. Help me visualise how much you can grow your business with my money. In other words how can you grow my money 10x or 20x in the next 2-3 years. Storytelling is good as long as it is backed by facts and figures.

5 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AN ENTREPRENEUR AND AN INVESTOR IS QUITE COMPLEX. WHAT SHOULD AN ENTREPRENEUR LOOK FOR IN AN INVESTOR?

There is dumb money and smart money. When you are looking for smart money, go for an investor who understands your niche and can add value beyond the money. The nature of this relationship becomes more of a mentor-mentee. At least that's how it has been for me

I have learned tremendously from each one of my investors till date and I give that forward to our startups incubated under Kolkata Ventures.

6 DO YOU SEE A NEED FOR MORE ANGEL INVESTORS AND VENTURE CAPITALISTS IN INDIA TO HELP AND INCUBATE MORE STARTUPS?

Of course. And there are plenty of them in almost every state of I ndia.to our startups incubated under Kolkata Ventures.

7 WHAT IS YOUR OUTLOOK FOR THE PRESENT START-UP ECOSYSTEM IN INDIA? WHAT'S YOUR TAKE ON THE 'VOCAL FOR LOCAL' TREND THAT IS GOING ON CURRENTLY?

It is much needed to resource locally and support our Indian companies. Having said that, startups attracting foreign money is a great thing for India. We should not close our doors to foreign investors unless it is a cause of concern for national security.

India will grow when we are able to pull in investment as well as revenue from outside of India. Create products in India and sell all over the world.

8 WHAT POLICIES (FISCAL) SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT COME UP WITH TO HELP SMALL BUSINESSES AND START-UPS TO GROW IN THIS COMPETITIVE MARKET?

The government is already doing enough. Many revenue generating startups are only possible today because they received government grants or loans. I was on the jury for Startup India awards. It was mind blowing to see the caliber of these startups from tier 2 and tier 3 cities, which is only possible because of government efforts.

Having said that, it can be very tedious to go through the paperwork and process loans, especially those related to startups or SMEs. It would be beneficial to train the bank employees in how the schemes work as well as how to identify high potential startups. Most bank managers are too scared to give loans to startups because in most cases they have no clue how to identify a high potential startup opportunity.

Kolkata Ventures is trusted by many government agencies to do the required shortlisting process because this organization is run by self-made entrepreneurs who help budding entrepreneurs. We are very good at identifying our own kind and our success of 400+ revenue generating startups speaks for itself.

10

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SMALL BUSINESSES AND START-UPS TO THRIVE IN THIS COMPETITIVE MARKET?

Time to evolve and take full advantage of the opportunities brought forth by COVID-19. Take advantage of remote teams. Now that you can have the best techies from Bangalore, best sales folks from Mumbai, and best marketers from Dehradun, embrace the new normal and make the most of it before your competitors also get comfortable with it.

Be as digital as you can be, automate as much as you can and know that your market is not limited to India.

9 WHAT ADDITIONAL SUPPORT DOES A FOUNDER GET, ALONG WITH YOUR INVESTMENT?

I tend to get actively involved with the invested startups especially with scaling and growth. Taking their businesses to the next level happens to be my strength due to my skill set and network in India, US, Canada, Nepal, Vietnam, Singapore and Hong Kong.

BEING A *SUCCESSFUL* WOMAN *ENTREPRENEUR* AMONG *OTHER THINGS!*

Not everyone is cut out to be an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship is an extremely demanding career for an individual, without the additional pressure of being a woman. Not so for Cecelie Hother, a Danish entrepreneur, TV host and mother. Donning several hats at the same time, she has poured her heart and soul into building successful businesses out of ideas that were important to her on a personal level. The wife of Thomas Honoré, President and CEO of Columbus A/S, she has made her way to the top through passion and a strong desire to be her own boss.

Here's an excerpt from our conversation with Cecelie Hother which shows that nothing is impossible if you just follow your dreams.

Asia Inc. 500: How did your TV career take off?
Cecelie Hother: Having attended the European Film College in Ebeltoft, Denmark, I initially wanted to shoot documentaries. Working behind the scenes as a photographer and producer, I started freelancing quite
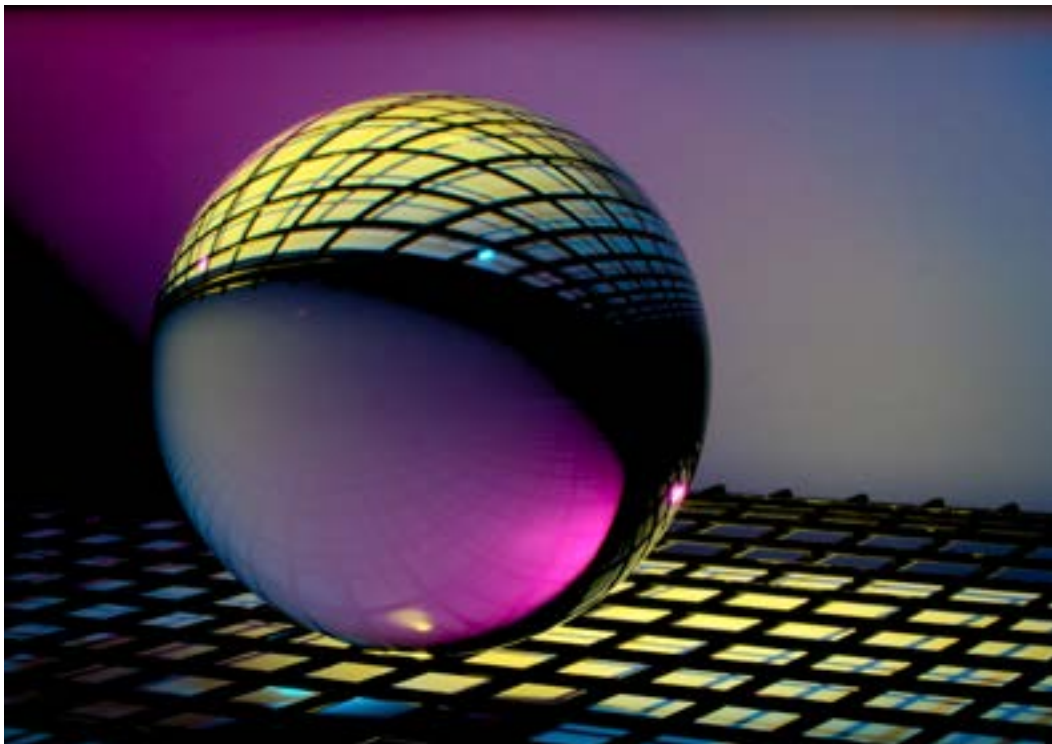
a bit for popular networks. One thing led to another and I was approached to take on producing for a TV show, TV 2 Weather in 2008. Before long, the network wanted me to do a screen test for a weather host position on the very same show. One of the main reasons for me being hesitant to take on the position is that the career span is short. Especially in the case of a female TV host, seldom do you see a leading host past the age of forty and in extremely rare cases, past fifty. Being the curious person that I am, I had to try and see for myself if I was any good at it. So, I sent in my screen test and got a call back six months later! There was no looking back from there on, and my career took off very fast from being a weathercaster on TV2 network to Good Morning Denmark as well as working with Danish Radio, DR.

AI: How did it feel being one of the leading faces in the Danish media business, given that it was a predominantly male-dominated workforce?
CH: When the TV2 network floated the idea of me starting a completely new channel in 2012, it took me a while to realise that I was one of the leading faces of their network. It was a surreal experience for me to see my face on a billboard along with the name of the network and my show, as I was driving past. I never actually realised the difference in the media industry between a male and a female employee until I was more established. All I knew at that point was that I was taking a chance, a big one at that, when I agreed to spearhead this venture. The channel, TV2 FRI was supposed to be a lifestyle channel focusing on home and leisure, gardening as well as lifestyle programs. I was never one to

back out of a challenge and I had to risk it all one more time. It paid off big time and I am extremely proud to say that the channel is still going strong after all these years.

AI: Can you take us through all the different ventures that you are a part of?

CH: I was always fascinated with jewellery and played around with designs since my childhood. I decided to pursue a professional course in this area and spent nearly 18 months in research. In October, 2012, I launched my jewellery line, Blaest but not everyone could pronounce the word. I wanted the name to reflect my roots and be organic as well so I went ahead with Gaia Jewellery, where Gaia means mother earth. Seeing the ideas and designs in my head being converted into the final product, is such a proud feeling for me.

My next business venture arose out of wanting the best for my daughter. She was an energetic toddler and keeping her occupied was getting difficult by the day. I wanted toddler activity blankets in bright colours, which help improve your child's eyesight. Where I come from, the colour palette primarily consists of mild tones. This led to me collaborating with Fred's World in 2016, to create bright-coloured and organic blankets within a reasonable price range.

AI: Given your experiences with entrepreneurship, what would be the one thing that every entrepreneur should be aware of?

CH: Being a woman, I am a firm believer of female solidarity. Rather than putting fellow women entrepreneurs down, I think it is very important to endorse and support their work. Stand with each other instead of against. Another rule that drives me is what I call the 100 percent rule. Unless you have complete and utter faith in your idea, do not go ahead with it. If you don't believe in yourself, there is no else that will. And lastly, do your research. Oceans of it. Jumping in blindly is never a good idea and certainly, not in the case of starting up a business from scratch!

THE MAN BEHIND THE BUDDING ENTREPRENEURS IN CHANDIGARH

Meet the quintessential startup mentor, Sumeer Walia, the Director and Dean at Chitkara University Center for Entrepreneurship and Education Development (CEED), who has been instrumental in starting and scaling the startup community in Chandigarh.

With the vision "To facilitate innovative thinking among the youth and society by advancing front line sensor innovation and promoting tech-businesses, which will prompt financial and social improvement of the nation", Sumeer Walia, has given his valuable 21 years towards building the entrepreneurial ecosystem. He was the Executive Director of TIE (The Indus Entrepreneurs - The Global Platform For Entrepreneurship Development) where he conducted over 300 events in Punjab and surrounding cities to promote entrepreneurship at the grassroots level.

SUMEER WALIA
DIRECTOR AND DEAN, CHITKARA UNIVERSITY

His goal is to help this industry with tutoring, office spaces, adaptable leases, coaching, systems, administration to capital, associating with industry for business pilots/development of new companies and other specialized assets. He has consistently supported sprouting new businesses, trend-setters and specialists that take into account the co-creation approach, incorporating exploration and advancement forms.

Some of the key projects under his direction with significant impact involve UN-INFLUX - UN program on SDG, SURGE 0.1, Ingenuity (with Nottingham University), Techstars Startup Weekend, Startup Day, GEN - Global Entrepreneurship Network Startup Huddle, CAP etc.

His main motto is to bring together the industry players and budding entrepreneurs under one roof to organize accelerator programs for sharing comprehensive knowledge about the various aspects of entrepreneurship.

He is associated with numerous enterprising eco-frameworks like Natio Cultus, Indian Angel Network (IAN), The Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE), ISBA, IESA, Keiretsu Forum, CII, FICCI, SIDBI, and is one of the founding members of Chandigarh Angels Network.

Some of the important events that he worked on are: Asia Inc. 500's NexGen 2020 Summit, Delegate and speaker with India Canada Economic Forum Collision, Toronto, Canada, Speaker & Mentor at Ingenuity 2018, Nottingham University-Ningbo China, Speaker & Moderator at ETNOW and Times of India Entrepreneurship Summit, Chandigarh, India. He was also honored as a noted speaker cum Delegate from India at the 3rd Annual Gala of Sikh American Chamber of Commerce- SACC, New Jersey, USA. He is an Executive member of FICCI National Committee for Startups.

The below are some of the diverse start-ups that have benefited from his vision.

Comparometer.in (Mohali-based retail and tech startup), SD Fine Arts (Art and tech startup in Chandigarh), Xovion technologies
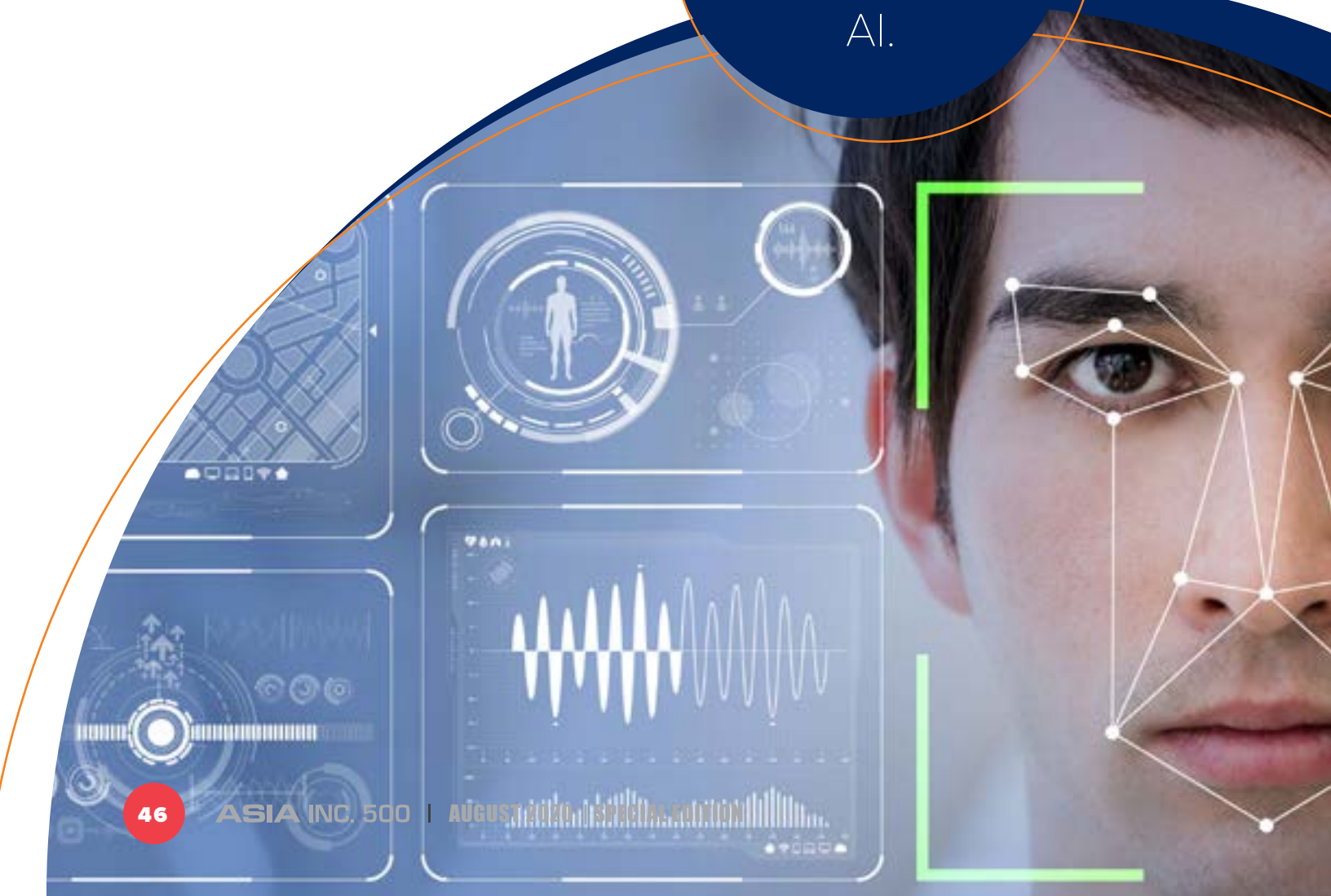
(Bangalore based award-winning startup in the field of Aerospace-Satellite Sub Stations), Chai Nagri (Food & Beverage Startup), Edurev.in (Ed Tech), It-Matic (App development company), BB Oorja (Low-cost cooking gas solution), Craaftz (Women-led startup in Handicrafts), You Care (Startup providing care assistants for old age people), EduCaffe (Online teaching platform) and many more.

Putting his creative skills to work, he co-founded the Startup Accelerator Chamber of Commerce (SACC) and has also designed the Startup Hub at Chitkara Innovation Incubator Foundation (CIIF). His vision has helped CIIF to achieve many milestones, one of which is being awarded the Top University Incubation Program from INDIA FUND FEST -2019, Bangalore. Some of the awards received by CIIF Startups under his expert guidance are:

- IEEE US, AIYEHUM Global and the only winner (2014 and 2016)
- DST-Lockheed Martin, US - India Innovation Growth Program IIGP (winner in 2016 and 2018)

> WHEN SOMETHING WORKS, IT STOPS BEING AI.

- TDB - USAID UKAID - Millennium Alliance 2016 winners
- Intel-DST - Innovate for Digital India 2.0 (winner in 2017)
- Global Ingenuity Competition in China at University of Nottingham, First Prize worth 200,000 RMB
- GIST 2019 (Only Indian startup to win at the event in the history of GIST since 2011)
- DST-Texas Instruments IICDC 2019

"At SACC, the unique selling point is that guidance and mentorship are provided with no expectation of equity in return. We help budding entrepreneurs to meet potential investors in our pool," says Sumeer Walia.

IN A[...]
THE FUT[...]
FOOD R[...]
'MANY[...]
NOT 'M[...]

A growing Asia will place[...]
challenged food product[...]
replicable and diverse, a[...]
Executive Secretary, As[...]
Research Institutions (APAARI).

ASIA, ...TURE OF ...ESTS ON ...Y' AND ...MORE'

...e increasing demands on our climate-
...ion systems. But, solutions – practical,
...are our hope, says Dr. Ravi Khetarpal,
...ia-Pacific Association of Agricultural

DR. RAVI KHETARPAL

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, ASIA-PACIFIC ASSOCIATION OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS (APAARI).

What have been some of the biggest trends in Asian agriculture?

Recent studies by Rabobank Economic Research Group have shown that the world's agriculture production nearly doubled in the last 50 years, while the total area harvested only increased 32%. Crop intensification and use of appropriate technologies eventually led to yield enhancement. Expansion of arable land, noticeably in Asia, has been less important in increasing output, but Asia's contribution to increasing the world's agricultural output has been significant. East Asia, where the output tripled with a mere 11% increase in harvest area, leads the trend.

Asia's agribusiness and food & agriculture companies are showing a positive trend for growing in size and scope to meet the increasing demand, changing national policies, rising organisational capabilities, and are attempting integration and consolidation throughout the value chain. Asia is playing a significant role in the global food chain, accounting for 19% of total food and agriculture exports and 31% of the total food and agriculture imports.

What are some of the biggest challenges to agriculture in Asia?

With half a billion undernourished people, nearly three million of those need to be lifted out of hunger every month until the end of 2030 to achieve the SDGs in Asia. The pace of growth to achieve SDGs in the region is already slow, notes the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) in a 2019 report.

Its large and growing population, coupled with rising incomes and a burgeoning middle class, will see Asia drive the demand for food, agricultural commodities and resources. Production will find it hard to keep pace owing to limited arable land, inadequate water and inefficient resource management combined with stagnating yields, environment and soil fatigue, and limited access to improved infrastructure. Consequently, Asia's, and especially China's, need for imports and investments locally and abroad is likely to increase agribusiness.

Asia is also the most disaster-afflicted region; 89 percent of the world's disaster-hit people are in Asia. Storms like Haiyan, which left more than 6,000 dead in the Philippines in November 2013, are getting stronger with increasing sea temperatures. The average

temperature in the Asia-Pacific region could rise by as much as 2 degree Celsius by 2030 and 7 degree Celsius by 2070. Annual rainfall is also expected to increase in several parts of Asia while arid and semi-arid areas would become drier.

Rising sea levels will greatly affect small atoll Pacific Island countries, Bangladesh, the Maldives and Vietnam. A 30-centimetre increase is expected in the Mekong Delta by 2050, and this increase, coupled with salinity intrusion, could lead to loss of some 420,000 hectares arable land. The IPPC estimates that a million people along the coasts of South and South-East Asia face risk of flooding.

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Nepal are particularly vulnerable to declining crop yields due to glacial melting, floods, droughts and erratic rainfall. With Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar, these countries are most vulnerable to climate change.

Land degradation, loss of biodiversity, biotic and abiotic stresses, coupled with natural and human-made disasters, continue to hit agricultural production, food security and nutrition. Recently, COVID-19 has added to the woes of Asia-Pacific. It is hoped that governments' plans to invest more in agriculture will keep economies in shape. The pandemic, unlike other disasters, is impacting the whole value chain from farmers' disruption of inputs, access to logistics of produce markets being hampered, and from processors and retailers not being able to fully operate to the impact on consumer purchase owing to lockdowns and looming recessions.

Discussions on strengthening the partnership and engaging network members in the Smart Food movement

APAARI Executive council meeting @Bangkok, Thailand. 12 – 13 June 2019

2nd from left is Dr Ravi Khetarpal

How do we tackle these challenges?

There are no quick fixes. Massive multi-pronged efforts are needed to make livelihoods and food systems resilient to climate variability and extreme events. To start with, a look at the whole food system is needed.

One of the solutions we are a part of is the Smart Food initiative founded by ICRISAT (International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics)

and led by an Asian-Afro consortium. It hopes to tackle problems of nutrition, environment and producer livelihoods, especially rural poverty, in unison – with holistic solutions. This is best explained through the Smart Food Triple Bottom Line – provide solutions that are good for you (nutritious and healthy), the planet (environmentally sustainable) and the producers (especially smallholder farmers but also small-medium entrepreneurs that are often pioneers in building markets).

The Smart Food Triple Bottom Line factors in the producers' plight but also advocates solutions that approach these three areas in unison. This is recommended as a framework for food system solutions. It will help us breakdown discipline and sector silos; as well as avoiding solutions that tackle one area while harming another.

The Smart Food Triple Bottom Line approach is complemented by identifying some commodities that could be defined as Smart Foods (i.e. food that is good for you the planet and the farmer) and focusing on diversifying staples with these commodities. By focusing on staples, which typically make up 70% of the plate in Asia, often refined and the least nutritious part of the meal eaten three times a day, we can have a major impact on the health of the consumer and the planet and well-being of the farmer.

Diversification with food that fits the criteria of being a Smart Food will help dissolve boundaries of the "Food System Divide". This is a divide where the largest investments have for decades gone into the Big3–rice, wheat and maize– by way of government support, private industry investment, R&D, product development and even development aid.

Diversification will involve efforts in adapting agricultural practices, in developing products and market linkages, and ultimately consumer demand. It is a path we must take if we are to achieve sustainable agriculture and food systems in Asia-Pacific.

Who can achieve this?

There can be no solo effort. Consumers, civil society, private industry, researchers and governments have to join hands to drive such initiatives. The Smart Food Triple Bottom Line has to guide us all. Country-level policies can play a critical role in mobilizing stakeholders.

How can digital solutions play a role?

Digital solutions have a critical role to play at every stage of the agriculture and food value chain, from consumer awareness and purchasing to supply chains, on-farm solutions for farmers to helping in high-end research. Recent advances including drones, IoT sensors, automated or remote operated post-harvest machines and smart applications, big data, deep learning and Blockchain technology will push us ahead in agriculture. COVID-19 has revealed to us what digital solutions can do when manual operations cannot be undertaken. Online purchasing is now more important to the consumer. Big data will be critical to make the consumer experience more informative, customized and ultimately, experiential.

How is APAARI helping?

APAARI, an apolitical multi-stakeholder body to bring collective change in agri-food systems of the region, aims to promote adoption of Smart Food by advocating policy support, research and development. A strong knowledge management programme would be at the core of our strategy.

To identify Smart Foods that can be adapted and adopted in the region, APAARI organized a regional expert consultation on Underutilized Crops (UUCs) for food and nutritional security in November 2017. It was then agreed that mapping and building of a baseline database on UUC species and diversity, documentation and validation of indigenous/traditional knowledge/ethnobotany, culinary recipes and local uses of UUCs be undertaken immediately.

A clear-cut strategy for Asia-Pacific region is being developed to ensure implementation, promotion and adoption of good practices that will involve persistent advocacy coupled with efforts at behaviour change.

Accordingly, APAARI intends to develop modules for stakeholders to explain benefits of Smart Food crops to smallholder farmers and rural communities while linking to health issues and malnutrition. We are also trying to create awareness programmes to strengthen the farmers' connect to value chains.

APAARI is leveraging its multi-stakeholder partnership base as such mega initiatives call for significant human and financial resources, strong partnerships and relevant linkages in diverse domains of research, innovation and development with an active involvement of the private sector.

What would be your biggest wish for agriculture in Asia?

My wish is that Smart Food becomes a household name in Asia-Pacific be it for a farmer, industry, a businessperson, an urban consumer or a policymaker.

My second wish is that a Smart Food Triple Bottom Line is used in all solutions implemented by businesses to governments to scientists.

Smart Foods are in the interest of the people, planet and producers alike. To realize their benefits, we need to link and synergize other existing programmes along the value chain. A holistic approach presents an opportunity for capacity building as issues around nutrition/health, environment and farmer welfare must be tackled in unison.

Survive and thrive in the face of DIGITAL EVOLUTION

Ramesh
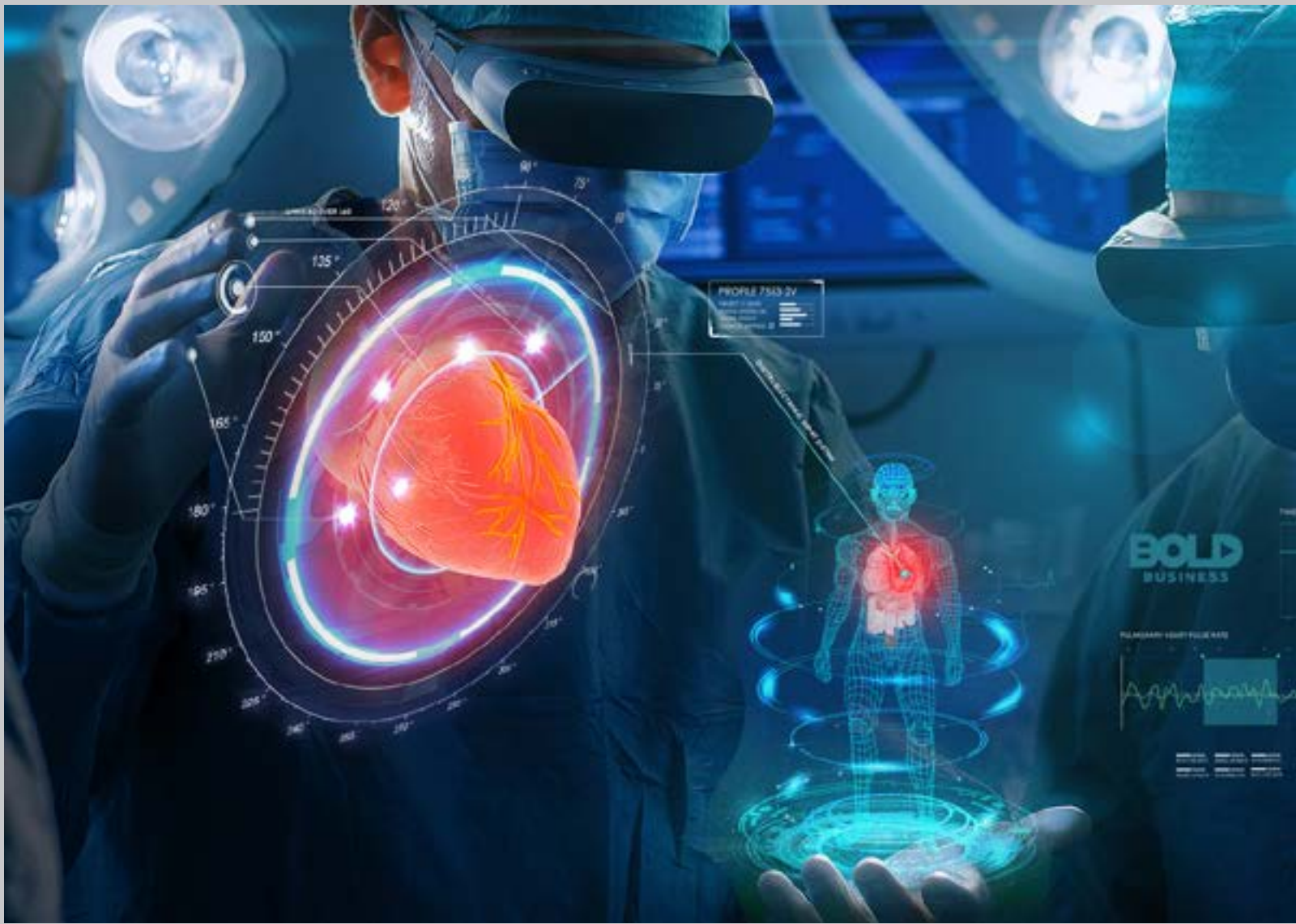Co-founder & President of
Pyramid Consulting Solutions

Relentless change is the new normal. It characterizes every industry in the market right now. Digital transformations are changing the fundamental way in which businesses operate. To stay relevant, welcoming digital evolution with open arms is fundamental.

While adapting to the advancements of digitization is crucial, it can be a tricky business. The first of many steps would be identifying the need and the right infrastructure but what comes next? To answer this confusing question, my team at Pyramid Consulting Solutions came up with several simple yet effective solutions to kickstart your digital transformation as well as thrive in this environment.

Survive and thrive in the face of digital evolution

Managing the complex curve of digital evolution is easy when guided by a cohesive strategy. Simply transforming your business is not enough – capitalizing on the wide array of advantages that technology can provide such as scalability, reliability and profitability of the business is the real challenge here.

Adapting to the technological innovations

At Pyramid Consulting Solutions, we understand the challenges involved and design effective solutions to navigate the complexity of the business. We offer advisory services for application modernization and help you with identifying which apps to abandon, which to migrate, and how much to invest in various architectures. Our development experts provide round-the-clock support for all your issues.
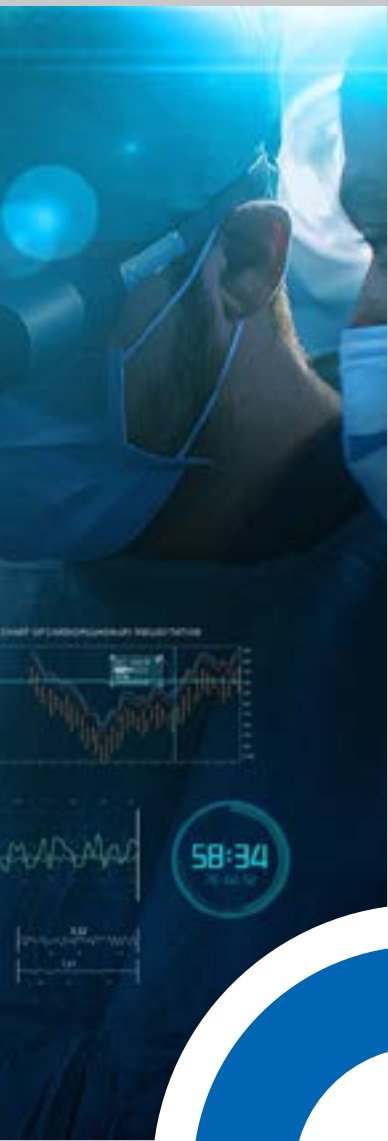
Optimizing the legacy business systems to support the NEW

Moving your applications to the cloud or building new applications from scratch to keep up with the digital products of today, requires a lot of support. My team has been dealing with application development since the inception of our organization. Getting your project off the ground will get easier with our services that range from automation to low code development, web, mobile and java tools management, scalability of resources to custom SOW support.

Organizing the transformation from Vision to Value

Software development lifecycle demands end-to-end support. Building an application is just the tip of the iceberg. You also require applications that run at peak efficiency, deliver high quality, and have security built-in. Maximizing flow-of-value and increasing productivity from your business is what is needed. Our Managed Services Group can help you with enterprise level solutions that are robust and cost-effective.

IT TAKES
EXPERIENCE
AND
PERSPECTIVE
TO PREPARE
FOR
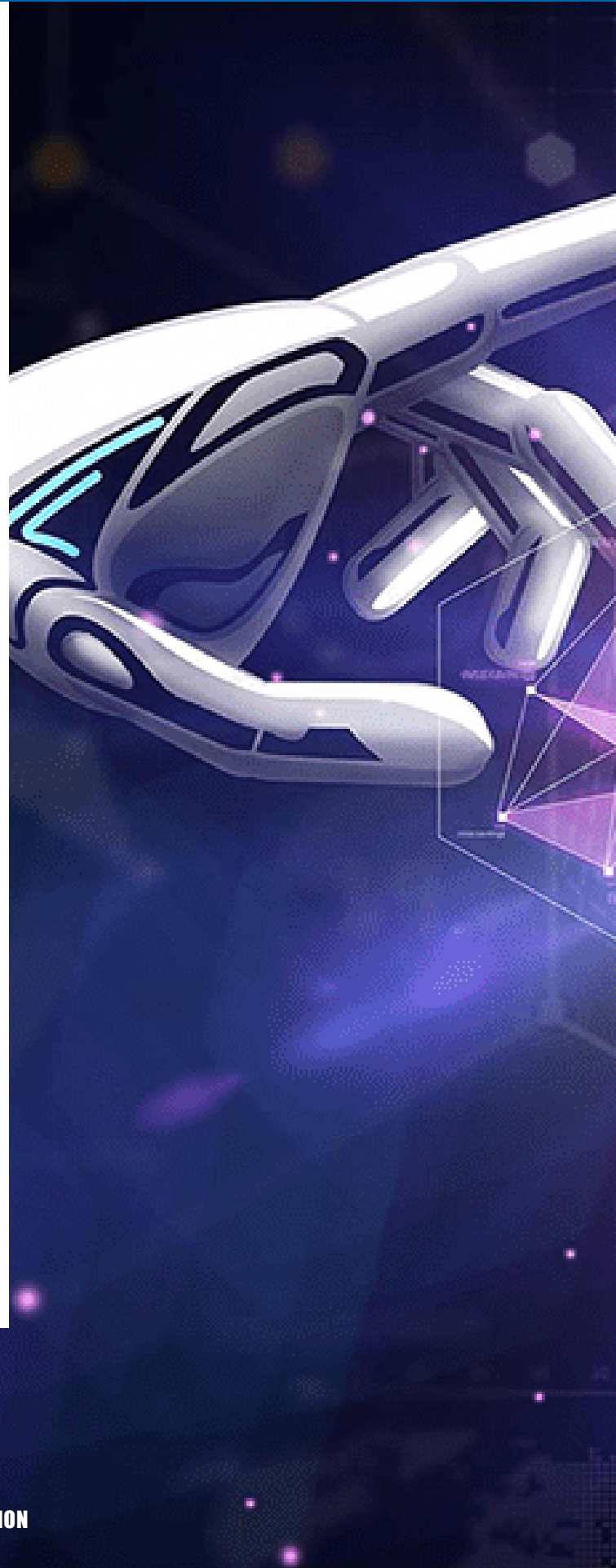TOMORROW,

Revisiting the Customer Experience

Digital transformation promotes collaboration and provides an opportunity for companies to rethink how they engage with their customers. Whether with all the stakeholders involved or with the customers; communication and transparency is easy to achieve. Putting the customer first is the primary motivation at any company and Pyramid Consulting Solutions is no exception. We are constantly striving for a seamless customer experience, and digital adoption only makes it more efficient.

Brand value propositioning with Pyramid Consulting Solutions

My team and I have been in the business of delivering technology solutions for almost 25 years since 1996. Our longstanding expertise in this area makes it possible for us to develop relevant and enticing brand value propositions for your enterprise. With the proper value proposition, it is relatively easy to answer 'why' someone should do business with your brand.

As we say at Pyramid Consulting Solutions, "It takes experience and perspective to prepare for tomorrow," which is exactly what we intend to do.

We, at Pyramid Consulting Solutions have helped dozens of major clients embark on their journey of digital transformation through our innovative and experienced solutions. A deep and nurturing alliance with all our partners enables us to deliver state-of-the-art solutions customized for each industry, application and computing environment in varied areas including data analytics, quality assurance, infrastructure optimization and security. As a strong partner we'll help optimize your enterprise growth, our organization is well-equipped to provides solutions that maximize your business in the future with confidence!

Suresh Cheruku
president and CEO
Matilda Cloud

CLOUD INNOVATIONS TAKE THE IT WORLD BY STORM!

While many are rushing to capitalize on this opportunity, they fail to take note of the numerous challenges faced while migrating to the cloud. Assessing the workloads to be shifted, identifying infrastructure and internal dependencies, and post deployment support are all imperative yet time-consuming activities. Cloud migration undertaken in haste and without a sound strategy will lead to trouble.

Shifting your applications to the cloud is synonymous with streamlining your IT enterprises to the maximum. Cloud automation assures an impressive portfolio of advantages such as agility, easy scalability and most importantly, profitability. Its no surprise that the number of businesses moving to the cloud has been increasing consistently. According to data cited by Forbes, 83% of enterprise workloads will be in the cloud by 2020.

TRANSFORM TO THE CLOUD WITH EASE AND CONFIDENCE

We, at Matilda Cloud wanted to design such a platform that not only helps you migrate to the cloud with confidence but also facilitates support in every phase of your digital evolution. We offer a suite of products such as Discovery, Migration, Optimize, Value Stream and AIOps, which enables autonomous cloud lifecycle management as well as supports a self-healing IT enterprise.

BROADEST AUTOMOTIVE PORTFOLIO HAS TO BE INCLUDED THAT COMBINES HIGH-PERFORMANCE MOBILE CONNECTIVITY WITH SECURE DEVICE MANAGEMENT.

ACCELERATE CLOUD MIGRATION AND VALUE STREAM DELIVERY

Be it containerization of legacy applications or migration of monolithic applications to the cloud, a detailed migration methodology is required. My team and I, at Matilda Cloud wanted to come up with a solution that is hassle-free and relatively, easy to implement. Matilda Migrate is a cloud-agnostic platform that automates the migration process with the help of domain-optimized templates. Quick, stress-free and simple process with up to 60% reduction in overall cost is possible with our module.

A holistic digital transformation journey with significant increases in ROI is facilitated by adopting DevOps across your entire IT enterprise. Accelerate IT value stream delivery and boost productivity with our Matilda Value Stream module that optimizes CI/CD pipelines and provides support for release and orchestration features.

ASSESS YOUR ENVIRONMENT

A seamless migration to the cloud is only possible when you are prepared for all the outcomes, good or bad. It is of the utmost importance to identify the best configuration fit for your cloud environment. If you don't know what's in your environment, how can you plan for the cloud? Combining speed with accuracy, our module, Matilda Discovery enables you to get your target environment ready in an extremely short span of time. Faster time-to-market is achieved as a result of this comprehensive preliminary assessment that involves evaluating existing applications, workloads and their internal dependencies.

OPTIMIZE CLOUD USAGE IN REAL-TIME AND ALIGN IT WITH BUSINESS DEMAND

Optimizing cloud spending is important because you can be very easily tricked into paying for more resources than you need. With our module Matilda Optimize, learn to optimize ongoing costs with an intelligent rebalancing of workloads that ensures increased ROI. We, at Matilda Cloud have developed a state-of-the-art AI enabled solution to monitor your complex environments and optimize it in real time. Also avail of customized recommendations based on your actual usage of the cloud.

RUN YOUR OWN SELF-HEALING IT ENTERPRISE

For a truly autonomous cloud experience, AIOps is the key. Gartner foresees that exclusive use of AIOps by large enterprises will rise from 5% in 2018 to nearly 30% in 2023. We, at Matilda Cloud, promise autonomous AI/ML optimization, high availability and more with Matilda Cloud AIOps. Our module coupled with intelligent automation enhances the efficiency of operations and allows for Enterprise systems to implement self-healing before an incident occurs.

The various ways in which cloud technologies can enable innovation among businesses are endless. We are a team of product visionaries that are very passionate about driving digital evolution to the next level. With our state-of-the-art platform, we assure you complete transformation from reactive IT to a self-healing IT environment. We also focused on making it extremely easy and quick for Enterprises to use our platform through a Self Service model. We automatically set up the platform so that Users can very quickly start to leverage the platform, including dashboards, visualizations and analytics. Enterprises can quickly see value, in a matter of days, instead of spending weeks and months to get things up and running

Recognized by Gartner as a Cool Vendor in Cloud Computing in October 2019 and being named the Advanced Technology Partner by AWS in June 2020 are only indications of how extensively we, at Matilda Cloud, can leverage our platform to provide top-notch solutions for our customers.

The Man Behind India's First

1

Million
Seconds Non Stop
Online Hackathon

The COVID-19 lockdown has opened the doors for innovation. There's a sudden rise in the frequency of virtual hackathons all across the globe encouraging young minds to think out of the box.

One among such hackathons was I-Innovate, organised by Publishsutra, an initiative by Tatonlabs, Telangana State Innovation Cell and Telangana Information Technology Association. The uniqueness of this hackathon was that it did not quiz participants with a problem statement rather encouraged them to come up with their own problem statement and the underlying solution offering assistance via mentors. The hackathon was held on 5th May, 2020.

The hackathon posed a unique opportunity to the participants who wish to make a difference. It was not about coding but rather about identifying a problem in their locality and coming up with a feasible solution that was taken to a final shape with the help of the mentors.

Krishna Chaitanya Rao, Founder and CEO, Publishsutra mentioned that his aim was to turn non-model villages to model ones through I-Innovate. He collected problem statements from villages by talking to local leaders over calls and uploaded them in the village innovation category. Here's an excerpt from our conversation with him about his passion and what inspired him to take the path of entrepreneurship.
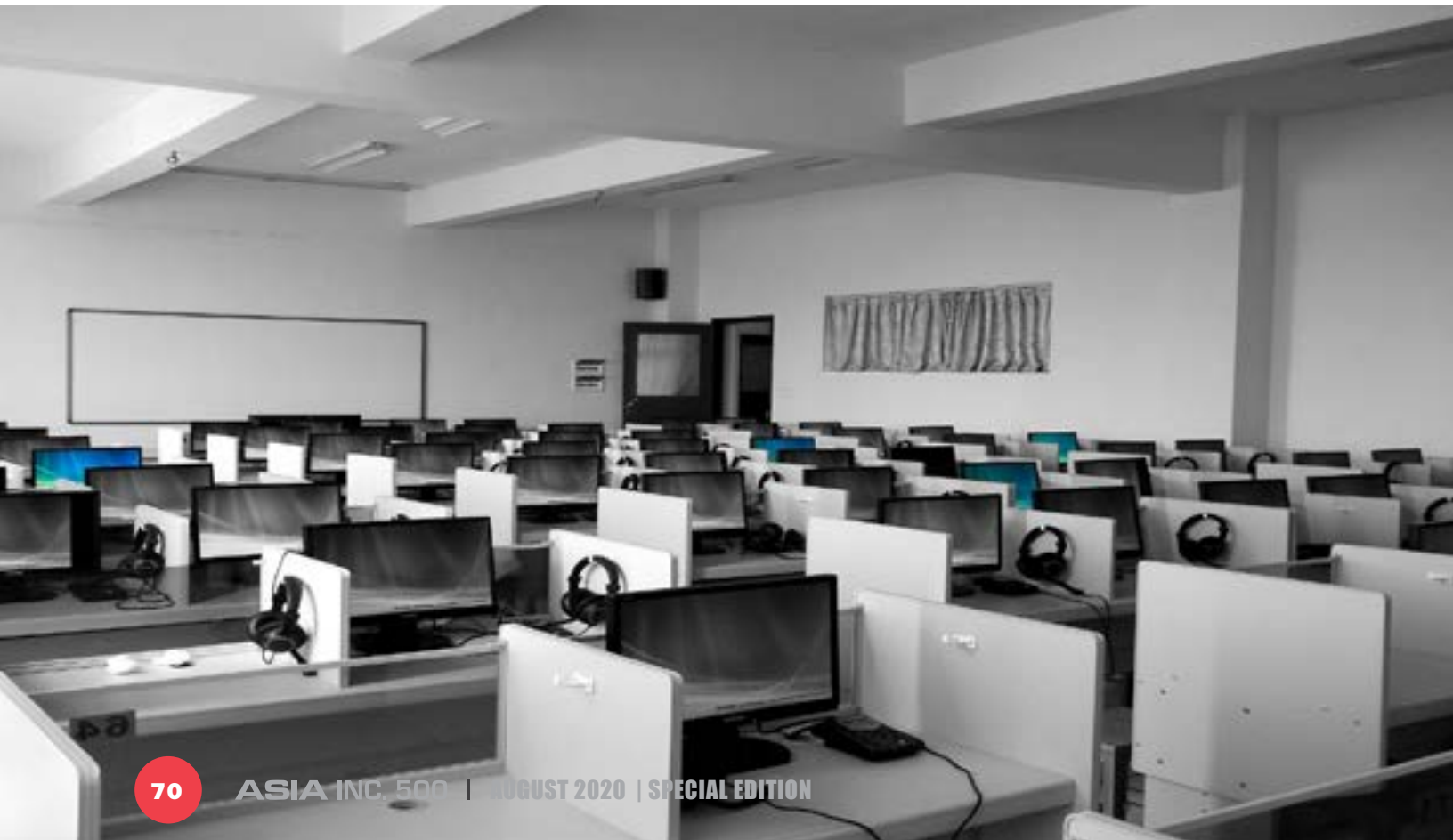
Could you tell us a bit about yourself?

With big dreams and few opportunities like every other young aspirant, I always wanted a better life. It was the 18th of May, 2015 when I gave my BITSAT exam and looking at the screen, I felt like Batman, for the score that I received, 325/450 was unbelievable to my own eyes. I was accepted into the Electronics and Communication Engineering program at BITS Pilani but all my joy shattered at once as my family could not afford it. My family runs on my father's income, who is a teacher at a small government school. However, being a sports person I managed to get admission into a Tier-2 college near my home. This was so that I could be with my family continuing my education as well as helping them out in household chores.

My curiosity always pushed me to learn new things, so I took advantage of every opportunity to spend time in various premier institutes and learn from the experts. Also, I was the only student from Telangana at that time, who got selected to study at IIT-Kharagpur as an off-campus student from a Tier-2 engineering college, where I have done my computer network management specialization. I used to sit with academic research scholars most of the time instead of with my classmates. Then, a professor from IIM-Lucknow offered me an internship. That gave me the push that I needed to finally become the person I always wanted to be. All these experiences helped me to upskill myself and I was able to publish 8 international research paper publications. Also, I have authored a book on machine learning. During my undergraduate studies, I bagged 3 state-level hackathons and won around 2000 USD, with which I was able to pay my academic fees. After grabbing the first position in the Government of Telangana Hackathon, the Telangana state government offered me a Research fellow Internship in the IT E&C Department.

What led you to start Publishsutra?

The initiation of Publishsutra was not a small thing. I was fascinated by the art of research and its importance in improving knowledge and experience in many fields. Sitting in my backyard, thinking about what to do next, a thought ran through my mind; what if research work is a part of every college curriculum? What if there are many students out there who can change their lives by being a research scientist? A research scientist is not a new occupation, but it is one of the least known jobs in India and a highly necessary occupation throughout the world. I was amazed by the thought of helping many capable students to publish their own research work under the guidance of top professors. That was the first time I decided to create something bigger and useful. I think of myself as really lucky because the people I used to hang out with have now become the people who have a hand behind Publishsutra. All these experiences I have put together with my friends Komal Vyas, Aishwarya, Rahul, Chandrashekar, and a high school student Abhi Keerthan Rao, who was frustrated by the challenges faced to get the right mentorship in research. However, It started as a small idea on a piece of paper while we were graduating, although we have experienced the pain points of getting access to the right resources, finding the right mentor for research is challenging for many students who are graduating from most of the colleges in India. We, as a small idea, participated In Startup Yatra India in 2018 where we got our first break, after winning the event. After coming back from that event we didn't have any plan of wasting this opportunity. Instead, we sat together and thought of making this into a reality. We always believed in one thing, "Focus on your path rather than the destination". That's how we perfectly took care of everything, never thinking of getting any international exposure. And at last, here we are, our plan has impacted 6000 students so far and nurtured 2000 researchers under Publishsutra.

Focus on your path rather than the destination

The entire concept of the I-innovate hackathon for 1 million seconds seems to be new. Could you tell us how you came up with this innovative idea and the thought process behind it?

A few months ago, when all the mess around the world started, my team had a meeting about doing something useful in the process of escaping this lazy lockdown. And then we remembered how we started and got encouraged by the hackathon. The world is on the verge of a global crisis and crises fuel innovation. So, we are conducting a hackathon to identify the problem statements and overcome them innovatively. As India is a developing country, our main focus is on rural areas as they lack the facilities that urban areas have to offer. We are focused on identifying the root problems. This is a one-of-a-kind program, which is designed in such a way that innovators work right from the problem statement identification to solution development and eradicate the problems. Everyone was happy with this idea and eventually, all of them started to get things together online. Conducting this virtually was the only option we had. The I-Innovate 1 Million Seconds Hackathon was created and then Telangana State Innovation

Cell (TSIC) and Telangana Information Technology Association (TITA) joined us to take this mission forward. We started publishing on many social media platforms, getting sponsors, and also many guest speakers to educate students about the importance of innovation. This, being the first virtual 1 Million Seconds Hackathon, turned out to be a very interesting and thought-provoking initiative for many of us, including the students who participated. After some months of efforts, up and downs, and a few glitches, the hackathon ended with categorizing and selecting the Top 50 teams. Now, we started training and incubating those 50 teams under the guidance of team Publishsutra with mentors who are handpicked and have experienced the ups and downs of entrepreneurship. While some of them are from leading IT companies, others are from premier institutions and also from Government and Non-Government organizations.

About the Hackathon

Publishsutra along with Telangana State Innovation Cell and Telangana Information Technology Association has launched I-INNOVATE, India's first 1 million seconds non-stop online hackathon where people of all ages can participate and put forth their innovative ideas to fight the current dire situation we are all facing because of covid-19. Our Initiative was launched by Mr. Ravi Narayan, CIO @ TSIC, and CEO @ T-Hub on 25th April 2020.

We started the hackathon on 3rd May 2020 at 10:00 AM and it went on till 14th May at 11:46 PM so that it completes 1 million seconds of non-stop addressing the innovators across the country. We got a huge response of 790 entries in the opening applications. From the overwhelming response that we received, we selected 174 teams with 574 participants (from Schools/ Engineering Students/ Pharma Students / Working professionals/ Doctorate Degree holders / Govt.sector and others) and assigned 40 different mentors from different backgrounds to help them at every step. Each mentor has 4 teams assigned to them and these mentors are responsible for getting their ideas into a proper structure.

We have also initiated the Quarantine learning carnival, where our budding innovators learn and pick up new skills. We also provide live technical webinars on IoT, Web development, and Application development courses for free by young and dynamic tutors from various organizations. We have initiated Quarantine Leadership sessions, where our budding innovators interact with great minds like Madhusudhana Rao - CEO, AIC-CCMB and, Vinay Kumar - Theater player, Rangbhumi on the Importance of storytelling. The second round started from 13th May 2020 and the grand finale was on 14th May 2020.

All of this was possible because we had such a strong team who stood like a pillar for I-Innovate: Rahul, M. Saiteja, Sukumaran Adarsh, Komal Vyas, Kanukuntla Chandrashekar, Ankit Kumar Singh, Abhi Keerthan Rao.

Abhi Keerthan Rao

Krishna Chaitanya Rao

Komal Vyas

Chandrashekar

Rahul

Aishwarya

What was the outcome of the hackathon?

This event is a lifelong learning experience for the team and also an important stepping stone for Publishsutra. We met different people around the globe, though at certain times, it was slightly challenging to manage and comply with everyone. However, we went through nerve-racking discussions, and tried hard to manage everything. Not only the team of Publishsutra had sleepless nights, but also around 500 participants as well, who got motivated and used this chance to make their dreams come true. We now started to incubate the top 50 teams and the other 50 were handed under the mentorship of the technology team. We are very proud of everyone for contributing in their own way to discover something during a crisis. Many of the teams tried solving societal problems and learnt from industry experts, and the best teams got a research grant from Publishsutra. We are also planning to take them for the upcoming Computational Fellowship and Research program.

Tell us about the upcoming projects that you are working on?

Our next big project is the Computational Research and Analysis Fellowship. This is a big step for our firm, and really an added advantage for any student who is passionate about research in their own field. The Fellowship program offers unique opportunities and technical expertise for exciting, progressive projects and initiatives with tangible goals. The program mainly highlights the subject of Analytics, which is going to be a massive part of all sectors for the next decade. After the Research fellowship, the fellows will get a chance to write, develop and publish their own research work under the guidance of their mentors. Students can illustrate their research work in any field of study, including SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals). This fellowship is a step forward for the growth of the research community as we are bringing scholars from the University of Massachusetts to teach and nurture fresh minds.

Cognitivebotics - Artificial Intelligence for Autism Intervention AI for AI

A state-of-the-art learning module to harness the power of Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and Natural Language Processing technology to enable and empower your child on the Autism Spectrum.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disorder that affects communication and behavior. Although autism can be diagnosed at any age, the symptoms can be recognized as early as in the first two years of life. Children with autism have difficulty in understanding and expressing some of the verbal and non-verbal social communication skills.

AI advantages

- Affordability
- Ubiquity
- Time saving
- Just in Time Practice
- Computers are less judgmental

Genesis

Ram was diagnosed with autism at the age of 2 years. At the time of diagnosis, healthcare professionals suggested that Ram may not be able to develop language, math, and social communication skills at par with other children of his age. Today, he is 24 years old (and has a long way to go), speaks 3 languages fluently, travels independently and has completed his undergraduate in computer applications. During his under graduation, he has successfully performed and submitted a project on how artificial intelligence (AI) can help children with autism. He has shown to the world that with the right efforts and support from parents and society, children with autism can overcome several challenges associated with autism and lead a near normal life.

Motivated by this transformational journey and altruism, Ram's parents (Dintyala family) partnered with Dhulipalli family and Seneca Global (an IT services company) to better the lives of individuals with autism and people around them. Cognitivebotics was formed to develop a product that augments the efforts of overloaded and less available therapists and parents and provide scalable models addressing the global population where many may not have optimal access to therapists.

Key advantages of this AI based intervention:

1. Affordability - Reduces cost of intervention

2. Ubiquity - Available wherever Internet is available globally (especially true in COVID times)

3. Time saving - Parents do not need to haul the child to therapy class often

4. Just in Time Practice - Child can practice before facing situation

5. Computers are less judgmental – Autistic children are very sensitive to others' feelings which come in the way of learning. Child feels comfortable as a computer is less judgemental

In the words of Dr. Harini Atturu, an experienced Psychiatrist (trained in UK) and advisor to Cognitivebotics, "This product aims to transform children with autism into self-sufficient and productive individuals of the society. And the best part is that it is being developed and co-founded by parents of a successful individual with autism, and socially conscious investors." Meenakshi, a parent and co-founder of Cognitivebotics says that, "As a family, we went through several moments of truth. By developing this product, we want to help parents and children with autism around the globe to realize their true potential. With appropriate help these children could grow into individuals who otherwise would be a potential tax burden to society, into a potential tax paying contributor to the society".

Cognitivebotics

product is being developed in Hyderabad, India, using digital technologies (patent pending) and caters to individuals with autism. The specific modules and skill-based training sessions of the product have been developed using latest technologies in Artificial Intelligence, Natural Language Processing, Audio Video Simulation and Augmented Reality, in collaboration with doctors and therapists who specialize in Autism Spectrum Disorders. These modules and sessions are delivered online and are monitored to chart the progress of the individual and predict the suitable path of learning. With this, it is believed that they will have access to 24x7 quality therapeutic support that augments their existing medical support system. It aims to provide early intervention and continued support, which is key to enable individuals with autism to lead a meaningful and productive life in society, and in dealing with the people and situations that they face in daily life.

She Leads SUMMIT - A League of Game-Changers in our Society
As India is witnessing a steady rise in women entrepreneurship and more women pursuing their career towards this direction, Asia Inc. 500 is gearing up to host its upcoming event to honor, award, support and connect women thought leaders and industry stalwarts at one place.

About 8% of women in India run their own startups, over 30% have a share in the Senior Management positions in the corporate and only 10% of formal enterprises are being operated by women. It is, therefore, imperative for both the organizations and people to accelerate the need to increase gender diversity in the workplace and society.

She Leads summit aims at bridging the gap on various aspects hampering the progress of women by bringing together 600+ the most sought-after women leaders, entrepreneurs, mentors, startup investors etc. who support women leadership through interactive keynotes, and panel discussion. This also invokes tremendous learning and valuable insights on what it takes to be leaders of tomorrow, from the one's today.

About ASIA Inc. 500
Asia Inc.500, a digital platform for celebrating, recognizing and awarding thought leaders and industry stalwarts across Asia. Along with its valued partners, Asia Inc. 500 lays emphasis on exploring and recognizing 5000+ individuals and organizations every year across Asia and helps to reach out to a wide audience, prospective clients & investors.

Our platform is a great source of information and connection in areas of AI, Blockchain and other upcoming technologies and frameworks. At the end of every quarter, we choose and rank the best 500 organizations in various aspects all throughout Asia.

ASIA INC. 500

Global Entrepreneur Summit (GES)

On its Journey to recognize individuals and organizations, and their contributions to the global economy, Asia Inc. 500 held its first official Road to GES (Global Entrepreneur Summit) Growth Conclave 2017 on November 24, 2017. Held at the tech startup incubator T-Hub on the IIIT-Hyderabad campus, the conference had over 50 women who made it big in their respective fields.

In the first edition of Growth Conclave, ASIA Inc. chose to support Women in Tech in alignment with Global Entrepreneur Summit 2017 who will be future leaders, game-changers, board members, executives and entrepreneurs, sportswomen, and politicians.

The Chief Guest for the conclave was Ms. Katherine B. Hadda, U.S Consul General, and the event witnessed prominent women leaders from various walks across the globe.

The conclave focused on women leaders and entrepreneurship with a theme that talked about rights, responsibilities, and respect that women get and deserve in the industry. The aim of the awards presented at the summit was to support women who will be a changing face of the world.

Pharma Digital Transformation Conclave

Asia Inc. 500, the leading Digital Platform for Thought Leaders in Asia, hosted the first ever Pharma Digital Transformation Conclave on March 8, 2018, at the Park Hyatt Hotel in Hyderabad. The event witnessed the participation of top-notch leaders from the pharma industry across the city of Hyderabad.

The conclave had more than 30 C-suite executives participating in the biggest CIO roundtable event. Asia Inc. 500 honored the top most influential pharma leaders who have embraced technology and made a significant contribution to the pharmaceutical field manifesting in a Pharma Digital Transformation. Out of 104 nominations from 71 brands, the jury has selected top 7 nominations and awarded them.

Asia Inc. 500 & IBC

Asia Inc. 500 and Nucleus Vision, in collaboration with the governments of Telangana and Goa, and NITI Aayog have launched the first edition of the International

Blockchain Congress held from August 3-5, 2018. This is India's first ever International Blockchain Congress and also the world's largest industry-government Blockchain conference which was attended by hundreds of government officials, global Blockchain leaders, innovators, enterprises, and technologists.

The first edition of the conference was attended by distinguished guests such as Mr. Tim V Draper, Founder of DFJ Ventures, Mr. Amitabh Kant, CEO Niti Aayog, Mr. KT Rama Rao, IT Minister, State of Telangana, Mr. Rohan Khaunte, IT Minister, Goa, Mr.

CP Gurnani, CEO Tech Mahindra, Mr. Mohandas Pai, Chairman, Manipal Global Assoc., Mr. Min Kim, CEO of ICON Foundation, Mr. Ian Balina, Global Community Influencer, and many others.

Global BLockchain Summit 2018

Asia Inc. 500 was also associated with Global Blockchain Summit 2018, Malaysia, that brought together blockchain gurus, technology players and influential audience of government. Mr. Khalid Abdul Samad, Minister of Federal Territories, Malaysia, and Mr. Kishva Ambigapathy, the Chairman of the Commonwealth Youth Council, Malaysia, were the guests of honor at the event.

Vizag Fintech Festival 2018

Vizag Fintech Festival 2018 is the largest financial technology festival in India where Asia Inc. 500 has collaborated with the government of Andhra Pradesh to organize the festival. The week-long event which took place from October 22-26, 2018, was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Chief Minister, N. Chandra Babu Naidu and the Hon'ble IT Minister, Nara Lokesh.

Fintech Valley as a platform, brought pioneers and enablers of innovation to host an exclusive group of leading corporates, startups, academia and regulators from around the globe. The event also had the world's first humanoid citizen robot, Sophia, as the star attraction of the Vizag Fintech Festival where Sophia was engaged in an intriguing interaction with the State IT Minister N Lokesh and other delegates.

World Quality Summit 2019

Asia Inc. 500 hosted the India edition of the World Quality Summit, the world's premium technology summit for quality assurance professionals, on 22 February 2019 at T-Hub, Hyderabad. WQS which was co-hosted by Wall Street Select is a not-for-profit thought leadership event with the sole focus of bringing innovation and thought leadership in Quality Assurance and Quality Engineering.

This seminal event in the Quality Engineering calendar witnessed the participation of CEOs, CTOs, senior vice-presidents of technology companies, senior QA & QE experts & Thought Leaders from the quality assurance and quality engineering space. Mr. J A Chowdary (IT Advisor and Special Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh) delivered the chief guest's address and launched the fifth edition of Asia Inc. 500's magazine on Digital Innovation in Asia.

Asia Inc. 500 in association with WQS also hosted Asia's biggest awards ceremony - Global Business Excellence Awards 2019 and celebrated companies and individuals who have accomplished significant achievements in the Quality Assurance and Quality Engineering space. This year's industry-star studded event saw hundreds of entries, where the winners were chosen after careful assessment and deliberation – culminating in a closely-run and action-packed event.

The accelerating pace of technology in diverse fields across the globe has resulted in the resonating success of many organizations, individuals and institutions. Asia Inc.500 is a digital platform for celebrating, recognizing and awarding
thought leaders and industry stalwarts across Asia. The global pioneer, which is also an international business magazine, endows an exposure of top business organizations that have manifested in a digital transformation. With a motive to bring the best in Asia, Asia Inc. 500 has been laying continuous emphasis on recognizing and rewarding 5000+ individuals and organizations across Asia.