

Newspaper Clips

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P-02

आईआईटी, आईआईएम के लिए बनेगी वित्तीय एजेंसी

नई दिल्ली, 6 मार्च (ब्यूरो): आईआईटी और आईआईएम की वित्तीय जरूरतों को पूरा करने के लिए सरकार बाजार और सीएसआर से धन जुटाएगी। इसके लिए जल्द ही उच्च शिक्षा वित्तीय एजेंसी (एचईएफए) गठित की जाएगी। इस

■ **संस्थाओं की जरूरतें पूरी करने को बाजार और सीएसआर से जुटाएंगे धन**

एजेंसी के अध्यक्ष उच्च शिक्षा सचिव रहेंगे।

सूत्रों की मानें तो केंद्रीय मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय उच्च शिक्षा वित्तीय एजेंसी

(एचईएफए) की रूप रेखा पर काम कर रहा है। भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान (आईआईटी) और भारतीय प्रबंध संस्थान (आईआईएम) जैसी शीर्ष शैक्षणिक संस्थाओं में आधारभूत संरचना निर्माण में वित्त पोषण के मकसद से इसका प्रस्ताव किया गया है। सूत्रों ने बताया कि महकमे में अधिकारियों के स्तर पर इस संबंध में विचार-विमर्श चल रहा है। कहा जा रहा है कि एचईएफए कंपनी कानून की धारा 8 के तहत एक कंपनी के तौर पर स्थापित की जा सकती है। एक अधिकारी ने बताया कि एचईएफए के एक गैर-बैंकिंग वित्तीय कंपनी (एनबीएफसी) होने की वजह से इस संस्था के सीईओ पद पर किसी पेशेवर व्यक्ति को नियुक्त किया जाएगा।

जयपुर में बना देश का सबसे बड़ा थ्री डी प्रिंटर

मेक इन राजस्थान : 12 युवाओं की कामयाबी

भास्कर न्यूज | जयपुर

जयपुर के 12 युवाओं की टीम ने देश में अब तक का सबसे बड़ा थ्री डी प्रिंटर तैयार कर दिखाया है। खासियत इसकी कीमत है। अमेरिका में इतनी ही क्षमता के 3डी प्रिंटर्स की कीमत करीब 3 करोड़ रुपए तक होती है। जयपुर में तैयार इस प्रिंटर की कीमत सिर्फ 55 लाख रुपए है, यानी विदेशी प्रिंटर्स की एक चौथाई कीमत से भी सस्ता। प्रोटोसेंटर 1एम नाम के इस प्रिंटर को गुजरात की एक कंपनी ने खरीद भी लिया है।

कंपनी ने इसे तैयार करने वाली जयपुर की 'अहा थ्रीडी' टीम को ऐसे ही एक और प्रिंटर का ऑर्डर भी दिया है। अहा थ्री डी के फाउंडर-सीईओ आकाश ने बताया-उनकी कंपनी पिछले तीन साल से 3डी प्रिंटर्स बना रही है। कंपनी डीआरडीओ, आईआईटी दिल्ली-मुंबई को भी कई प्रिंटर्स बेच चुकी है।

अमेरिका में तीन करोड़ रु. में बनता है ऐसा प्रिंटर, यहां 55 लाख में बना



खासियत

- प्रोटोसेंटर 1एम की क्षमता 1 घन मीटर है। यानी एक मीटर लंबा, चौड़ा और ऊंचाई वाला कोई भी प्रॉडक्ट यह प्रिंटर तैयार कर सकता है।
- यह डायग्नोस्टिक पार्ट, ऑटो पार्ट्स, आर्किटेक्ट मॉडल्स, मूर्तियां, स्पेयर पार्ट्स जैसी चीजें प्रिंट कर सकता है।
- इसे चलाने के लिए ऑपरेटर की जरूरत नहीं पड़ेगी। रिमोट से चलाया जा सकेगा।

एक घन मीटर का थ्री डी प्रिंटर देश में जयपुर के युवाओं ने तैयार किया है। इसे मैंने खुद देखा है। इन्हें सरकार की ओर से जो भी मदद होगी, दी जाएगी। ताकि मेक इन राजस्थान को राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर पहचान मिल सके।
- रविशंकर श्रीवास्तव, प्रमुख सचिव विज्ञान एवं तकनीकी

Nai Duniya ND 07.03.2016 P-07

माशिमं की त्रुटि ने विद्यार्थी को दिया तनाव

धार (मप्र)। बच्चों को न केवल परीक्षा के दौरान बल्कि परीक्षा के बाद भी तनाव से दो-चार होना पड़ता है। आईआईटी, पीएमटी जैसी परीक्षाओं के लिए भी उन पर दबाव रहता है। वहीं माध्यमिक शिक्षा मंडल की त्रुटि भी उनके इस तनाव को बढ़ा देती है।

ऐसा ही एक पीड़ित छात्र है- 17 वर्षीय भूमिंद्रसिंह सिसौदिया। 12वीं की परीक्षा में उसे कम अंक मिले तो उसने हाई कोर्ट की शरण ली। इसके बाद विद्यार्थी के तीन विषय में अंक बढ़े। 71 से बढ़कर उसके अंक 76 प्रतिशत हो गए। इसके बावजूद माध्यमिक शिक्षा मंडल ने नई अंक सूची देने की बजाय मामले में हाई कोर्ट में ही अपील दायर कर दी थी लेकिन विद्यार्थी हित में न्यायालय ने इसे खारिज कर दिया।

भूमिंद्रसिंह की माताजी व सामाजिक कार्यकर्ता पूर्णिमा सिसौदिया ने बताया कि उनके पुत्र ने 2015 में 12वीं बोर्ड की परीक्षा दी थी। गणित, भौतिक और रसायन विषय से उसे 71 प्रतिशत अंक मिले थे। उनका बेटा प्रतिभावान है। बेहतर पर्याप्त हल करने के बावजूद उसे कम अंक दिए गए। इस पर हमने उत्तरपुस्तिकाओं के बारे में चैलेंज किया। हाई कोर्ट में एक वाद प्रस्तुत किया। ऐसे में न्यायालय के आदेश पर शासकीय शिक्षकों से मूल्यांकन करवाया गया तो गणित में 87 से 98, भौतिक में 48 से 60 और रसायन में अंक

- 12वीं में आए 71 प्रश्न, दुबारा मूल्यांकन में हो गए 76 प्रश्न
- बोर्ड को देना होगी अंकसूची
- 10 माह बाद उम्मीद जागी
- आईआईटी व अन्य प्रवेश परीक्षा में 75 प्रतिशत अंक की है अनिवार्यता
- माता-पिता भी गुजरे तनाव से



भूमिंद्रसिंह
सिसौदिया

50 से बढ़कर 56 हुए। इस तरह तीनों विषय में मूल्यांकन में त्रुटि पाई गई। मूल्यांकन की प्रक्रिया और न्यायालय के आदेश आने में दिसंबर बीत गया। न्यायालय के आदेश की प्रमाणित प्रति हमें 14 जनवरी 2016 को प्राप्त हो सकी। कोर्ट ने आदेश में कहा था कि बढ़े अंकों के साथ नई अंकसूची दो सप्ताह में दी जाए। इस हिसाब से अंकसूची जनवरी में ही मिल जाना चाहिए थी जबकि न्यायालय के आदेश के बावजूद मार्च तक नहीं मिल पाई।

बेटा तनाव में : वर्तमान दौर प्रतिस्पर्धा का दौर है। आईआईटी व अन्य प्रवेश परीक्षा में 75 प्रतिशत अंक की अनिवार्यता रहती है। ऐसे में कम अंक आने से पहले ही बच्चा तनाव से गुजर

रहा था। इसलिए माता-पिता को भी परेशानी हुई। क्योंकि कोर्ट में केस लगाना खर्चीला काम होता है। साथ ही प्रत्येक कॉपी का मूल्यांकन करवाने पर पांच हजार रुपए विशेषज्ञों को भी देना होते हैं।

‘मेरे बेटे का एक साल हुआ बर्बाद’

पूर्णिमा ने बताया कि मेरे बेटे का एक साल बर्बाद हुआ ही। अब जबकि उसे अंकसूची दे देना चाहिए थी तो बोर्ड के वकील ने बेवजह आपत्ति लगाकर और भी तनाव में डाल दिया है। उन्होंने कहा कि सामाजिक होने के नाते हमारी व्यवस्था के बारे में चिंता होती है। बच्चों के तनाव को लेकर एक तरफ प्रदेश सरकार व्यवस्था में बदलाव की बात कर रही है लेकिन मूल्यांकन में लापरवाही और उससे उत्पन्न तनाव को लेकर भी ध्यान देने की आवश्यकता है।



बोर्ड की ओर से पुनर्मूल्यांकन का कोई नियम का हवाला देकर आपत्ति ली थी, लेकिन याचिका के तहत न्यायालय ने अपने विशेषाधिकार के तहत बच्चों को राहत दी है। इसके तहत अपील खारिज कर दी गई और अब बोर्ड को अंकसूची देना होगी।

-अनिमेष चतुर्वेदी, हाई कोर्ट एडवोकेट

Search on for IIM-N BOG head, director

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/nagpur/Search-on-for-IIM-N-BOG-head-director/articleshow/51282580.cms>

Nagpur: The progress made by Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Nagpur, since it was conceptualized in October 2014 will surprise even the harshest critics of government machinery. Not only did it begin operations in a record eight months, it would soon be getting a full-time chairman and director, thanks to IIM-Ahmedabad, which is mentoring it.

IIM-N sources said the Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD) has already floated advertisements for appointing directors at six new IIMs; at Vishakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh), Bodh Gaya (Bihar), Sirmour (Himachal Pradesh), Sambalpur (Odisha) and Amritsar (Punjab), besides Nagpur.

The ministry recently appointed SBI chairman Arundhati Bhattacharya as full-time chairperson of Board of Governors (BOG) of IIM Sambalpur for five years from January 15. There is every chance that IIM-N, which was the first one to start operations in the new batch, would be next in the pipeline.

Additionally, the prestigious institution has also applied for a new hostel building to accommodate new batch of 60 students, who will start studies in June. On Tuesday, the Maharashtra government officially allocated 143 acres for the new building and other facilities in non-SEZ area of Mihan. "We've requested Maharashtra Airport Development Company Limited (MADC) to erect a compound wall around the area earmarked for IIM-N and we will pay them," sources said.

The officials of IIM Ahmedabad have plans to build a state-of-the-art complex, which would have world class infrastructure and facilities. They are even contemplating floating a global tenders and inviting the best consultants from overseas to construct a complex on the lines of IIM-A, so it is truly world class.

IIM-N was also formally registered as a society with charity commissioner's office in Nagpur from January 1. It comprises ad hoc Board of Governors (BOG) led by MHRD secretary Vinay Sheel Oberoi as chairman. Other members include MHRD joint secretary and financial adviser Darshana Dabral, MHRD joint secretary (administrative and coordination) Praveen Kumar, MHRD director (ICR) Rina Sonowal Kouli, Maharashtra chief secretary Swadheen Kshatriya, principal secretary of higher and technical education Sanjay Chahande, IIM Ahmedabad director Ashish Nanda, senior faculty at IIM-A Pradumnya Khokle and Shailesh Gandhi, and AICTE chairman Anil Sahasrabudhe.

All IIMs are governed through BOG, a non-executive body, as per the Companies Act, 2013, and therefore, they've to first register with Charity Commissioners' offices under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, in the cities where they are located. Without constitution of BOG, IIM-N wouldn't be registered.

This board starts the process for appointment of a director, who is sole appointing authority for teaching and non-teaching staff in these premier B-schools. The director, who remains an employer as per Companies Act, is appointed by following proper procedure of constituting search panel on the lines of vice chancellors in traditional universities, sources said.

What's new at IIM-N

* Officially registered as charitable trust from January 1

* Ad hoc body of Board of Governors (BOG) constituted

- * MHRD secy Vinay Sheel Oberoi to head ad hoc BOG
- * Ministry floated advertisements for full time director
- * MHRD to soon appoint full-time BOG chairman
- * Requested MADC to erect boundary wall at Mihan campus
- * To construct new hostel to accommodate 60 students

Soon, Stanford University quality check for ‘desi’ engineers

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/education/soon-stanford-university-quality-check-for-desi-engineers/story-7n4NL2jyp9u0QNVAevwx6O.html>

The government wants to run a quality check on engineering students to sharpen their skills before they graduate.

The human resource development ministry is engaging Stanford University to design a capsule test to measure learning outcomes of engineering students, HT has learnt. The test is likely to be introduced by the end of this year.

HRD officials said the proposed test is the result of feedback about skewed standards of engineering education in the country which produces around 8 lakh students annually from 3,000-odd registered technical institutes. Data show that 20 to 30% of them fail to land a decent job due to lack of skills or less demand from the industry.

Depending on the results, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) will decide where and how to intervene to improve the standard of students.

HRD officials said the proposed test is meant to ensure that lakhs of engineers who graduate from these institutions are gainfully employed.

The test will be conducted in all engineering institutes such as the IITs or those perceived to be run-of-the-mill institutions.

It will comprise technical skills in physics, mathematics, and informatics, critical thinking and creativity, and quantitative literacy skills. AICTE will administer the project.

The test will take place once a year starting with the first and third year students. Similar tests are being conducted in the United States, Russia and China.

“This is a good step and we should assess students at an initial stage and in their final year. Similar tests can be done at the Master’s level too. China and Russia have such mechanisms in place,” said Ashok Misra, chairman of IIT Roorkee.

At this stage, the government does not plan to make the test compulsory. However, officials said since employers are expected to put a premium on institutions that join the process of quality test, most of them are expected to participate in it.

At an international workshop on students' assessment in higher education held in Delhi last month, which was attended by representatives of Stanford University and World Bank, premier engineering colleges such as IITs were said to be amenable to the idea of a quality test.

“A number of engineering institutes have such internal mechanisms including IITs but such interventions are required and will help improve standards,” said the director of an IIT requesting anonymity.

March 6

Indian Express ND 06/03/2016 P-6

Higher education has been hijacked by vested interests, says Jay Panda

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
AHMEDABAD, MARCH 5

LAMENTING THE lack of proper funding for new IITs and IIMs, BJD Rajya Sabha MP from Kendrapara, Baijayant Jay Panda Saturday spoke of the need to expose politicians with commercial interests in higher education that are holding the system to ransom. He was speaking at TiECON conference held at the Indian Institute of Management at Ahmedabad.

Replying to a student's query on lack of funds for the provision of extra curricular infrastructure at IIT-Vadodara, Panda said, "Many of the

institutes, not just the IITs, but some new IIMs also, have not got proper funding. We are setting up so many institutes at one go and not setting aside enough resources for that. It damages the brand and it damages people like you who want some facilities that are not there..."

"The bigger problem is that our higher education has been hijacked by vested interests over the past three decades. There are lots of politicians with commercial interests in higher education and they are holding the system to ransom; that needs to be exposed," the MP said.

Underlining the issue of restriction of higher education offered by premier foreign varsities like Harvard

and Yale, the BJD MP said, "There is no reason why we should stop Harvard from opening a campus here or Yale from opening a campus in India... we are holding them back because of our policy restrictions. There is enough demand and enough young men and women like you to take admission in top notch institutes if 20 or 40 more were opened. There is artificial restriction of supply and we need to speak out against it."

Answering a query on PM Narendra Modi, Panda heaped praises on Modi for repositioning India in the eyes of the world by pursuing a successful foreign policy and said that now he should engage more in domestic policy.

Rajasthan Patrika ND 06/03/2016 P-1

स्निफर डोंग का विकल्प: आईआईटी बॉम्बे के छात्रों ने तैयार किया अनोखा यंत्र

विस्फोटक को सूंघ लेगी इलेक्ट्रॉनिक नाक

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अपराधियों और बढ़ते आतंकी खतरे के बीच विस्फोटकों को तलाशने में अभी तक स्निफर डोंग की मदद ली जाती है। भीड़भाड़ वाली जगह में कई बार स्निफर डोंग भी कामयाब नहीं पाते, पर अब इसका विकल्प आईआईटी बॉम्बे ने खोज निकाला है।

यहां के छात्रों ने नैनो टेक्नॉलजी पर आधारित पोर्टेबल इलेक्ट्रॉनिक नोज (नाक) तैयार की है, जो भीड़भाड़ वाली जगहों पर भी

विस्फोटकों को सूंघ लेता है। इसका नाम ईनोज रखा गया है।

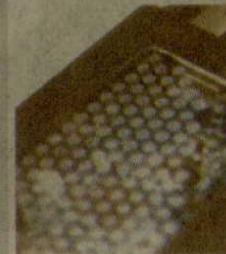
फोन के साथ लिंक संभव

आईआईटी बॉम्बे के चार विभागों के 15 छात्रों की टीम ने इस यंत्र को विकसित किया है। इसे भारत सरकार के प्रिंसिपल साइंटिफिक अडवाइजर के ऑफिस ने वित्तीय मदद दी है।

ईनोज को दूर से संचालित करने के लिए मोबाइल फोन के साथ लिंक किया जा सकता है। इलेक्ट्रिकल इंजीनियरिंग के

आरडीएक्स पकड़ेगी

आरडीएक्स जैसे विस्फोटकों की पहचान कर सकता है। इसे इस तरीके से तैयार किया गया है कि बिल्कुल इंसान या जानवर की नाक की तरह काम करता है। इसे पम्प के साथ फिट किया गया है, जो हवा को अंदर लेकर और बाहर छोड़ता रहता है।



चलती गाड़ी में काम करेगा

इस यंत्र का प्रयोग चलती गाड़ी में भी हो सकता है। यह सरफेस वाइब्रेशन से चार्ज किया जा सकता है। यह यांत्रिक ऊर्जा को इलेक्ट्रिकल एनर्जी में तब्दील कर देता है। इस नाक को तैयार करने में पांच से 10 हजार रुपए का खर्च आया है।

प्रोफेसर वी. रामगोपाल राव ने इस तकनीक के बारे में बताया, ईनोज के सरफेस पर खास कोटिंग लगी

हुई है। इंसान के बाल की मोटाई के बराबर संरचनाएं इसमें हैं, जो सेंसर का काम करती हैं।

इस पर लगे नैनो पार्टिकल्स पर विस्फोटक सामग्री के वाष्प कण चिपक जाते हैं।

Students played crucial role in developing economical arsenic-filter, says IIT-Kharagpur Professor

<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/education/story/iit-kharagpur-sirshendu-de/1/612857.html>

Great minds make great innovations, like an IIT-Kharagpur Professor, Sirshendu De, who has recently completed his project of an economical filter for less privileged districts in West Bengal. Having realised the need of removing arsenic (chemical) content from the water, the professor started his work way back in 2004. The economically poor can now afford a filter at just Rs 500 for 100-litre water per day.

After receiving the coveted Innovation Award 2016, Sirshendu expressed his joy with India Today Education and the whole idea behind the research.

"We realised that the arsenic problem was emerging in some districts, including Murshidabad, North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas due to the nature of soil which was gangetic alluvial soil. However, districts like Midnapore, Purulia and Bankura were rocky laterite in nature, that works as a natural protection against arsenic content," he said.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), consumption of arsenic-contaminated water for 5-20 years causes severe diseases such as "skin problems (such as colour changes on the skin, and hard patches on the palms and soles of the feet), skin cancer, cancers of the bladder, kidney and lung, and diseases of the blood vessels of the legs and feet, and possibly also diabetes, high blood pressure and reproductive disorders."

The arsenic content in water was recognised in the 1980s, after which, many scientists tried to solve the problem. Prof De was one of them, but he visioned this revolutionary innovation in 2004. In order to complete the project, he received funds from the Government of India in 2009 and the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in 2012.

"Nothing would have been possible without the help of my students, they have played a crucial role in making the project happen. From designing the filter to deploying the samples in schools and district, they have participated actively, " De said.

The device is designed using laterite content so as to stop the arsenic-substance in the water.

HRD disagrees with PMO on IIM fee hike

Hindustan Times (Bhopal)

The HRD ministry has expressed reservations about a proposal by the PMO to scrap a provision in the draft IIM bill that makes it mandatory for the business schools to inform the government after fee hikes.

The PMO said a move to force the IIMs to intimate the ministry after deciding on fees might impinge on their autonomy, sources told HT.

It also suggested the ministry include at least three women members in the IIM board of governors and appoint the IIM director as the member secretary of the business school's coordination committee.

The ministry accepted both these PMO suggestions and diluted the bill but didn't agree to do away with the fees provision.

The proposed legislation has come under severe criticism from academics, who allege the bill gave the government sweeping powers over the premier schools as the IIMs had to seek the ministry's nod for a range of functions, including fee structures and regulation changes.

The IIMs are among the few institutions in India to be consistently ranked among the world's best and are globally renowned for their management courses but continue to give diploma certificates as they don't have university status. [See page 5](#)

IIT Bombay run: nostalgia for some, beauty for others

Participants queue up near The Hindu newspaper stand to get themselves photographed after the run. Photo: Mukesh Trivedi

Certain sections of the race were appreciated by participants for the sheer beauty that they witnessed

A first of its kind event held on Sunday saw IIT Bombay open its gates to all running and fitness enthusiasts as part of a run organised by the campus entrepreneurship cell. The event provided a platform for competitive racing to the institute's students and alumni, and runners across the city.

Participants were given the choice to participate in a 5-km, 11-km or 21-km run and the races took place in the beautiful IIT Bombay campus where the route takes in hills as well as a beautiful lakeside. The event kicked off at 5:30 am with a firework display and the runners were flagged off by Soumyo Mukherji, the Dean of Student Affairs of IIT Bombay.

Certain sections of the race were appreciated by participants for the sheer beauty that they witnessed.

"Seeing the sun rise at the lakeside was the prettiest thing I have seen during a race," exclaimed one. Regular runners also praised the track for its diversity with one runner saying, "The hill section was a true test of our endurance."

The run was also filled with nostalgia for IITB alumni with one of them reminiscing, "I used to walk around in this campus during my college days. I'm glad I got the opportunity to come back and run here."

The 3 categories of the races saw over 3,500 enthusiasts participate, including IIT Bombay students, alumni, entrepreneurs and fitness enthusiasts. With RFID tags installed along with arches for timekeeping, the event was appreciated by all!

The winners of the races include Yadunath Baraf, who won the 11-km (men), Ms Anand – 11-km (women), Ajeet Yadav – 21-km (men) and Ms Josefin Sjolind – 21-km (women).

The event also went beyond just being a race and also witnessed some performances by the students of IIT Bombay. Ashish Bhushan, the Founder and CEO of Chapter 3, which helped IIT Bombay to conduct the event, said, “We have always known of the academic excellence of the IITB students. This event showed us their excellence in organisational areas as well.” He expressed his eagerness to conduct the event in future years as well. That marked the conclusion of this unique venture. The first IIT Bombay Run was a mixture of competitive racing, cultural events and diversity, and will definitely serve as a precursor to many more events to come!

How an IIT Kharagpur alumnus is financially helping the underprivileged, without any funds

<http://social.yourstory.com/2016/03/assist-the-needy/>

The inspiration for Assist The Needy (ATN) goes back to my childhood, when I would see kids begging outside the restaurants of Park Street (in Kolkata), where my Dad would take us for a nice meal once every quarter. I always felt helpless that I could not give my food to those kids and the sense of helplessness still lingered. I felt the same helplessness when I couldn't help people financially.

Subhajit Mandal went on to be an exceptional student – a graduate from the 2007 batch IIT Kharagpur and a National University of Singapore MBA graduate in 2014 – and made great career choices. In 2015, Subhajit joined LumenLab, the MetLife Innovation Centre, as an MBA intern and was subsequently offered a full time position in August 2015.

Through the years, he continued to ponder over how he could build something that would help the economically underprivileged such as the house help in most Indian homes.



The impetuses

Subhajt's work at LumenLab was a drastic shift from most organisations. He says that it is like being in a dedicated corporate innovation lab with a focus on disruptive innovation, keeping customer insight at the centre of their approach. The job entailed that the employees go beyond today's set rules and methods, begin again with a deep understanding of people's lives, and rewrite the role of the industry in the 21st century. One of three broad themes that the team worked on was "wealth", which aligned to his dream of helping the economically backward.

Another freedom of sorts at work is that employees are encouraged to incubate ideas— either on their own or through collaboration with other disruptors that solve the problems that fall in the specified broad categories. Subhajt tells us another interesting aspect, "As corporate innovators, we have the advantage of MetLife's resources, while, similar to the venture community, we pitch internally for funding and have to conduct stringent experiments to prove our assumptions at every stage to warrant further funding."

Workwise, Subhajt was being driven in the direction of the solution. The game changer was a fateful conversation with Rajat Singh, COO at Ujjivan, and an old friend from his IIT Kharagpur days. For the uninitiated, Ujjivan is an Indian microfinance services organisation aimed at serving the economically active poor, who are not adequately served by financial institutions. Subhajt asked Rajat, if a website existed where anyone could upload details of someone who needed financial help, would an institution like Ujjivan pay heed? Rajat said a vehement yes and added that "such information was crucial to his business and any lead was worth exploring."

Assist The Needy

It only takes a minute to

ASSIST
THE NEEDY

Subhajt launched ATN in January 2016 after multiple iterations within the team, and a select group, to make sure that the idea was being conveyed to a tee. ATN's ambition is to try and solve one aspect of financial inclusion for the unbanked population of India. ATN aspires to motivate the Internet-savvy middle class of India to connect the unbanked to a source of lending by taking a few minutes out of their day to upload information on people they've met or have come into contact with who have a real need but no access to funding. ATN doesn't provide "loans" but it does connect people. It seeks to find new ways of solving the problems that defy existing banking ontologies.

The process is fairly simple. Let's say you want to help a driver or a maid. All you have to do is logon to the website and fill in a basic form with the details of the person in need. This simple action will connect the person in need with Ujjivan. The form is small and can be filled out in less than a minute! There is no financial contribution required from the submitter. You don't even have to be a guarantor for the person.

Watch the video here:

There is a huge population of "unbanked" people in many countries – those who simply are not served by the established financial structure. Subhajt adds, "In fact, the MetLife Foundation has made financial inclusion a core mission, committing \$200 million over four years."

Working around road blocks



Subhajit (left) and Zia

Things didn't come in as easy. Despite the encouragement given at LumenLab to incubate, and funds offered to see it through, Subhajit's boss rejected his pitch the first time around. Not one to back down, Subhajit didn't can the idea. Instead, he launched ATN and came back to his boss with the numbers to back his hypothesis.

Within weeks, ATN's Facebook page received 4,400+ likes, more than 6,000 people have viewed the ATN video and they have received six requests for loans on ATN. Subhajit's boss, Zia Zaman(CEO, LumenLab) agreed. Subhajit's boss adds, "When anyone brings market data to the table, we need to reassess. It's about taking little bets. With some ideas, the pivot is more successful than the original. Getting 4,400 likes is compelling.

Our hypothesis is that there are enough interested people who care enough to help someone in need. We are not sure if this will work, but we believe that the only way to know is to try something quickly and cheaply."

He adds that as with all new businesses, customer acquisition is hard, and finding a profitable and sustainable business model is even harder. He stresses, "We need to see concrete data that the business model can be scaled and the unit economics of such a business works."

Challenges and future plans

Subhajit agrees on both accounts and tells us that they haven't zeroed in on the revenue model just yet. "We brainstormed multiple revenue models, but honestly, until we really run the experiment, it is premature to discuss the revenue model. This is especially true when working on the bottom of the pyramid of ideas." He adds that **a sustainable business model is the most challenging part of social entrepreneurship. "A one-time good deed, as noble as it is, has limited impact unless it is sustainable. We strive for a sustainable social enterprise that can have a wide-reaching positive social impact"**, says Subhajit.

Currently, conversion is the biggest challenge for ATN. While there has been decent traction on Facebook (posts, videos, likes), the conversion has been low. Subhajit says, "**We are engaging our current consumers on Facebook now to figure out the reason for the lack of conversion. We expect to learn a lot as we get more data.**"

Subhajit and ATN have a long way to go. With other MFI and crowdfunding platforms on the rise, it will be interesting to watch ATN evolve and find a sweet spot for itself. On a parting note, Subhajit shares how he wants to see his childhood dream grow, **“I want to see ATN helps 1 million people get the financial assistance that they would have never had otherwise.”**