

## Funding for Real Innovation in India! UNAVAILABLE

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Thursday, 03 December 2009 02:47 - Last Updated Saturday, 09 January 2010 08:21

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If you look carefully at the blue fish in the water below, you can discern INDIA written faintly on the body. Well it is not a fish but India's first indigenous designed Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV). I have a story about it for you.

I first met Ammar in Delhi after he reached me through the India Brand Equity Foundation. I travelled to the Delhi College of Engineering campus and met the larger team of 8 students. You should have been there with me to see the kick ass energy this team has. They have gone ahead and built a 4th generation AUV that has been the only Indian participant at the prestigious annual competition hosted by the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Centre, San Diego.

They have not won yet. They lost to the Israelis and the Americans. One reason - the US team has the support of an entire fab for the circuitry right inside the university. The DCE team was building it themselves on a circuit board using a solder.

The kind of applications for such a thing is amazing. It can travel 2km on its own. Can identify objects. Follow a path intelligently. And all onboard, right from the power to the brain. Applications range from security to fish patterns. In any other country, they would have received funding, or would have been kidnapped by the armed forces months ago. In our case, this team is struggling to raise a fund of just Rs. 20 lakhs to buy equipment.

They footed my bill at the College Canteen! So I got them over to meet a couple of international angel investors who were speechless after the meeting about how they were able to see something like this without an NDA. It would be very difficult for the team to raise professional funding as the IP is university controlled. The Dean of Research, Dr. R.K. Sinha is wonderful and has got the Institute to be more outward looking but for those benefits to reach innovators within will still take years after the IITs first get their act in place!

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