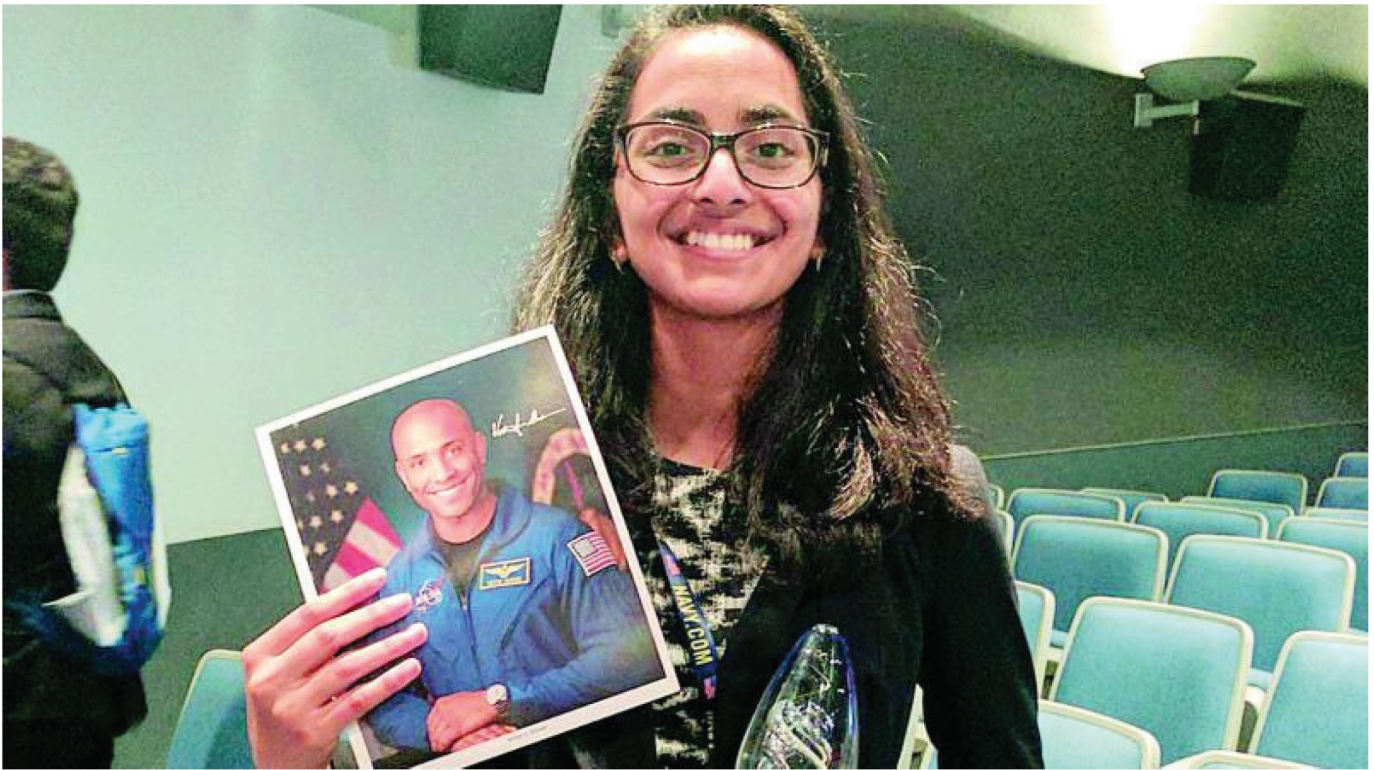


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Four youngsters, including two Telugu girls, won The Conrad Spirit of Innovation Challenge in the Cyber Security and Technology category.

Alia Mohammad and Deepika Dandaboyina, along with Sarah Varghese and Anchal, participated in The Conrad Spirit of Innovation Challenge, a multiphase innovation and entrepreneurial competition, in the US recently. Over 142 teams from all over the world took part in it and this group won the first place in 'Cyber Security and Technology'. "We wanted to address a problem that is relevant and contemporary. We brainstormed and thought about drugs because people are dying in fatal accidents in the US due to drug abuse. We came up with a drug wrist band," Alia says.

Describing how the technology works, Deepika adds, "The drug band can be tied to the wrist and there's a chip inside. This chip, through its sensors, detects sedative and tranquillising material through sweat and air and sends an alert to the mobile phones of the parents. It can work through Bluetooth as well as with GPS. When we presented this along with the videos, the committee liked it, hoping that there could be a solution to drug abuse."

Alia was born in California and later moved to Texas. She is studying in the 11th grade while Deepika is in 10th grade. "One of the reasons I took part in the competition was because of my interest in math, computers and architecture," Deepika says. Mirza Faizan, Aerospace scientist and Aviation safety expert, mentored the group. "He showed us how to approach the problem. He was instrumental in our success."

Alia was honoured with the Education Excellence by then US President Barack Obama. "I was 13 (in the 8th grade) and received the honour for maintaining an outstanding academic record throughout. I guess that has broadened my horizons and made me poised for higher honours," explains Alia who recently came to India. "I was in Hyderabad, Vijayawada and Vizag. I guess it will take some time for me to get used to the traffic, heat and the food," Alia says. Meanwhile, Deepika did not miss out on her tour to India either. "I came to Hyderabad a couple of weeks ago and spent quality time with my relatives," she says. Both the girls say that their parents and teachers supported them a lot. Ask them about their action plan and they say, "We are looking for sponsorship or any start-ups coming forward with a proposal. But we are yet to decide on how to go ahead."

