



THE TIMES OF INDIA

In **1st** a **Two brothers from Patna**, bag US award for making kids innovators

ATNA: The Freedoms Foundation has conferred the George Washington Honour Medal on Mirza Rizwan and Mirza Faizan, two brothers hailing from Samanpura in Patna, for turning students into innovators in the United States (US). With this, they have become the first Indians to receive the honour. The younger sibling, Faizan, got the national award at a ceremony in Dallas on Tuesday. Speaking on the occasion, he said, "Since the future of a country is dependent on its kids, we began nurturing and mentoring schoolchildren so that they could identify real-world problems and come up with patentable solutions."

Hailing the work of the Mirza brothers, the Freedoms Foundation stated in its 2020-2021 awards booklet, "They are being recognised for their significant contribution to education. Rizwan developed a step-by-step process to help students think like scientists and innovators while Faizan founded the DiscoverSTEM in Plano as part of which kids solve real-world problems."

Rizwan, an alumnus of Indian Institute of Management-Bengaluru and HEC Paris, told TOI over the phone on Thursday that he conducted an intensive two-year research on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), innovation, child psychology, and learning patterns. On the basis of his research, he prepared a module to mentor kids, make them think like innovators, identify problems, and create patentable solutions. In the process, he co-founded DiscoverSTEM in Texas in 2016.

"Since children are out-of-the-box thinkers, they come up with very bright and promising ideas. However, they lack a structured thought process and do not know how to convert an idea into an innovation. That's why I want to make a difference and give children the right platform to work on their ideas and come up with unique solutions," Rizwan, who is in Bengaluru at present, said and added that 25 of their students had been awarded for their innovations by the NASA.



Faizan reviews an award and (right) Rizwan Strikes a pose.

That's why I want to make a difference and give children the right platform to work on their ideas and come up with unique solutions," Rizwan, who is in Bengaluru at present, said and added that 25 of their students had been awarded for their innovations by the NASA.

Sharing a good news with the students here, Rizwan said the DiscoverSTEM Innovation Lab would become functional in India soon. "A large number of our students in the US belong to the Indian diaspora. Hence, we are in the process of launching the programme here as well," he claimed.

Speaking about Rizwan's DiscoverSTEM programme, Charles A Rodenberger, a top NASA scientist, said, "As a scientist, I have been part of several intensive brainstorming and innovation sessions. I saw similar activities being conducted at DiscoverSTEM, one of the best STEM and Innovation programmes."

Hashima Hasan, another NASA scientist who holds a PhD in nuclear physics, pointed out, "A small mentoring programme, which began in 2016, has evolved so much that its students are winning awards and patenting their innovations."

The Freedoms Foundation was started by former US President Dwight D Eisenhower in 1949.

