

Now, stories give start-up ideas; get Parekh, Nilekani praise

NEW DELHI: Top business leaders including Deepak Parekh and Nandan Nilekani have come together to back an innovative concept of an IIM graduate penning down 21 innovative ideas in form short stories -- all of which can be start-up business opportunities.

The ideas include motorcycle taxis, terrace farms, asset sweating, pisciculture, state-to-state tourism promotion, rural medics and fashion sourcing.

In a first-of-its-kind effort, management consultant and IIM-Ahmedabad alumnus Ravi Nawal has thrown forward these ideas, which he says can address many significant socio-economic challenges before India, in his first book 'India Can'.

Published by Bloomsbury, the book contains 21 short stories. Nawal said he is reaching out to corporate houses and government departments, both at Centre and state levels, to take forward the ideas emanating from each of his 21 stories and has already got positive feedback from many.

Accolades are coming from many quarters, including top banker and eminent industry leader Deepak Parekh, Infosys co-founder and former UIDAI Chairman Nandan Nilekani and Dipak C Jain, former Dean -- Kellogg School of Management and INSEAD.

Parekh said the book is "truly inspiring for it offers simple, innovative ideas that may well be transformational for India."

"Through 21 short stories, the book captures relatable, everyday life experiences of the common man. Each character displays a spirit of true entrepreneurship, reflecting the determination to bring a positive change in India," he said.

Parekh, Chairman of the housing finance major HDFC, said that Nawal has marked his debut as one of India's most promising and thought-provoking new-age authors and 'India Can' is must-read for anyone who believes in India's future.

Nilekani said, "It is now apparent that the rapidly rising aspirations of India's billion plus population cannot be met by 'business as usual' methods.

"It will require highly innovative ideas that reimagine the way we do things. Ravi has captured several of the possible ideas in his book and they should be debated and implemented where possible," he added.

Jain, who is currently Director at Sasin Graduate Institute of Business Administration, said innovation is the engine of growth and development.

"As a collection of short stories accessible to everyone, 'India Can' is a truly innovative way to address important challenges facing India. I certainly hope that it achieves what we should all strive for: success with significance," he added.

The author, who believes that the written word can be a powerful instrument for creating impact, said he does not believe in "pedantic academic discussions on problems and text bookish solutions to these problems".

"I did not want to write a heavy-duty or high-brow book as I wanted it to be meant for the masses".

One of his stories focusses on public transportation- wherein he has advanced the idea of motorcycle taxis as most solutions currently in vogue are urban centric and very few focus on last mile connectivity.

"Motorcycle taxis could be a possible solution to public transportation in the rural hinterlands, where lack of adequate road infrastructure and economics do not make a case for investments in public transportation.

"Such a taxi service can also be leveraged as part of the multi-modal transportation solution for urban centres to provide effective last

mile connectivity," he said.

The idea of motorcycle taxis is advanced through the story of a single mother in rural suburbs of Delhi, challenged with her daily commute to and from work. The protagonist comes up with the solution based on her evaluation of what will work best for a person of her socio-economic milieu.

Another story talks about a concept of 'asset sweating'.

Most public infrastructure in India, such as schools, colleges, office buildings are open during the day hours, typically between 9 AM to 6 PM. For the rest of the evening and night, these assets lay idle.

At the same time, there is a strata of Indian society that is unable to undertake entrepreneurial activity for want of suitable operating space.

This concept has been forwarded through the story of a migrant worker who wishes to augment his family income but struggles for want of space to operate from.

The story suggests opening of public infrastructure to entrepreneurs for work and development activities such as needle classes, adult literacy coaching, clinics, alcoholic anonymous support group meetings and women cooperatives. PTI