

Maharaja Surajmal Institute of Technology
Incubation Cell , MSIT
Report on Participation at Startup Mahakumbh 2025 by LittleMove Team



From April 3–5, 2025, LittleMove, a bootstrapped hardware startup incubated at Incubation Cell , Maharaja Surajmal Institute of Technology, lit up Pod 5GM.88 at Startup Mahakumbh 2025, held at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. The event, themed Startup India @ 2047: Unfolding the Bharat Story, was a kaleidoscope of ambition, showcasing over 3,000 startups to 2.5 lakh attendees. For us, it wasn't just an exhibition—it was a chance to tell the world how LittleMove is revolutionizing school transportation safety with real-time tracking and seamless parent-school communication, all built from scratch with grit and ingenuity.

The Journey Unfolded

Day 1 hit like a spark. Visitors swarmed our pod, from wide-eyed students to sharp-eyed industry veterans, each conversation a chance to refine our vision. The thrill came when some recognized LittleMove from Startup Pedia, Karo Startup, and Inshorts—proof our story was breaking through. Day 2 was a blur of handshakes and ideas, so intense we forgot to post, but every pitch by Harsh Singh, demo by Prem Kumar Verma, and chat led by Himanshu Verma cemented our purpose. By Day 3, standing near Shark Tank India stars and government-backed ventures felt like a quiet victory for our small team. We'd held our own, connecting with hundreds and soaking in feedback that'll shape our next leap.



The event was a spectacle: 12 pavilions spanning AI, HealthTech, and more, 751 speakers dropping wisdom, and 15,983 B2B meetings sparking deals. The GeM pavilion opened doors to government procurement, while the Startup MahaRathi Challenge showcased audacious ideas. Yet, beneath the buzz, a controversy stirred, one that hit close to home for us.

The Piyush Goyal Controversy

Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal's speech at Startup Mahakumbh ignited debate. He contrasted India's startups—focused on food delivery, quick commerce, and “fancy ice creams”—with China's, which he praised for tackling electric vehicles, semiconductors, and AI. His words, “Do we want to make ice creams or chips? Are we happy being delivery boys and girls?” drew sharp responses. Some founders, like Zepto's Aadit Palicha, defended consumer tech's job creation (1.5 lakh jobs, ₹1,000 crore in taxes), while others, like Mohandas Pai, questioned government support, noting China's \$845 billion tech investment (2014–2024) dwarfs India's \$160 billion. Goyal later clarified he meant to “show the mirror,” urging ambition, not criticism.



For LittleMove, his remarks resonated and stung. We're not chasing quick wins—we're building hardware, a field demanding deep innovation and deeper pockets. Yet, his call for “chips over ice creams” felt incomplete without addressing the ground realities we face.

My Thoughts: Doing Business in India vs. China

As a bootstrapped software plus hardware startup, I believe doing business in India is far tougher than in China or elsewhere. Software startups like Zomato or Swiggy thrive because they're lighter to launch - leverage open-source tools, tap YouTube tutorials, and hit the market fast. Hardware? It's a marathon. Our real-time tracking devices need heavy R&D, custom manufacturing, and rigorous testing, all burning cash young founders rarely have. In China, startups swim in government incentives—\$361 billion in tax breaks for high-tech firms in 2024 alone, including \$80.7 billion for R&D. India's deep-tech funding? A mere \$1.6 billion in 2024, just 5% of startup capital versus China's 35%.

The government champions innovation in headlines—Startup India, Atal Innovation Mission - but reality lags. Take our 1.5-year journey with AIC, a government-backed incubator under AIM. We poured heart into a pilot with schools, proving our tech works. The pilot succeeded, earning us modest funds that fueled in-house hardware development and early scaling. But post-pilot? Promised funds haven't arrived, stalling our momentum. This isn't unique—many founders at Mahakumbh whispered similar tales: grand promises, slow delivery. On X, posts echo this, with founders citing delays in approvals or loans due to bureaucratic red tape. While India's deep-tech startups grew to 4,000, projected to hit 10,000 by 2030, scaling feels like climbing without a rope when support falters.

What We Gained, What We Learned

Startup Mahakumbh was a crucible. We gained allies—students inspired by our mission, experts offering pivots, and leads to chase. It validated our fight: startups like ours aren't just building products; we're building India's future. But challenges loom:

Capital Drought: Investors shy from hardware's long gestation, unlike software's quick returns.

Bureaucratic Maze: Even GeM's promise of procurement feels distant without streamlined processes.

China's Shadow: Goyal's right—China's ahead—but catching up needs more than speeches. It needs funds, labs, and trust in young dreamers like us.

A Heartfelt Note

To Harsh, Prem, Himanshu, and our team: you turned Pod 5GM.88 into a beacon of hope. To GeM and Startup Mahakumbh: thank you for the stage, but let's bridge the gap between vision and action. To AIC: our pilot proved we can deliver—now help us soar. LittleMove isn't just a startup; it's a movement for safer schools, built one circuit at a time. India's innovation story needs hardware heroes, not just app architects. Let's make it easier to dream big here, not elsewhere.