Tree Tag: Towards a digital green revolution

Tree Tag strives to reduce carbon emissions through tech-integrated afforestation projects, which also calls for transparency

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Tree Tag is the dream of Abhijith Kumar Meenakumari and Aashuthosh B Sai, who did their schooling together at Kendriya Vidyalaya, Pattom.

By Anu Kuruvilla

Express News Service

KOCHI: Rarely does an opportunity get converted into an idea or a venture? However, in the case of two childhood friends from Thiruvananthapuram, an opportunity ignited a spark leading to the founding of a startup which is now grabbing attention for its environment-friendly projects. Tree Tag is the dream of Abhijith Kumar Meenakumari and Aashuthosh B Sai, who did their schooling together at Kendriya Vidyalaya, Pattom.

Explaining what Tree Tag is Abhijith, who is the CEO of the startup based in Thiruvananthapuram, said, "It is a mission that aims at working for an entrepreneurial social goal. We are striving to reduce carbon emissions through tech-integrated afforestation projects, championing the qualities of transparency and quantitative accountability." But what led to the founding of the startup? "The idea behind the startup sparked when we were contacted by an NGO Thanal seeking our help in the digitisation of trees of the carbon-neutral Meenangadi," he said.

We are a social impact startup and have been registered as Treetag Pvt Ltd, said Abhijith. Tree Tag was started in 2019 with the support of a Technological Business Incubator at Government Engineering Bartonhill. Abhijith said, "We tagged 7,000-plus trees in carbon-neutral Meenangadi in 2019. As our work spread through word of mouth, we started getting more

queries from organisations and individuals. That got us thinking of founding a firm. Tree Tag has been registered with Startup India and the Kerala Startup Mission. It is backed by Thanal."

Other supporting NGOs include Sustera and Think Good Foundation. Tree Tag's clients include Mahindra Logistics, Young Indians, Confederation of Indian Industry and Hyundai Explorers.

"We started off by bootstrapping," said the CEO. The three-year-old startup today has clients not only in India but also abroad. Besides Abhijith and Aashuthosh, who is the CTO, the company also has Mohammed Wazeer and Anoop Babu as the COO and CSO, respectively. Aashuthosh said, "We help in the digitisation of afforestation projects. We have different profiles to cater to the needs of corporates, MSME and NGOs."

The team has a well-developed dashboard system to bridge the gap between those who sponsor (corporate) tree plantation and those doing tree plantation (NGOs). According to Abhijith, their application is a web-based app to geotag trees. "Information like latitude and longitude, photos of the trees, name and information of the trees, date of planting, date of updating, sponsored by and planted by is available in our system. We have also developed an application for a carbon company," he said.

He said we want to create a nature-conscious community through our actions. "The publicly sponsored trees in our system are planted on the premises of social service institutions, like schools, colleges, old-age homes, orphanages and rehabilitation centres. We also provide a platform for students to plant trees and engage in sustainable activities. Through our enterprise, we aspire to help other businesses and individuals in making nature-conscious decisions. Tree Tag aims to bring in solutions to the difficulty of tracking the growth and survivability of trees that you plant," said Aashuthosh.

According to the team, the startup finds its revenues from the service charge collected from clients. "Usually, the service is offered for three years. The charges vary according to the nature and size of the projects. Now, we are getting a steady revenue," said the team.

How does it work?
Any individual, organisation or corporate can use the app to sponsor as many trees as they want.
The sponsored trees will be then planted by affiliated NGOs through farmers. Later, the NGOs assign their volunteers to geo-tag the trees and thereby monitor their growth status. The tagging of trees is done through the phone, and the app provides data like the common name and scientific name of the tree, its location, date of planting, sponsor name, planter name, an approximation of carbon sequestration, etc. Also, the Tree Tag app is free for the student community to encourage the young generation to come forward and engage in activities like planting drives.

According to Abhijith, existing trees can also be tagged using the system. "We also provide a variety of services custom-tailored to fit the requirements of our clients. They are OxyPark Creation, Natural Economic Zones, Carbon Neutral and Green Events, Technology support for Carbon Credit Projects, Student Engagement Platform, etc," he said.
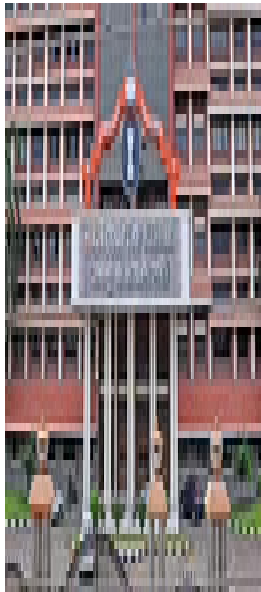
In terms of future plans, the team stated that they aim to create a better environment through voluntary awareness and capacity-building programmes in schools and colleges. Volunteers from NRPF's NSS Cell at the APJ Abdul Kalam Kerala Technological University have been actively participating in tree planting activities.

"We are currently in discussion with clients abroad, especially in Europe, Africa and South East Asia. Also along with the startup mission and EY, we are trying to expand globally," said Abhijith.
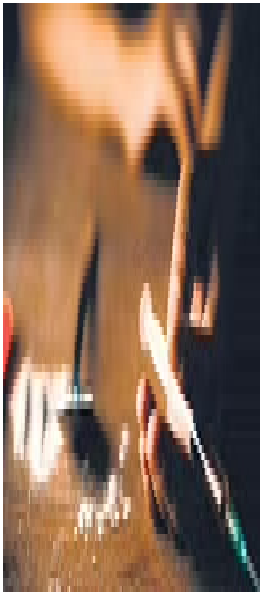
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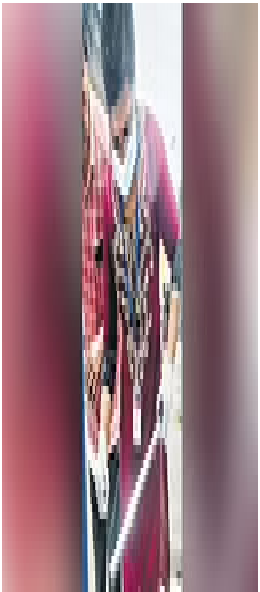Can't criticise Islam in Kerala: C Ravichandran

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