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# Govt school kids dance their way to robotics contests

**Bengaluru**  
**TIMES NEWS NETWORK**

In a first, six government school students will represent India at two international robotics competitions -Robocup Junior and First Lego League 2015-16. They will travel to Philippines and Germany in June and July respectively to compete in the finals.

The team of six, Master Minds, won the `Dance' category of the Robocup nationals in February and stood fourth among 39 teams in the First Lego League nationals held in Delhi. They also won accolades for the best project research.

The students were trained under P Shridhar, who manages the robotics programme at Akshara Foundation, an NGO which has set up a robotics lab in Seva Bharat Trust Government School. "We are so proud of our students. I am a fulltime worker for the foundation and I have been training underprivileged children for the past two years. This is the first time a government school team is representing India. The students are ecstatic about going to foreign countries," said Shridhar, an IISc graduate.

"When I came home and told my mother and sisters that we had been selected for the finals and I was going to Philippines, they started screaming with joy ," said Lawrence Aga, 16. His mother, a domestic help, was slightly apprehensive at first but encouraged him to go ahead and work hard. "If his father were alive now, he would have been the happiest person in the world. My son breathes, eats and sleeps only robotics now," said Rosaline Aga, who speaks seven languages.

Not too long ago, the students barely knew how to switch on a computer but now they are programmers who can design almost any thing. "For a long time, my family thought I was lying. Only when they saw it in the papers, they believed me," said Rama Krishna, 14.

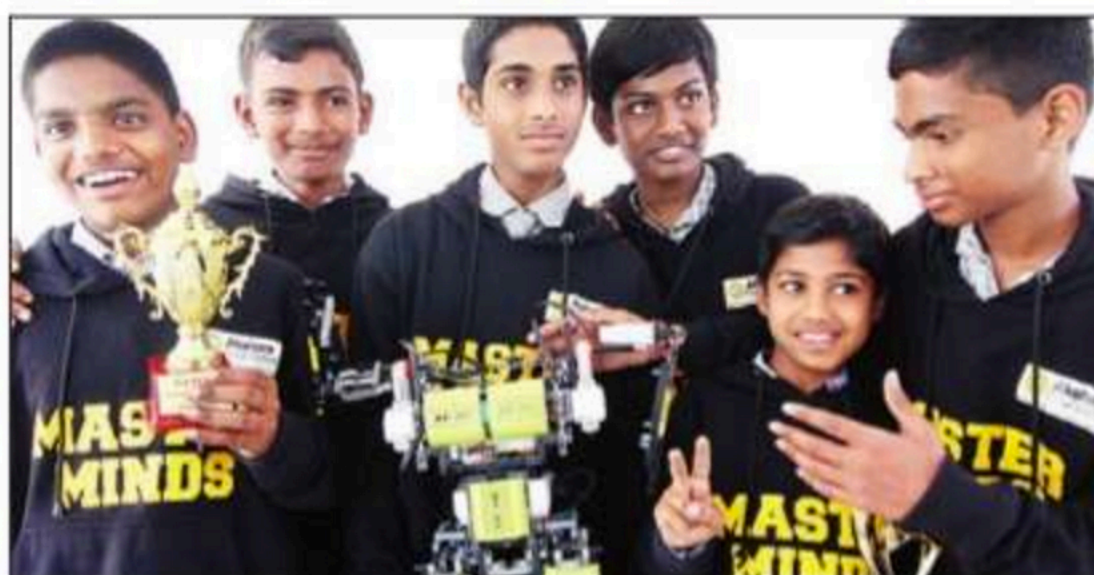
Ameenuddin, who looks like the youngest of the lot, said, "I am very excited and think I will become famous. My sister also wants to learn robotics," he said.

The euphoria aside, the team is also intimidated by the international teams. "We want to speak flawless English like them. We were so shocked when our names were announced and we walked to the stage to collect the prize," said Arvind Reddy and Ramesh A, whose parents are construction workers.

Akshara Foundation is now raising funds via crowd-funding platform Ketto (<https://www.ketto.org/support-robotics-champs>) to ensure these bright children can make it to the international finals.

Want to make India proud

We were so nervous and thought we wouldn't make it. But now we all feel like we have the confidence to build something. We are lucky to have reached so far because government school kids usually don't get such big opportunities. We hope to make our nation proud MasterMinds Team



**YOUNG CHAMPS:** The kids will represent India at Robocup Junior and First Lego League