

Change mindset to retain IQ, says Mashelkar



Mukund Bhave

The Venture Centre was inaugurated by Director General, CSIR, Dr R A Mashelkar and Prof Sir Richard Friend at the NCL Innovation Park. Others are also seen

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PASHANK: Dr Raghunath Mashelkar, director-general, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research yesterday hoped that if scientists changed their mindset, India could retain its Intellectual Quotient and Intellectual Property.

Dr Mashelkar along with Prof Sir Richard Friend, Cavendish Professor of Physics at Cambridge University, yesterday inaugurated the National Chemical Laboratory's (NCL) Venture Centre.

Asking scientists to have a change of mindset, Dr Mashelkar said that both knowledge and wealth generated in India should remain within the country itself. Referring to Bayh-Dole Act of the US, which looks at creating a wealth out of intellectual property by public funding, Mashelkar said that this would help build research driven innovative enterprises with global reach.

If we can have Indians doing the same in Silicon Valley, why can't it be done here? He questioned the audience comprising many scientists. He also spoke of how CSIR

was helping scientists to do the same and said that the heads of the institutions need to take on a supportive role. Mashelkar also urged for entrepreneurship to be inculcated in courses. "This is just the beginning and I hope there would be 100s of Richard Friends' being produced from the institute," he said.

Prof Friend, who is the founder and Chief scientist of Cambridge Display Technologies Ltd and Plastic Logic Ltd, told how the companies came into existence.

Friend said, "While carrying out research work in Cambridge in 1989, we discovered that polymers could be electronically excited and an artificial fluorescence could be created. This discovery had numerous practical applications. This commercial potential entailed patenting which was very important. We had two options before us: either to find a large company and give it to them in return for patenting, or to pay for it ourselves. In 1994 we set up a virtual start-up company."

Prof Friend asked scientists "to take time out and be an active entrepreneur as there is great talent pool in India." He also said, "Cambridge now has about 900 high-tech

companies which provide about 27,000 jobs in and around the city. A symbiosis of companies and universities can exist, with the companies providing engineering base for the research work of the universities."

Earlier director of NCL, Dr S Sivaram said that the opening of this centre was actually "thinking and dreaming big." He also hoped that their team will talk about their innovations and a panel to assess whether the same concept can form part of the Venture Centre.

Though both the NCL Innovation Park and NCL Venture Centre will function independently, Dr Sivaram is hopeful that the NCL Innovation Park will see a lot of private-public partnerships in the near future.

Briefing about the Venture Centre, Dr Premnath said the centre which is housed in the NCL Innovation Park, will be a technology business incubator with a mission to nucleate and nurture technology and knowledge based enterprises even outside NCL.

Its activities will include providing space, facilities and services for new start-ups, including shared laboratories for chemistry and materials science, physics, engineering, biology and prototyping.

The centre is also expected to specialise in manufacturing companies primarily in areas of biomedical products, devices, niche chemicals and nano-materials and specialty materials science products amongst others.

The Venture Centre project is also looking at a tie-up with management schools and co-incubations with Indian Institute of Management of Ahmedabad, said Dr Premnath. A website of the Venture Centre www.venturecenter.co.in <<http://www.venturecenter.co.in>> put together by a start up company, was inaugurated by Dr Mashelkar.

Companies that used NCL technology

- Biopore Surgical, Mumbai: Production of ocular implants which have passed clinical trials and is being sold in India.
- Membrane filters, Pune: Use of ultrafiltration membranes that prevents viruses and bacterial from passing through.
- Triagonal Solutions: Formed by NCL and IIT alumni offers services and solutions in the area of computational modelling of flow and chemical processes, flow diagnostics and specialized professional education.