

NCL sets up Venture Centre for business start-ups

Bureau

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The National Chemical Laboratory is changing the way it will commercialise technology. Instead of mere technology transfers from the lab to established companies, NCL will now nucleate and nurture innovative technology business start-ups through incubation and create technology companies of the future.

The NCL Venture Centre, a technology business incubator, promoted by NCL opened in Pune on Monday at NCL Innovation Park. The technology incubator is open to knowledge-based enterprises in materials, chemicals and biological sciences and engineering. "The not-for-profit company floated by the NCL is being set up with an investment of Rs 5 crore with the Department of Science and Technology providing the seed funding," S Sivaram, director, NCL said. "Taking technology to the market is not new to NCL. Earlier the focus was on large manufacturing companies.

Now we will take the technology to the market with this new innovative model," Sivaram said. Richard Friend, Cavendish professor of Physics at Cambridge University and also founder and scientist of two technology start-up companies (Cambridge Display Technologies Ltd and Plastic Logic Ltd) opened the NCL Venture Park. "This is a new way of creating hi-tech companies. You have to allow young people to do what they want. Freedom to take time out of research and be active entrepreneurs," Friend suggested.

RAMashelkar, director general, CSIR, said that the rules regarding the conduct of scientists needed to be changed and this was being worked upon to encourage entrepreneurship amongst scientists. "Indian IQ has been creating IP for others and it is time Indian IQ started creating IP for India," Mashelkar said.

"Five years from today we will be self-sustaining," says Premnath V, the scientist heading the centre said. The venture centre is in talks with ISB and

IIM Ahmedabad for co-incubation of companies. Apart from making entrepreneurs out of NCL scientists, the Centre will be open to any promising business idea, from anywhere and anyone but that is based on specialised know-how.

In addition to space and services, the start-ups will get shared labs for chemistry and material science, physics and engineering, biology, prototyping and fabrication and analysis. It will also put in place mechanisms to make readily available and accessible know-how support, business support, administrative support and financial support.

This venture centre is something like the St John's Innovation Centre at Cambridge that assists formation and growth of early stage knowledge-based businesses by providing physical space and in-house management support for such companies.

It has worked with 600 early stage or embryonic businesses and currently houses 50 businesses, many of which were under five years old.