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Title : NCL's Venture Centre turns dreams into reality

Author : Ardhra Nair

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When 24-year-old Sachin Dubey was pursuing his MTech in 2014, he and his friends came up with an idea of making specialised diagnostic kits for patients. Unfortunately, they didn't know whom to approach, nor were they sure if their idea was worth pursuing. The National Chemical Laboratory's Venture Centre, arguably India's biggest science-based incubator, came to their rescue.

“Sometimes you just have an idea and don't know whether it is viable. That is what we call pre-incubates. We guide them, counsel them, try to see if the idea can be developed further and make it fit for the criteria required to receive a grant,” said V Premnath, founding director & secretary of Venture Centre.

The centre has till date helped more than 40 such companies. The Union government has asked the centre to replicate the model in all national laboratories across the country.

“Currently, 42 start ups are physically operating from the Venture Centre. In addition, there are eight associated incubates. We have about 100 pre-incubating programs. Interestingly, about 28% of the entrepreneurs are women,” said Manisha P, general manager of the centre.

The Venture Centre provides several services to entrepreneurs -from office space to resources and technologies to visibility, networking, investors, information on grants, funding, filing for patents and IP rights -it is a one-stop solution for those looking for converting their scientific ideas into business. There are various packages to opt from which are given on the official website as per the need and spending capacity of the entrepreneur.

While most start ups are focusing on biomedical, healthcare, bioelectronics, life sciences and alike, officials believe that clean energy technology and environment are two areas where there are a lot of ideas but not much research is happening for want of funds.

“There is a lot of early stage funding available for projects in life sciences. Government funds are available too. Hence, projects related to biology and life sciences are more. But despite there being many ideas coming from youngsters and experts alike in renewable energy and environment related subjects, lack of initial stage funding is preventing them from taking off,” said Manisha, adding, “Later stage funding is available more for environment and clean energy related subjects when compared to life sciences projects.”

Manisha further talked about the need to have a change in policy decisions. “There is a need for more early stage funding from the government. A common policy for all research institutes will be helpful when it comes to commercializing the research into products and entering it in the market,” said Manisha.

YOUNG TURKS

MODULE INNOVATION

The company was registered in 2014. "We were M Tech students doing our internship in NCL when the idea of making affordable diagnostic tools for people stuck us. For example, a person can check for infections at home without going to a professional," said Sachin Dubey. He partnered with Usman Khan to develop a way to check for bacterial infection

Pic: Sadanand Godse

NAVSTIK LABS

After working for about 15 years in the aerospace technology sector, Nitin Kumar Gupta realized that a lot of energy is wasted by companies in making the same layer or platform in a drone which is them



The NCL lab

customized to perform specific operations. "I thought if we can make the operating system and give all basic features in a drone, all that a company needs to do is to mount or customize it according to its needs," said Gupta

BAREFEET ANALYTICS

In 2008, shortly after Venkat Panchagnula joined NCL Pune, there was a scare of melamine contamination in milk products from China. Panchagnula's group was developing bioanalysis methods for processing large numbers of samples in a short duration. These were immediately put to use and an analysis method to rapidly and reliably detect melamine from milk was published

JAIPUR BELT

Ganesh Ram Jangir thought of making scientific spine supportive belts and was looking for incubators online when he came across NCL's venture centre. "A lot of Indians are into manual labour. They put stress on their spine. My design is like an exoskeleton which will allow all movements but limit the stress on spine to the minimum," said Ganesh