

VENTURE CENTRE | Come July, startups can bank on NCL's high end expertise to develop technology, products & processes

NCL gets into 'VC act' to nurture good business ideas

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AS an institution, it is known to register the highest number of patents in chemical technology. But now, Pune based National Chemical Laboratory (NCL), the mecca of chemical sciences in India, is opening its arms to shelter, promote and nurture ideas and transform them into a tangible form of commercially exploitable products.

So, starting July, a 10,000 sq ft business incubator, christened "Venture Centre", will be operational in the premises of this internationally acclaimed laboratory to promote startups and spin off companies. "In the past, public-private partnerships led NCL to

focus on processes which are more relevant to large companies. Through the Venture Centre, startups will now be able to leverage NCL's high end scientific expertise to develop technology, products and processes," explains Premnath V, an NCL scientist.

The logic of setting up this facility is that in any science based enterprise, one cannot work in vacuum. A certain set of complementing expertise is also needed along with high-end computing tools:

For example, a startup in nanomaterials will need an electron microscope as well as a qualified person to handle it. But for a startup this is an expensive proposition.

"Companies based at the Venture Centre can use NCL's people,



The National Chemical Laboratory. File photo

resources, as well as information and knowhow generated over years of research," adds Premnath. The basic criteria for getting a place in the centre is a knowledge-based business idea which is in synergy with the kind of science practiced at NCL.

The focus areas identified so far are material science, chemical synthesis, biomedical sciences, chemical and process engineering as well as research, technology and knowledge management. "These are basically the strengths of this laboratory. Moreover, the

primary focus area for us will be development of products which has material sciences central to it," says Premnath.

The USP of the Venture Centre will be flexibility. The need for an operating address can be reason enough to set up a unit at the centre. "Later, when the business matures, they will have to move out," clarifies Premnath. "We are planning to set up a network of mentors, financiers to promote the entrepreneur aspirants. We will also help them to get government funds."

The cherry in the cake for aspiring entrepreneurs wanting to use the proposed NCL facility is that a special laboratory will also be set up which will have workhorse scientific facilities. "Startups need laboratories to device prototypes

Any idea is a good idea

The NCL's Venture Centre can help aspiring entrepreneurs in several ways:

- Want an address for your fledgling company? You will get it here
- You have conceptualised your product and want to discuss the idea with prospective financiers. VC will offer you the space
- The concept is ready, you want to build the prototype. NCL's in-house laboratory is at your disposal
- You need to check the product in the market in by releasing it in small quantities. No problem, do it from here!

which they can show to prospective financiers. This laboratory will also help them test their products for various quality parameters." says Premnath.