

National Chem Lab to start IISER in Pune

Our Bureau

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National Chemical Laboratory (NCL), a premier laboratory of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) is starting the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) in Pune. CISR is simultaneously starting another IISER in Kolkata and is eyeing a third campus at Chandigarh as well.

The first batch of IISER at Pune and Kolkata consisting 70 students each will commence from August 16, 2006. Krishna N Ganesh, head of the organic chemistry synthesis division at NCL and newly-appointed director of IISER, Pune said that the financial outlay for each IISER from the government is Rs 500 crore over five years.

S Sivraman, director NCL said that in the next 15 years, Pune will be a hub for research and development in all science domains including chemistry, fine chemistry and materials. NCL is becoming the magnet for pulling some of the major global and Indian players to set up shop in Pune. Hence, NCL is starting a new laboratory spread over an area of 80,000 sq feet for polymers and advanced materials which will be completed by 2008. This is its first expansion in 23 years.

NCL has also planned to set up a company by the name Venture Centre by next month, which will hand hold small companies from early stage incubation of ideas to the manufacturing stage. Since the Venture Centre is registered as a

not-for-profit company under Section 25 of the Companies Act, it can form joint ventures, etc, to respond quickly to market needs.

Along with this, NCL will start an innovation park which will house several business facilitation functions as well as independent research and development centres of corporate entities, either as stand alone or as JV with NCL. The funding for the research centre will be close to Rs 5 crore in the next three years. As reported earlier, Deepak Research and Development Foundation (DRDF) has already occupied a 7,500 sq ft facility. The innovation park will be spread over an area of 10 acres and will be operational by the first quarter of 2007.

As reported earlier, IISER will provide an integrated five-year Master in Science (MS) pro-

gramme after class 12th. Currently, the institute has sent offer letters to 83 IIT joint entrance exam (JEE) qualified students for Pune and 79 for Kolkata. Along with these, offers have been made to the Kishore Vaigyanik Protsahana Yojana (KYPY) and Olympiad students. In addition to the integrated masters course, IISER will also offer integrated Ph. D programme for science graduates.

From the next academic year, IISER will come up at arms length from NCL on a sprawling campus of 30,000 sq ft which will be fully residential. Eventually, IISER is expected to have 3,000 students and a 150-strong faculty. Mr Sivaram admitted that the research focus at IISER is still to be finalised, after which faculty will be recruited. Once the IISER

campus at Chandigarh comes up, a joint entrance exam for the course might also be started.

"Conducting nationwide exam is a tedious task and currently we do not have the infrastructure to do so. Till then, we will rely on the existing system of IIT-JEE," said Mr KN Ganesh, director, IISER. The students at IISER will be offered monthly fellowship of Rs 3,000. The fees for the course will be Rs 6,000 per semester.

The innovation park of NCL will also house the single molecule repository of NCL. This repository will systematically receive, catalogue and archive all the molecules discovered at NCL. Data mining techniques will be used for the maintaining the repository and it can be used as a curing drug for various diseases or for research.