

Innovation center to promote biotech start-ups at CCMB soon

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Hyderabad: The 30-year-old iconic genetics research center of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) is embarking on innovation promotion mission. The Center for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) with its plan to set up a 40,000 square feet (Sq.ft) Innovation Center, is aiming to stimulate translation of scientific breakthroughs into business ventures.

“All the scientists and research students will be encouraged to take up entrepreneurship ideas through the innovation center, “the new CCMB director, Dr Rakesh Mishra revealed during a recent panel discussion on fostering innovation in the country, organized by the Federation of Asian Biotech Associations (FABA) in Hyderabad. The Panel discussion was moderated by the Association of Biotechnology Enterprises (ABLE)’s COO, Mr Narayanan Suresh.

CCMB has had a key role in the growth of India’s biotech industry. It incubated Shantha Biotechniques in the 1990s and CCMB helped with the development of the technology to manufacture the country’s first recombinant DNA product, a Hepatitis B vaccine generic version for Shantha. Since then many budding entrepreneurs have used CCMB facilities for their work.

Well known for its cutting edge research work in the field of genetics, CCMB has already thrown open its facilities to start-ups, innovators and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) as part of the national mission to promote affordable healthcare solutions.

This is done through the CRTDHs(Common Research and Technology Development Hub) for MSMEs scheme started by the Government of India's Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR). CCMB hosts one of three CRTDH in this field in the country.

The CCMB-CRDTH is a fully air-conditioned 10,000 sq.ft facility that provides affordable access to sophisticated equipment test facility, infrastructure and intellectual support to MSMEs for short and long term use.

As revealed via Mr Narayanan Suresh in the newsletter of ABLE recently, the CCMB Director, Dr Mishra further mentioned that the facility is relevant for standard research work in biochemical, molecular and cell biology work. In fact, all the sophisticated equipments in the laboratory are also available to start-ups for a small fee. The CRTDH is run on a non-commercial but cost plus basis for innovators wanting to use the facilities.

“ Many innovators with good ideas may face difficulties in translating it into marketable products or services due to lack of an ecosystem for innovation including availability of sophisticated test facilities, equipment and infrastructure,” Dr Mishra said. “CCMB will strive to help them overcome these aspects in every possible way.”

The laboratory runs a CCMB-Young Innovators programme to encourage school students in classes 8 to 12 to take up science projects and selects 15 students every year from schools in Hyderabad. These students spend two weeks in the CCMB premises to familiarize themselves with the research processes and also conduct their own small experiments there.