IIT Incubation Plans on Fast Track to Boost Startup Ideas

CULTURE SHIFT New incubator IIT Mandi Catalyst may be registered as a Section 8 company

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Mumbai / New Delhi: In January, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Mandi, was selected as one of 16 sites across the country for setting up technology business incubators under the government’s ‘Start-Up India’ initiative. The premier institute is now working on its new technology business incubator, named IIT Mandi Catalyst.

IIT Patna recently received a total of Rs 75 crore from the central government’s department of electronics and information technology and the Bihar government to set up an incubation centre for electronics system design and manufacturing (ESDM). The institute is approaching the ministry of human resource development and department of science and technology to set up another technology business incubator (5 crore) that will focus on agriculture, among other areas.

At a time when the government is pushing for startup incubation, a culture shift is underway at the new IITs, which have put their incubation plans on fast track. Several of the new IITs, including the ones in Patna, Ropar, Mandi, Gandhi Nagar and Hyderabad, are in the process of setting up new incubators and strengthening the existing ones.

“The government is giving so much importance to incubators that no one can ignore. The government push definitely forms a background for the new culture of incubation at the new IITs,” said Mayank Tiwari, associate dean, research and development, at IIT Patna. The institute is setting up the infrastructure for the incubators. Students have already started coming up with ideas and the institute is open to anyone from India who would like to incubate an idea.

“The promised funding for the incubator is encouraging the faculty and students towards a culture of incubation, said Bhavender Paul, professor-in-charge at IIT Mandi Catalyst. “They have begun to expect that they may receive support for any ventures they may start.”

Paul said, “With the expectation that DST funding shall become available soon for IIT Mandi Catalyst, our incubator expects to begin offering support to innovative ventures in a not too distant future.” The facility at IIT Mandi, of about 11,000 square feet, is expected to become operational this year. It will facilitate administrative and technical support for innovative startups.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the ‘Start-Up India’ initiative on Independence Day last year, and the action plan for it was rolled out in January. Among the many plans under the initiative, one is to set up 25 incubators in institutions.

“The idea is to push for more innovation among all IITs, including the newer ones. This will help generate confidence among students and faculty alike around innovation,” said SK Jain, director of IIT Gandhinagar. IIT Gandhinagar, which already has one incubation facility in place, will use the Rs 75 crore it has received from the government to strengthen the existing centre.

“The one that is running currently is on a low key due to lack of funds, but now, with the grant from the government, we will be able to operate on a larger scale,” Jain said.

Meanwhile, IIT Mandi Catalyst is in the process of getting registered as a Section 8 company. Initial funding is being provided by IIT Mandi and the National Science & Technology Entrepreneurship Development Board of the department of science & technology. In addition, the technology institute itself has been increasing awareness about startups through its entrepreneurship cell (E-Cell) and its entrepreneurship course. IIT Mandi has had an E-Cell and has been offering an entrepreneurship course to nurture innovative ideas. Also, there is drive among the students to have their own startups. While some students are running their own startups in the 3rd and 4th year of their undergraduate degree, several faculty members too are exploring the possibility of their own startups.
Sanskrit only as elective subject in IITs, says Irani

New Delhi: Union human resource development minister Smriti Irani on Thursday clarified that Sanskrit had been offered as an elective language subject in IITs to those who want to study it.

In a written reply in the Rajya Sabha, Irani said that it was being done as per the recommendations of N Gopalawami committee report on reviving Sanskrit. The committee had suggested that IITs may facilitate study of science and technology as reflected in Sanskrit literature, along with inter-disciplinary study of Sanskrit and modern subjects.

“In consonance with the recommendations, IITs have been requested to offer Sanskrit as an elective subject or as a language course for students who wish to study the language,” Irani said. To another question related to IITs, Irani said although 2,468 teaching positions in these institutes were vacant as on September 1, 2015, research scholars, contract adjuncts and visiting faculty more than adequately compensated for these vacancies.
Irani unveils web platform for inclusive higher edu
http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Irani-unveils-web-platform-for-inclusive-higher-edu/articleshow/52033876.cms

NEW DELHI: The HRD ministry has unveiled an ambitious plan to facilitate web-based learning, involving applying for courses and accessing material online, to increase the reach and quality of higher education.

HRD minister Smriti Irani in a tweet outlined the structure of Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (Swayam) which promises linkages and assistance for web-enabled learning.

The massive open online courses (MOOCS) platform will aim to create a student experience that begins with creating learning plans and providing information to prospective students about the courses that are available. The Swayam flow chart will allow students to check their eligibility and then proceed for preview and availability of teaching in fields of their interest.

The next step is contact with course coordinators for more detailed information. Application and successful registration lead to access to course materials as the learning process gets under way and now, as students begin following schedules, they can network with other learners to set up a shared workspace. These workspaces can be homes or any available public space and the interaction can go up with online communication with other course-takers.

Mid-module assessments and guidance from supervisors are intended to keep students on track and up to the mark in their academic work that includes self-assessment. Successful course completion will lead to earning credits followed by a course review exercise and the next level of learning in the programme will get under way. Completion of requisite number of modules will lead to qualification at par with regular learning.

The e-learning programme has been structured to deliver results and improve inclusion as the admission processes to colleges and schools are unable to accommodate a growing number of applicants.

Ghaziabad girl clears JEE, jumps to death in Kota

JAIPUR: A day after JEE (Mains) results were announced, a 17-year-old IIT aspirant from Ghaziabad ended her life by jumping from the fifth floor of her apartment building in Kota on Thursday. In her suicide note, Kriti Tiwari said she was taking the extreme step as she wasn't satisfied with the results.

Kriti's death takes the total number of stress-related suicides this year by coaching students in the educational hub to five.

"Kriti has implied in the note that she didn't want to pursue engineering, but Bachelor of Science (BSc). She wanted to become an astrophysicist. It’s strange because one can also become an astrophysicist after graduating from an IIT,” said SHO of Jawahar Nagar police station Harshit Bharati, who is investigating the case. In her suicide note, written in English, Kriti apologized to her parents.

"Her JEE (Mains) results came out on Wednesday. Though the cut-off marks were 100, she scored 144. As per the coaching officials, it was a decent score and she had a good chance of cracking IIT," the SHO said. Her Class XII results are yet to be announced.
Bharati said Kriti had moved to Kota two years ago and was staying in the apartment in Ashirwad Angan near Om Tower. Though her father, who runs a travel agency, is based in Ghaziabad, her parents had arranged for one of them to stay with her at any time. "The girl took admission in a senior secondary school. She joined a coaching institute to prepare for IIT simultaneously," said the SHO. "When she took the extreme step on Thursday, her father was in Kota while the mother was in Ghaziabad," Bharati said. The family lives in Konark Enclave, Sector 17, Vasundhara.