

Marketing boost for scientists

Govt. set to give them time off to hop entrepreneurial skills

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Pune: Scientists working in government organisations will be given time off from laboratories to hone their entrepreneurial skills and start a venture on their own with the technology they have developed.

Director-general of Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Raghunath Mashelkar, after inaugurating the Rs 5-crore venture centre at the National Chemical Laboratory (NCL) here on Monday, said a draft modifying conduct rules for scientists had been cleared and was awaiting cabinet clearance. "The approval should come within two months," he added.

The venture centre — funded by the Department of Science and Technology — is a technology business incubator, specialising in technology enterprises in areas of materials, chemicals, engineering and biological sciences.

Present on the occasion was Sir Richard Friend, from the University of Cambridge, who has successfully taken laboratory research to marketplace. Emphasising that young scientists



(From left) IIT, Mumbai director Ashok Mishra, Friend, Mashelkar and Sivaram (standing) on the occasion of the foundation stone laying ceremony of NCL's new laboratory building for polymers and advance materials on Monday

should be allowed to do what they want, he said the scientific community should take some time out to exploit their scientific expertise.

NCL director S. Sivaram said the centre would allow scientists from within and outside to exploit their scientific expertise. "The NCL will help nucleate and nurture new businesses through the start-up phase." A majority of our scientists hesitate to start a

business venture," Sivaram said, adding, "scientists working in laboratories, have disengaged high quality science with innovative products in the market, thinking it is incongruous."

The idea behind the venture centre is to allow the scientists to continue with their research work and, at the same time, start a successful enterprise.

"And why not," asked Mashelkar, pointing out that a lot

of intellectual property (IP) and wealth was being created by using the Indian IQ. "If universities in China can spin off 2,800 hi-tech companies, why not us," he said, also referring to the Silicon Valley in the US, which is dominated by over 2,00,000 Indians.

"It's high time this trend is reversed," he said, however, adding that only those ideas or technologies which have substantial potential in the market should be encouraged.

The CSIR chief said a similar initiative — scientists' entrepreneurial programme — was undertaken in 1995. "Scientists were offered a break so that they could start their own enterprise, but nobody came forward."

Premnath V, who heads the centre, said talks are already on to collaborate with the International School of Business, Hyderabad, and the Indian Institute of Management-Ahmedabad.

Earlier in the day, Mashelkar and Friend laid the foundation stone of the Rs 13.5-crore laboratory building for polymers and advanced materials on the NCL campus. The building will be ready in the next 18 months.