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Gururaj Deshpande Setting Up India's Biggest Incubator For Startups In Hubballi



By Jitendra Chaturvedi

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Gururaj Deshpande, An Indian-American entrepreneur, philanthropist and venture capitalist, is setting up India's biggest incubator for startups in Hubballi. It is around 400km away from Bengaluru. The 82,000-sqft facility is expected to open in September. India's current biggest incubator is T-Hub in Telangana which is a 70,000 sqft building.

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The Hubballi incubator will have the capacity to seat over 1,200 people which can accommodate at least 200 startups. The startups will be mainly from Dharwad district, said Deshpande at a startup event at Infosys's new campus in Hubballi.

Deshpande, An IIT-Madras graduate, was born in Hubballi and moved to the US in 1998. He launched Sycamore Networks which went operational in 1999. By March 2000 the company's network raised to \$45 Billion which made Mr. Deshpande one the wealthiest self-made man in the world.

In 2010, US President Barack Obama appointed Deshpande as co-chair of the National Advisory Council on Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

The Hubballi programme is a significant expansion of an idea that the Deshpande Foundation -founded by Deshpande and his wife Jaishree – seeded in 2008 and which has grown to be successful in the region. They called the Sandbox, the objective was to encourage problem-solvers from the local community and allow them to come with solutions with help from the foundation in terms of management, a financial model and connections to global innovators.

Several innovative solutions have emerged through this programme, including a software-enabled machine that helps automate the process of sorting cashew nuts according to their quality , and a technique to improve the productivity of cotton farmers. Some 50 startups are part of the Sandbox. All of them will move to the new facility once it is ready.

“The new facility will have a makers’ lab, 3D printing lab, IoT (internet-of-things) lab. It will focus on all sectors -from manufacturing and agriculture to IoT,” said Deshpande Foundation CEO Naveen Jha.

On Friday, Deshpande also announced the foundation will launch its biggest skill development centre in April.

Recently in **January 15, 2017** Tech Mahindra announced InovateMK, which is an incubator and will help startups in the new town of Milton Keynes area in the UK.

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