

Nasscom - ICICI Knowledge Park Fund (NIIF) announced

NASSCOM, the premier trade body and the "voice" of the Indian IT industry, today formally announced the NASSCOM - ICICI Knowledge Park Innovation Fund (NIIF) promoted in collaboration with ICICI Knowledge Park. The anchor investors in NIIF are Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Bharti Airtel and ICICI Knowledge Park.

NIIF, a first of its kind initiative by NASSCOM and the ICICI Knowledge Park, has been created with the intent of providing seed stage investments in order to promote Intellectual Property driven innovations in emerging technologies. The fund will also endeavor to encourage entrepreneurship and enable innovative start-ups to reach a stage of self sustenance and growth. This fund is targeted at early stage companies with a core focus on creating Intellectual Property, and academicians, researchers and incubates looking to commercialize inventions.

NIIF will operate as a separate commercial entity with the fund corpus being created through voluntary institutional contributions from firms representing the targeted investment areas of the fund. As of now, the following sectors have been identified as the key focus areas for investment by the fund

- Wireless technologies
- Automotive infotonics
- Life Sciences
- Energy conservation technologies and devices,
- Medical devices

Speaking at the launch, Kiran Karnik, President, NASSCOM said, "The Indian IT-BPO industry has grown ten times over the last decade and is today an important driver of the India growth story. To continue this growth trajectory and attain newer heights, Indian firms, irrespective of size or nature of activity, will have to develop new competitive advantages and increasingly focus on value capture through relentless innovation. While the larger firms have the wherewithal to invest in innovation, start-ups and young firms in India (with innovative ideas) often fail to scale up due to the lack of timely availability of seed capital. This situation is further exacerbated in the context of firms who focus on IP creation in emerging technologies which often are high-risk and have long gestation periods."

"To address this serious issue of lack of seed capital, NASSCOM and ICICI Knowledge Park have decided to promote the NASSCOM-IKP Innovation fund. The fund will focus on start-ups involved in IP creation in both IT and life-sciences. It is a source of great satisfaction that India's most well known corporate brands and leading innovators in their respective industries, TCS, ICICI Knowledge Park and Bharti Airtel have decided to invest in this initiative', he added.

Mr. S Ramadorai, MD & CEO TCS said, "As an industry leader and investor in the NASSCOM-IKP innovation fund, TCS believes this is an important national initiative required to spur IP creation in emerging technologies and build an eco-system for innovation across the country. Such funding initiatives need to take root nationally as innovation will be the key driver to sustain and enhance Indian IT's future competitiveness."

"The collaborative nature of the initiative is important because sustainable innovation requires collaboration with other stakeholders. One example of this is TCS' own Co-Innovation Network (COIN) that continues to develop a collaborative eco-system beyond the enterprise with our customers as well as venture capital funds, start-up companies and academic institutions," Mr. Ramadorai added.

Mr. N Vaghul, Chairman, ICICI Group, said "Sustaining the growth momentum of the Indian economy will require us to create new knowledge in emerging technologies. Not only does it create tremendous business opportunities for Indian industry in new areas, but the new knowledge also provides an opportunity to address some of India's most challenging problems in areas of healthcare, energy conservation etc. Creating this new knowledge will not be easy and will require perseverance and creativity especially from the young entrepreneurs. We need to ensure that impediments in the path of the young entrepreneurs are removed. The NASSCOM-ICICI Knowledge Park innovation fund addresses the key challenge of availability of seed capital and will hopefully provide a light-house effect. I am delighted to announce that the ICICI Group has decided to support this

important initiative."

Dr. Jai Menon, Director - IT & Innovation, Group Chief Information & Innovation Officer, Bharti Airtel, said, "Bharti Airtel is focused on fulfilling the aspirations of millions of Indians by providing leadership to make dial tone ubiquitous. The next opportunity is for us to provide 'information tone to a billion people' - however, achieving this will entail breakthrough innovations on a vast scale. Successful innovations often happen at the intersection of neighboring industries and we expect that the convergence of IT and telecom technologies will enable us to realize our vision of taking information tone to a billion people. Creating and scaling these breakthrough innovations will require us to stimulate the Indian innovation ecosystem and collaborate extensively with other stakeholders of this ecosystem. Given our belief and passion in innovation, I am very glad to announce that Bharti Airtel will become an anchor investor in the NASSCOM-ICICI Knowledge Park innovation fund."

Dr. Nachiket Mor, President ICICI Foundation said "Technology will play a key role in addressing many if not all of India' pressing social problems in healthcare, education, unemployment, poverty alleviation etc. For these technologies and their applications to deliver results, they will need to be appropriate for the Indian context, both from the perspective of applicability and affordability. Given the magnitude of our social problems, this is not going to be easy and will require innovations on a vast scale. Therefore we need to create an ecosystem which encourages entrepreneurs to take higher risks and focus on creating game changing innovations. The NASSCOM-ICICI Knowledge Park innovation fund is an important path-breaking initiative towards enabling an Indian innovation ecosystem which encourages relevant and breakthrough innovations in frontier technologies"

The key objective of NIIF is to stimulate technology innovation through providing seed capital funding for opportunities in emerging technologies including IT, automotive, life sciences, wireless, clean energy etc. Some of the other objectives of NIIF are as follows:

- Promote innovation in emerging technologies through patient investment
- Encourage entrepreneurship through providing market access and mentoring
- Enable innovative start-up companies to reach a stage where they can attract follow-on venture capital funding