

“Radical educational transformation required”

In an exclusive interview, Prof Mridula Goel, Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Faculty In-Charge, Center for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship BITS Pilani, K K Birla Goa Campus speaks on the start-up ecosystem in Goa

The Goan: In order to promote innovation and entrepreneurship, BITS Pilani Goa Campus has a dedicated unit called CIIE (Center for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship). Could you tell us how it works?

Mridula Goel: CIIE seeks to support the creation of intellectual property and commercialization of technologies developed by the students and faculty of the University. The ecosystem attempts to create an entrepreneurial mindset in our community. We organize ideation workshops, Hackathons, e-Summits and have regular interactions with entrepreneurs and also offer a course - New Venture Creation.

TG: What about your BIRAC incubation facility?

MG: It will include labs in the area of microbiology and molecular biology and will make them available to start-ups from BITS and outside. Its access would be to Goa and adjoining states.

TG: What is the reason for focusing on healthcare and environmental engineering?

MG: These two issues are crucial to the development of mankind today. They are high innovation areas. Besides, BITS has a remarkable presence of researchers in these areas.

TG: What about assisting start-ups in market expansion?

MG: We are working on possible collaboration with renowned consultants to help commercialize our innovations. Once the collaborations are finalized, they will offer good support in market expansion. Our strong industry network also provides meaningful linkages.

TG: You were part of the jury for the CM's Goa Start-up Challenge. Do you feel our youth are up to the challenge?

MG: Yes, of course. In fact, the top 10 contestants, who reached the final round were all working on developing technology to solve a real social problem. All the ideas were innovative.



QA PROF MRIDULA GOEL

TG: You are associated with the Goa State Innovation Council too. Can you tell us something about this.

MG: The Innovation Council aims to support the creation of innovation and intellectual property in the state. The focus is on youth and the student community. The council has proposed measures like supporting student research projects, documenting innovations and creating a permanent presence in Goa.

TG: What is your take on low-budget start-ups?

MG: Low budget start-ups are mostly started in the web based or app based domain. The advantage they have is that most of them can test the product market fit at a low initial set up cost. With less capital resources, they can create

more employment and definitely add to GDP growth.

TG: How can we encourage innovative ideas?

MG: A radical shift in our system is required from early schooling to bring changes in the mental makeup of youth. Innovativeness requires change in the social mindset. The government, corporates and academic institutions should make concerted efforts to further this objective.

TG: Pros and cons in small start-ups

MG: Small start-ups normally focus on a single innovative product to take-off. The resources available to them are limited in terms of both manpower and capital. Risk taking ability is low and capacity to absorb losses is limited. Small start-ups can achieve exponential growth, carve markets for their products and supplement big industries in pushing economic growth.