

# Need inclusive plans to empower youth to become next gen entr's: KU VC

*Inaugurates daylong startup consultative meet*



**Srinagar, Oct 4:** To address the challenges and explore opportunities within the Jammu and Kashmir startup ecosystem, the University of Kashmir (KU) Tuesday hosted a daylong startup consultative meet here bringing together local incubator heads, early-stage startup founders from diverse industries and experts in the field, alongside numerous students from various university departments.

Titled 'J&K Startup Ecosystem – Challenges and Opportunities', the event was organised by the varsity's New Generation Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Centre (NewGen IEDC), in collaboration with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) Startup Hub to nurture a vibrant entrepreneurial landscape, emphasising the importance of ongoing support for local startups.

KU Vice Chancellor, Prof Nilofer Khan congratulated the programme organisers for their revitalisation efforts at the NewGen IEDC while highlighting sectors like hospitality, agriculture and tourism as growth areas.

"We must create inclusive plans that empower everyone, including differently-abled individuals. Success stories from startups can inspire our students to become the next generation of entrepreneurs," she asserted.

Dean, College Development Council, Prof Khursheed Ahmad Butt, addressed the challenges startups face, including the youth's preference for white-collar jobs and the migration of skilled talent.

“While challenges are present, our region is rich in resources and culture. With the right support, we can turn these challenges into opportunities for innovation,” he maintained.

KU Registrar, Prof Naseer Iqbal, highlighted the changing job landscape, emphasising the urgent need for individuals to transition from job seekers to job creators.

“In today's economy, encouraging entrepreneurship is not just beneficial; it's essential for our youth to thrive,” he reiterated.

Programme Director, MeitY Startup Hub, Omkarnath Suprabath Rath, shared insights into MeitY's initiatives to promote entrepreneurship, such as the SMRIDHI initiative and support for startups in smaller cities.

“Investing in deep tech startups is key to unlocking the technological potential of our region and encouraging economic growth,” he noted.

Coordinator, NewGen IEDC, Dr Sartaj Hussain, in his welcome address, provided an overview of the centre's activities and also outlined the objectives of the consultative meet.

“Our mission is to cultivate a robust entrepreneurial spirit in the region. This meet is a crucial step toward that goal, uniting diverse stakeholders in meaningful dialogue,” he said.

The event showcased inspiring journeys from emerging startups in the Kashmir Valley, such as Kashmir Box, CredAgro, and SkyRobo Drones. “These ventures exemplify innovation and resilience, tackling local challenges while promoting sustainable solutions. Their successes serve as motivation for aspiring business leaders, reinforcing the immense entrepreneurial potential in the region,” a university spokesperson said in a statement.

Notably, KU's NewGen IEDC has been selected as one of 65 incubators nationwide to implement MeitY's GENESIS (Gen-Next Support for Innovative Startups) scheme, reflecting its pivotal role in capacity building for startups.