

DPIIT Engages with Startups under FICCI Mercedes-Benz Bharat Innovation & Business Ideas Challenge Programme

Seven Selected Startups to Receive Structured Post-Funding Mentoring and Handholding Support

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Reaffirming its continued commitment to strengthening India's startup and innovation ecosystem, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) participated in a virtual interaction under the FICCI Mercedes-Benz Bharat Innovation & Business Ideas Challenge Programme.

The FICCI Mercedes-Benz Bharat Innovation & Business Ideas Challenge Programme was launched to identify and support high-potential Indian startups developing innovative and scalable solutions across key sectors, including manufacturing, sustainability, education, decarbonization and automotive/EVs.

Addressing the participants, Additional Secretary, DPIIT, Shri Ateesh Kumar Singh congratulated FICCI and Mercedes-Benz India on the successful implementation of the programme. He said the initiative reflects the growing strength of India's innovation ecosystem and the immense potential of the country's young entrepreneurs. He noted that by providing timely mentorship and support, the programme empowers innovators to develop solutions aligned with national priorities. He added that such collaborative efforts are essential for driving innovation-led growth and strengthening India's position as a global innovation leader.

As part of the programme, a structured post-funding mentoring and handholding framework has been announced for the seven selected startups to accelerate their growth and enhance investment readiness. The initiative will provide targeted support across critical business, regulatory, financial, legal, investment and technology domains, enabling startups to build scalable, resilient and globally competitive ventures.

Under this framework, the selected startups will receive specialised mentoring on regulatory and legal compliance, taxation and fund utilisation, fundraising strategy, valuation fundamentals, term sheet negotiations, data privacy, cybersecurity and intellectual property protection.

The programme will also feature dedicated Demo Days, providing startups with opportunities to showcase their innovations, business models and growth strategies before industry leaders, investors, mentors and ecosystem stakeholders. These interactions will help validate market readiness, strengthen strategic positioning and unlock potential partnerships and funding opportunities.

Additionally, the selected startups will benefit from the "Sounding Board Programme", a strategic mentorship initiative designed to provide industry insights, expert guidance and leadership perspectives to help refine their business models, sharpen growth strategies and accelerate their journey towards market

readiness and long-term success, thereby contributing to Bharat's vision of becoming a global hub for innovation and entrepreneurship.

Following a nationwide call for applications, startups from across India participated in the programme. After a rigorous multi-stage evaluation by industry experts and ecosystem stakeholders, 32 startups were shortlisted and invited to present their innovations before the jury and leadership team. Based on innovation, scalability, business potential and impact, seven startups were selected to receive funding support of INR 30 lakh each, along with post-funding mentoring and business support.

The interaction highlighted the importance of structured ecosystem support, mentorship and industry collaboration in enabling startups to move beyond early-stage innovation and build globally competitive enterprises, reinforcing DPIIT's continued focus on fostering a robust startup ecosystem in the country.

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