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From Nagpur to a National Network: SINE, IIT Bombay Launches Hub-and-Spoke Initiative To Strengthen India's Startup and Deep-Tech Ecosystem

Nagpur becomes the first regional ecosystem under SINE's national initiative to connect institutions, empower incubators and accelerate technology-led entrepreneurship across India.

MUMBAI, 6th November 2026: India's next wave of innovation and entrepreneurship will depend not only on strengthening established startup hubs, but also on unlocking the immense research, technology and entrepreneurial potential that exists across institutions and emerging cities throughout the country.

Taking a significant step in this direction, the **Society for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (SINE), IIT Bombay has launched a national Hub-and-Spoke initiative** to strengthen India's startup incubation ecosystem through structured institutional collaboration, knowledge sharing and collective capacity building.

Built on over two decades of experience in nurturing technology-based entrepreneurship, SINE's initiative seeks to take its incubation expertise, institutional practices, networks and ecosystem connections beyond its own campus and make them accessible to institutions and incubators across the country.

The initiative marks an important evolution in SINE's role in the Indian startup ecosystem; from building and supporting startups directly to also enabling and strengthening the institutions that nurture them. Over the years, SINE has shared its experience and supported several incubators and institutions informally. The Hub-and-Spoke model seeks to take this spirit of collaboration forward through a more structured, scalable and sustainable framework.

A Collaborative Network: Stronger Institutions, Stronger Ecosystems

Under the proposed model, SINE will serve as the central **Hub**, providing incubation frameworks, operational and portfolio management practices, mentoring resources, programme management expertise, investment facilitation and connections to national and international networks. Partner institutions will serve as **Spokes**, bringing their local infrastructure, research capabilities, specialised laboratories, domain expertise, entrepreneurial talent and regional industry connections.
The strength of this model lies in combining complementary capabilities rather than creating parallel structures. It aims to empower existing incubators, enable institutions to learn from one another and create a connected network through which startups can access capabilities and opportunities beyond the boundaries of their own institutions.

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Through this collaborative approach, a startup emerging from one institution could potentially access specialised facilities at another, benefit from SINE's incubation and mentoring frameworks, connect with industry and investors, and explore co-incubation opportunities across the network.

Nagpur: The First Step Towards a National Movement

Nagpur has been identified as the first region under this initiative, marking the beginning of SINE's efforts to develop a collaborative and connected regional startup ecosystem. As the first step, IIT Bombay and SINE convened a stakeholder meeting on **12th October 2026 at Visvesvaraya National Institute of Technology (VNIT), Nagpur**, bringing together representatives from 10 institutions and associated incubation organisations.

The meeting provided a platform for institutional leaders and incubator representatives to deliberate on the strengths, opportunities and challenges of the Nagpur startup ecosystem, identify areas of collaboration and explore a shared roadmap for strengthening regional entrepreneurship.

The participating institutions and organisations included:

- Visvesvaraya National Institute of Technology (VNIT), Nagpur
- VNIT Ventures Vault Foundation (V3F)8
- IIM Nagpur Foundation for Entrepreneurship Development (InFED)
- All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Nagpur
- Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), Nagpur
- Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University
- Incubein Foundation
- Yeshwantrao Chavan College of Engineering (YCCE), including YCCE TBI Foundation
- G. H. Raisoni College of Engineering, including its Technology Business Incubator Foundation
- RCOEM Technology Business Incubators Foundation

An important milestone of this engagement was the signing of a **Memorandum of Understanding between SINE and VNIT Ventures Vault Foundation (V3F)**, establishing the first institutional partnership under the Hub-and-Spoke initiative.

The discussions recognised Nagpur's considerable strengths, including its academic and research institutions, strategic location, industrial base and infrastructure. At the same time, participants highlighted opportunities to strengthen access to early-stage investors, specialist mentoring, technology commercialisation support, structured incubation practices and collaborative funding networks.

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The collective participation of the institutions reflects a shared recognition that building a strong startup ecosystem requires collaboration across institutions, disciplines and sectors.

From Institutional Strengths to Startup Opportunities

The Nagpur engagement has laid the foundation for a collaborative approach to addressing ecosystem-wide challenges and unlocking new opportunities.

The proposed areas of engagement under the Hub-and-Spoke model include:

- **Co-incubation and startup development:** Joint identification, evaluation and incubation of promising startups, enabling them to access the complementary capabilities of multiple institutions.
- **Investment and funding facilitation:** Investor introductions, pitch preparation, demo days and participation in SINE's investor engagement programmes.
- **Incubation capacity building:** Sharing established practices in incubation management, startup evaluation, portfolio monitoring, programme implementation and institutional governance.
- **Mentoring and expert networks:** Connecting startups, faculty members and incubation teams with experienced entrepreneurs, domain specialists, industry leaders and mentors.
- **Technology commercialisation:** Supporting the translation of institutional research, intellectual property and technological innovations into market-ready products and scalable enterprises.
- **Government funding and programme support:** Sharing knowledge on seed funding, grant management, programme implementation, evaluation and compliance.
- **Industry and market linkages:** Creating opportunities for startups to engage with industry, validate technologies, identify market opportunities and build strategic partnerships.

The discussions also identified opportunities for sector-focused collaboration in deep technology, healthcare and medical technology, agriculture, food processing, manufacturing, mining, veterinary sciences and fisheries, drawing upon the strengths of the participating institutions and the wider regional ecosystem.

Building a Sustained Collaborative Framework

The Nagpur initiative is envisaged as a continuing institutional partnership rather than a one-time engagement.

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The next phase will focus on formalising collaborations with participating institutions, developing co-incubation arrangements, identifying potential pilot startups and establishing a regular mechanism for coordination and knowledge exchange.

Proposed activities include monthly interactions among participating incubators, periodic institutional visits, knowledge-sharing seminars for students and faculty, and opportunities for startups to participate in SINE's investor engagement platforms.

The framework will also provide for mutually agreed arrangements covering institutional responsibilities, startup engagement, intellectual property, confidentiality and commercial terms wherever applicable.

The objective is to create an ecosystem where institutions retain their individual strengths and identities while benefiting from a larger collaborative network.

A National Vision: Taking the Model Across Cities and States
Nagpur is the beginning of a larger journey.

Building on the experience and learnings from this first regional engagement, SINE intends to progressively take the Hub-and-Spoke model to other cities and states, working with academic institutions, research organisations, technology business incubators and ecosystem stakeholders to develop strong, connected regional startup ecosystems.

The larger ambition is to make quality incubation support, institutional knowledge, specialised infrastructure, industry connections and access to capital more widely available; particularly to promising technology and deep-tech ventures emerging outside the country's established startup centres.

By connecting regional innovation capabilities with national networks and institutional expertise, the initiative seeks to create a more distributed, inclusive and collaborative innovation ecosystem.
This vision aligns with the broader national aspiration of **Viksit Bharat**; where institutions across the country contribute to technological advancement, indigenous innovation, entrepreneurship, employment generation and economic growth.

The initiative carries a simple but powerful belief: India's startup potential is not concentrated in a few cities or institutions. It exists across the country. Connecting that potential can create opportunities far beyond what individual institutions can achieve independently.

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Leadership Perspectives:

Prof. Milind Atrey, Deputy Director (ART), IIT Bombay said:
"India's deep-tech ambitions require us to strengthen the pathways through which research capabilities across institutions and regions translate into entrepreneurial ventures. The Hub-and-Spoke initiative seeks to connect institutional strengths with incubation expertise, industry engagement and access to capital. By bringing institutions together, we can create a stronger foundation for innovation, technology commercialisation and entrepreneurship across the country".

Prof. Nishant Sharma, Professor-in-Charge, SINE, IIT Bombay said:
"Over the years, SINE has built institutional capabilities and incubation practices that have contributed to the growth of the startup ecosystem. We believe that this experience can create much greater impact when shared and strengthened through collaboration with other institutions. The Hub-and-Spoke initiative is an effort to take this forward in a structured manner; empowering existing incubators, connecting regional ecosystems and enabling promising startups to access capabilities and networks that may otherwise be beyond their reach. Nagpur is our first step, and we look forward to building this model with institutions across the country".

About SINE, IIT Bombay

The Society for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (SINE), established in 2004, is the Technology Business Incubator at IIT Bombay and is recognised as a Centre of Excellence by the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India. With over two decades of experience, SINE supports technology-based entrepreneurship through incubation, mentoring, infrastructure, industry partnerships and funding opportunities. Having supported more than 500 startups, SINE works across multiple sectors to nurture innovation and enable the translation of research and technology into impactful enterprises. Through its continued efforts to strengthen the broader incubation ecosystem, SINE remains committed to advancing technology-led entrepreneurship and contributing to India's innovation and nation-building ambitions.

About IIT Bombay:

The Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, set up in 1958 as the second IIT, is recognised worldwide as a leader in the field of science and engineering education and research. The Institute was granted the status of ‘Institution of Eminence’ by the Ministry of Education (the then Ministry of Human Resources Development) on July 9, 2018. IIT Bombay is reputed for the quality of its faculty, cutting-edge research, industry relations, and the outstanding caliber of students graduating from its undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The Institute has 34 Academics Divisions (including Departments, Academic Centres, Schools, Academic Advisory); 29 Research Centres (including Externally Funded Centres and Labs) and 9 Section 8 Companies (includes Society). Over the last six decades, more than 78,000 engineers and scientists have graduated from the Institute. It is served by

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770 faculty, including 121 women faculty (plus 241 parttime faculty), considered not only amongst the best within the country but also highly recognised in the world for achievements in the field of education and research. On June 18, 2026, IIT Bombay was ranked 2nd in India and 134th in the world in the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings for 2027.
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