

Start up the spirit of innovation

The scope of young entrepreneurs to transform India is tremendous and this needs a matching policy regime

R Chandrashekhar

Finally, the much anticipated Startup India movement's launch is here. For me, and as much for other stakeholders in the ecosystem of young companies with big ambitions, the event promises to be an exciting. It brings together many dignitaries, media, investors, community leaders and students alike, with a strong international presence from successful entrepreneurs.

For a considerable period of time, Nasscom has been pitching strongly for an easier set of rules for startups, with simpler registration and compliance and less burdensome taxation including easier exits for venture investors to ensure that young entrepreneurs are not hobbled by unnecessary regulations. While the proposals submitted have been comprehensive and minutely detailed, one can remain expectant and hopeful that many of these recommendations will finally see the light of day either in today's launch by Prime Minister Narendra Modi or subsequently in the budget due next month. The Indian startup experience has not been too long, and yet we are globally at the number three position, and that is testimony to the rich

WE NEED POLICIES THAT ENCOURAGE FUNDING, PROTECT ANGEL INVESTORS FROM TAX BURDENS AND MAKE WAY FOR SEED CAPITAL

promise that this sector brings in.

The challenges facing India are immense and bring an immense scope to transform the economy and the nation. Huge gaps persist in energy, agriculture, healthcare, financial inclusion and education, to name only a few. Interestingly, the brightest entrepreneurial minds view such "gaps" as opportunities that can be significantly addressed through innovative ideas and their execution. This kind of a positive mindset certainly warrants changes in policy to provide appropriate support for nation building.

India's startup ecosystem and its players are maturing at an incredible pace. What the government needs to bring in are what at Nasscom we call the 4Cs — Catalysing, Coaching, Capital and Connect. Startups need to be coached, receive capital to fuel

growth and need connections to reach the market. All this needs a catalytic touch. The 4Cs will ignite the spirit of innovation. As they focus on immense change, startups need to spend time on building value for customers, not on paperwork or regulatory compliance.

We need policies in place that encourage funding, protect angel investors from unnecessary tax burdens, facilitate removal of bottlenecks and make way for seed capital. This is all about building the "connects". Young men and women on entrepreneurial journeys need to connect not only to customers and the society in general but also the government and policymakers.

Many people look forward to the Prime Minister's address to galvanise the Startup India movement as an occasion to create a partnership with startups that represent the spirit of a new India that is innovative in thinking, unfettered in imagination and equipped with a "can-do" frame of mind.

*R Chandrashekhar is a former civil servant and president of the National Association of Software and Service Companies (Nasscom)
The views expressed are personal*