

City to host National Challenge for innovations in coconut sector

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Aimed at developing an inclusive startup ecosystem in the state, the Kerala Startup Mission is foraying into sectors such as agriculture, tourism and Ayurveda. As of now, the KSUM is concentrating on engineering colleges and technology startups. As the first step in making a paradigm shift in its functioning, the mission is conducting a startup idea contest on to find solutions using technology for the problems faced by the coconut sector, which has been ailing for decades, in the state.

KSUM is conducting the first National Coconut Challenge in association with Kerala State Industries Development Corporation (KSIDC) and State Planning Board. "The challenge is to foster ideas and innovations in the coconut sector. It will be a unique opportunity for innovators and startups to showcase their idea or prototype before the KSUM," said Saji Gopinath, chief executive officer of the mission. It will be held as part of International Conference and Exposition on coconut scheduled on September 6 and 7 here.

Saji further added combining of startup ideas with the existing industries will solve problems of the later. "Extending the technology ideas to agriculture, tourism, Ayurveda etc can help the sector to grow and go further."

He said the mission has identified five problems in the sector. "The applicants can present technology or ideas to detect and control pest, disease and nutrients, procurement and marketing models of coconut and coconut based products, ideas for effective utilisation of neglected coconut palms, value addition, product diversification and by-product utilisation and ideas to simplify the task of farmers on the field," he added.

The innovators, startups, individuals and students can showcase their idea or prototype at the conference. Selected presentations will get mentoring and fund support from various government agencies. The challenge opens a big door for the teams to grow further. The top 10 ideas will get showcased during the National Coconut Conference and will get an opportunity to present to government agencies for support. The top three teams will get prizes worth ₹one lakh. The top 10 teams can also pitch their ideas for KSUM's innovation grant of up to ₹12 lakhs on the Idea Day, selected teams to get seed support of up to ₹25 lakhs.

The organisers of the challenge are expecting innovative, economic and user-friendly solutions for problems faced by the coconut sector.

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Chief Executive
Officer, KSUM