

# Building Robots One Limb at a Time

## Hot Startup

### Sastra Robotics

The startup is building robots that can handle risky and rote jobs for humans

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Cofounders Sastra Robotics (Left to Right): Akhil A, Aronin P & Achu Wilson

**Bengaluru:** Whether robots are taking over the world or not is an intricate argument, but a Kochi-based startup, Sastra Robotics, is building robot companions for humans, one limb and a sensory organ at a time.

A robot arm for testing touchscreens, a robot arm that can interact with 3D devices for testing, and an intelligent telepresence robot are some offerings of Sastra Robotics, the three-year old startup that counts German automaker Bosch and a large Indian software corporation among clients.

Robotics enthusiasts, the cofounders of the startup were convinced they were not cut out for "IT jobs" and started Sastra with an aim to

build robots that could handle risky and rote jobs for humans.

"Our vision is to build a perfect robot companion for humans. It's a time-consuming task, so initially we are concentrating on robotic arms, vision and artificial intelligence," says Aronin P, 27, chief executive at Sastra Robotics.

Sastra is building industrial robotics solutions for system integrators and manufacturers.

During its R&D phase, the team was approached by Bosch to build an automated device-testing robot for touchscreen devices, Aronin said. That's when the startup built its first SCARA robot.

At least 90 Indian companies, including big multinationals, have shown interest in Sastra device-testing robotic equipment and the startup is waiting for purchase orders, according to the company.

Sastra is also developing a prosthetic robotic arm that can perform the actions of a human arm.

Sastra, which was incubated at Kochi Startup Village, was selected for The Indus Entrepreneurs' AnthahPrerana accelerator programme and the International Institute of Information Technology, Hyderabad's accelerator programme, Avishkar.

"If you look at the niche market

there's a lot happening in the robotics domain, but there are many other applications where you need smaller, appropriate and cost-effective solutions," said Amitava Roy, former COO of Tech Mahindra and an investor in the company. "(Sastra Robotics) is targeting a high-growth market with extremely innovative solutions."

The startup recently won the Humanitarian Robotics Challenge-2016 conducted by IEEE International Conference on Robotics & Automation in Stockholm, Sweden, along with another Kochi-based startup QBotics.

The industrial robots space is expected to grow exponentially with an array of advantages robots provide for industrial use. The global industrial robotics market is touted to reach \$79.58 billion by 2022, growing at an annual growth rate of 11.93% between 2016 and 2022, according to a report by MarketsandMarkets.

Though Sastra Robotics currently specializes in robotic arms for testing of devices, other Indian firms gaining significant traction in the space include Tiger Global-funded GreyOrange that specializes in warehouse automation, and industrial robot maker Systemantics, which counts Infosys cofounder Nandan Nilekani as an investor.