

India equipped to protect over 2 lakh formulations under **Traditional Knowledge Digital Library**

Our Bureau



Union Minister of Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, Pawan Kumar Bansal with Prof. Samir K. Bramachari, Director General CSIR at the International Conference on Utilization of the **Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL)** as a model for the protection of traditional knowledge, in the capital on 22.3.2011. - Picture: Kamal Narang

New Delhi, March 22:

The Union Minister of Science, Technology and Earth Sciences, Mr P.K Bansal, said on Tuesday that India is equipped to protect over 2 lakh formulations under the **Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL)**.

Traditional knowledge is the information that people in a given community have developed over generations, on the basis of their experience and which is adapted to local culture and environment.

Many countries are struggling to protect their traditional knowledge, against wrongful exploitation, primarily in the pharmaceutical sector. This knowledge is used to sustain the community and its culture, as well as biological resources necessary for the continued survival of the community.

Speaking at an international conference on utilisation of the **TKDL** as a model for the protection of traditional knowledge, Mr Bansal said, "Today, India is well equipped to protect 2.26 lakh formulations within a time range of 'days and weeks' and without any cost." The idea is not to restrict the use of traditional knowledge, but to ensure that wrong patents are not granted due to lack of access to the prior art for Patent examiners, he said.

India developed this much needed tool (**TKDL**) for protection of Traditional knowledge. Over 150 experts in traditional medicine, Information Technology, Intellectual Property Rights and scientists spent almost ten years for this task.

This process began in 2000, when wrong patents granted on the wound healing properties of turmeric by US Patent Office and another on the antifungal property of Neem by the European Patent Office (EPO), came to notice and were later fought and got revoked, Mr Bansal said.

"In the cases of 'Neem' and 'Turmeric', India had to incur huge cost and it took over 10 years to get the 'Neem' patent revoked at EPO," he said.

Globally accepted

"**TKDL** has been embraced by the World Intellectual Property Organisation, the EPO, the US-Patent and Trademark Office and other patent offices worldwide who have found in it a powerful weapon to fight bio-piracy," the Minister said.

The Minister explained that Traditional Knowledge is also the basis of the livelihood of a very large population in the world, in particular, in developing countries. He added that the World Health Organisation has estimated that over 70 per cent of the population is dependent on traditional medicines for their primary health care needs."

Mr Bansal said, "To ensure that that no wrong patent is granted on India's traditional knowledge, the **TKDL** database converts India's traditional knowledge of Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Yoga – originally written in Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian and Tamil – into five international languages makes information understandable to the International Patent Examiners."

"Access to **TKDL** has been given to several international Patent Offices under a non-disclosure agreement," he added.