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News and Information for Intellectual Property Practitioners

India Launches Traditional Knowledge Database --- [Click Here for More Updates](#) ---

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India Launches Traditional Knowledge Database

According to Gavin Rabinowitz writing for the Associated Press, a 2003 study by India's National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (NISCAIR) claims that "some 7000 patents worldwide are based on Indian indigenous knowledge." The group has therefore "convened a group of 150 experts in traditional medicine, scientists, doctors, patent lawyers and computer programmers to put together the Traditional Knowledge Database Library (TKDL)." According to the [TKDL](#) demo website,

Since time immemorial, India has possessed a rich traditional knowledge of ways and means practiced to treat diseases afflicting people. This knowledge has generally been passed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. Some of them have been described in ancient classical and other literature, often inaccessible to the common man. Documentation of this existing knowledge, available in public domain, on various traditional systems of medicine has become imperative to safeguard the sovereignty of this traditional knowledge and to protect them from being misused in patenting on non-original discoveries, and this has been a matter of national concern.

India fought successfully the revocation of turmeric and basmati patents granted by United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) and neem patent granted by European Patent Office (EPO). As a sequel to this, in 1999, the Department of ISM&H constituted an inter-disciplinary Task Force, for preparing a report on establishing a [TKDL](#).

[TKDL](#) is a collaborative project between NISCAIR (erstwhile NISCOM) and Department of Indian System of Medicine and Homoeopathy (ISM&H), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare which been implemented at NISCAIR. An inter-disciplinary team of 25 Ayurveda experts, 1 patent examiner, 5 IT experts, 3 NISCAIR scientists and 4 technical officers are in place at present for carrying out the work.

[TKDL](#) will give legitimacy to the existing traditional knowledge and enable protection of such information from getting patented by the fly-by-night inventors acquiring patents on our traditional knowledge systems. The project [TKDL](#) proposes to document the knowledge available in public domain by sifting and collating the information on traditional knowledge from the existing literature covering Ayurveda, in digitized format in five international languages which are English, German, French, Japanese and Spanish.

Traditional Knowledge Resource Classification (TKRC), an innovative structured classification system for the purpose of systematic arrangement, dissemination and retrieval has been evolved for about 5000 subgroups against one group in international patent classification, i.e. AK61K35/76 related to medicinal plants.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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