

"Willing to share TKDL model to protect traditional knowledge"

PTI | 09:03 PM, Mar 22, 2011

New Delhi, Mar 22 (PTI) India today offered to share its experiences in protecting traditional knowledge from being used to get patents with countries desirous of doing so. "I assure you that the Government would extend all cooperation to you, in particular to WIPO, so that countries rich in traditional knowledge and biodiversity and desirous of adopting TKDL as a model to protect such knowledge are able to do so," Science and Technology Minister P K Bansal said. He made these remarks at an international conference 'Utilisation of the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) as a Model for the Protection of Traditional Knowledge' here. India is the only country in the world to have set up an institutional mechanism -- Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) -- to protect its traditional knowledge and to prevent grant of wrong patents. The TKDL database includes 54 authoritative textbooks on ayurvedic medicine, nearly 1,50,000 ayurvedic, unani and siddha medicines, and over 1,500 physical exercises and postures in yoga. TKDL is being used as a ready reckoner by patent examiners to compare patent applications with existing traditional knowledge. "Today, because of TKDL, India is well equipped to protect 2,26,000 formulations within a time range of days and weeks and without any cost," Bansal said. He recalled the huge cost the country had to incur in getting the patents awarded for the medicinal properties of 'Neem' and 'Turmeric' revoked at the European Patent Office. Before the advent of the TKDL, any bio-pro prospector for a pharmaceutical company could dig up ancient medical wisdom and lay claim to the practice's healing ability without consequence. On an average, it takes five to seven years for opposing a patent granted at international level which may cost upto half a million dollars. Since July 2009, TKDL team has so far identified about 230 patent applications at European Patent Office which concern Indian systems of medicine and filed third party evidences.