

International conference on utilization of TKDL kicks off tomorrow

New Delhi, Mar 21 : A three-day international conference on "Utilization of the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) as a model for the protection of traditional knowledge" will begin here on Tuesday.

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Encouraged by the ongoing support of the government for internationalizing India's pioneering TKDL as a template for the benefit of developing countries seeking to protect their traditional knowledge, World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), a

specialized agency of the United Nations, has collaborated with Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). Dr Francis Gurry, DG, WIPO, considers this development as a concrete and potentially beneficial form of South-South Cooperation in which India's pioneering role would be recognized.

Misappropriation of traditional knowledge and bio-piracy of genetic resources are the issues of great concern for all the developing countries. These issues are being pursued at several multilateral forums, such as convention on biological diversity, TRIPs council, World Trade Organisation and World Intellectual Property Organisation.

However, so far a "global framework" for traditional knowledge protection system has not been established.

It is mainly for this reason that Mexico had to fight a legal battle for ten years to get the patent on Enola bean at the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) cancelled in July 2009. Similarly, the cancellation of Monsanto Soybean patent in July 2007 at the European Patent Office (EPO) took 13 years of legal battle.

India is the only country in the world to have set up an institutional mechanism - TKDL, to protect its traditional knowledge and to prevent grant of wrong patents.

A collaborative project between CSIR and Department of AYUSH, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, TKDL is a maiden Indian effort to help prevent misappropriation of traditional knowledge belonging to India at International Patent Offices.

More than 40 countries from different regions of the world would participate in this international event, including 35 developing countries (17 from Asia Pacific region, 4 African, 4 Latin American, 3 Arabian, 4 from Division for certain countries in Europe and Asia such as Bulgaria and Russian federation and 3 Least Developed Countries- Mali, Uganda and Zambia) and 7 developed countries who are signatories of TKDL Access Agreement, viz., European Union, United States of America, Germany, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and Japan.