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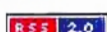
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Saarc to set up traditional knowlege digital library

OUR ECONOMY BUREAU

Posted online: Tuesday, January 04, 2005 at 0000 hours IST

FEEDBACK EMAIL PRINT

NEW DELHI, JAN 3: The member-countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) have decided to set up a traditional knowledge digital library (TKDL) with a view to protect the region from any possible acts of biopiracy and misappropriation of traditional knowledge in the near future.

A model legal framework has been drafted and circulated to member-countries for framing notional legislation recognising TKDL.

Speaking to FE, director of Saarc Documentation Centre (SDC) Dr VK Gupta said, "The TKDL database will be provided to patent offices across the globe under non-disclosure agreement. This will help them to examine the case before granting patent rights on any subject pertaining to traditional knowledge. Even if they, by mistake, grant patent rights over any aspect of traditional knowledge which is already documented and given to them, this can be challenged without payment of any fees and the concerned patent office will be under obligations to revoke the wrongly granted patent rights. Otherwise the cost of challenging a single patent right in patent offices in the US and Europe equals to the total investment required for setting up of a TKDL."

India is the only country in the world to set up a TKDL and we are urging all countries in the South Asia to set up a common TKDL for the region, he said.

Mr Gupta said India needs to enact appropriate legislation to protect traditional knowledge from infringement. "So far we have Biological Diversity Act to protect bio recourses. But there are other aspects of traditional knowledge like traditional medicines, foods, farm practices, architecture and construction, tribal knowledge and traditional expressions like handicrafts, handloom, folk music, museum which need similar protection through law," he said.

The TKDL set up in India has already documented the public domain knowledge on

Ayurveda (36,000 slokas) in a digitised format and the information is available in English, Spanish, German, French and Japanese. It has a traditional knowledge resource classification system based on the international patent classification. It provides information classified under sections, classes, sub-classes, groups and sub-groups and has expanded one IPC group related to medicinal plants to about 5000 sub-groups. The cost involved in documenting Ayurveda slokas was Rs 1.25 crore.

The decision to set up a Saarc TKDL was taken at a two-day workshop convened by jointly SDC, National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (NISCAIR) last week in Delhi, said Dr Gupta.

The Saarc TKDL will also have an innovative uniform structured traditional knowledge resource classification (TKRC) for systematic arrangement, dissemination and retrieval which may be TK independent of region or country.

The framework will encompass various aspects of traditional knowledge including materials used for treatment like plants, animal products, minerals, their generic or specific method of preparations or designs, their dosage, mode and time of administration, therapeutic action or indication or application of traditional knowledge.

With respect to components of biodiversity digital library (CBDL), TKDL will be created using the taxonomic hierarchical structure of Whittaker's five kingdom classification, namely, Monera, Protocista, Fungi, Animalia and Plantae and modern phylogenetic classification system.

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