

Examrace

Competitive Exams: Science and Technology Safeguarding Traditional Knowledge

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Safeguarding Traditional Knowledge

1. The global fight against bio-piracy and preservation of intellectual property rights of the people took a major step forward recently when about 35 countries came together at an international conference to explore options of replicating India's TKDL or Traditional Knowledge Digital Library to protect their traditional knowledge. The International Conference on Utilization of the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) as a Model for Protection of Traditional Knowledge held in New Delhi from 22 – 24 March 2011 demonstrated in ample measure TKDL's immense value in safeguarding national TK.
2. It was organized by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in association with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) .
3. The TKDL documents traditional knowledge available in public domain in the form of existing literature related to Ayurveda, Unani Siddha and Yoga, and presents it in searchable and digitized format in English, German, French, Japanese and Spanish. The information is structured to assist patent examiners in their search for existing evidence of previously known/documented knowledge or prior art.
4. More than 150 experts in traditional medicine, law and computer science spent almost ten years accessing and classifying information codified in authoritative textbooks on Ayurvedic, Unani and Siddha medicines and documenting postures in Yoga. They collated scattered data published in ancient languages and transformed it into a systematic, proprietary database. The TKDL digitized available information in five languages and in format that allowed patent examiners to retrieve the information in the way they needed.
5. As it stands today, the TKDL has documented 85,500 Ayurvedic formulations, 1,20,200 Unani formulations, 13,470 Siddha formulations and 1098 Yoga postures. TKDL safeguards 0.226 million medicinal formulations as these are used in Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha. The TKDL database size runs to 34 million A4 size pages.
6. The USP of TKDL is that it operates within the established rules and laws of the recognized patent system and does so in a manner that cannot be challenged in any way. TKDL established prior art and does so in an internationally acceptable manner despite the fact that the source of the prior art goes back thousands of years and was originally written in a language few today use regularly. By empowering patent examiners, TKDL is instrumental in preventing the grant of wrong patents.

7. For instance, a patent that earlier took at least a decade of enormously expensive intensive litigation to be revoked is now being routinely refused in a matter of weeks at no cost (since the patent application is rejected and no rights have been granted that need to be revoked) . A new and welcome trend is that many applicants are unilaterally withdrawing their applications can being faced with TKDLtheir actions tacit acknowledgement of a misappropriation attempt.
8. The Conference proved that the TKDL story is not just one of significance from the context of national pride but is one of inspirational leadership than can serve as a beacon illuminating the way forward in the global fight against bio-piracy and preservation of IP rights of the people.

Courtesy: Science Reporter

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