

Govt to fund Ayurveda clinic research centre in Kerala

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The central government has pledged financial support to set up a state-of-the-art Ayurvedic Clinical Research Centre in Kerala to help scientifically validate traditional systems of healing and medicine and integrate them with mainstream public healthcare delivery.

Union minister for state for AYUSH, Mr Shripad Yesso Naik gave the assurance as he announced the new National Programme of Ayurveda Inspired Research initiated by the Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Biotechnology (RGCB) and the proposed National Ayurveda Expo 2015 at a function on January 11, 2015.

The RGCB is setting up a National Centre for Excellence for Ayurveda Inspired Discovery lead research into efficacy mechanisms involved in Ayurvedic therapeutics and has proposed two sister campuses: an Ayurvedic Clinical Research Centre at Konni in Kerala and a High Altitude Discovery Centre at Munnar in Kerala.

Mr Naik said the Centre will fund the setting up the clinical research facility in Konni, as Kerala's minister for health and family welfare Mr V S Sivakumar promised to provide the approximately 50 acres of land required for the project.

The union minister has been visiting Kerala for the past week to learn more about Ayurvedic practice, education and industry in the state.

"The set-up in Kerala, including training and delivery system in both public and private sectors, is of a very high standard," Mr Naik said. "Kerala can contribute immensely towards raising the status of traditional healthcare systems for which we require scientific inputs, standardisation and certification processes."

Mr V S Sivakumar noted that in Kerala "Ayurveda is not only an alternative way of treatment, but also one of the engines for the state's economic growth. The industry, which is worth Rs 1,000 crores annually aims to grow five-fold by 2020."

He said that of the global herbal product market worth \$80 billion, India's share is less than \$1bn whereas China has a share of around \$6-7 bn. "Events like the National Arogya Expo 2015 will augment the investment opportunities in R&D, including genomics and nanotechnology," he added.

National Arogya 2015, an initiative of the World Ayurveda Foundation (WAF) in partnership with the RGCB, is proposed to be held in state capital Thiruvananthapuram from April 23-26, 2015 at the end of a month-long Ayurveda festival that will bring together practitioners, policymakers, manufacturers, R&D institutes, students and members of the public to widen the global reach of Indian traditional medicines.

The proposed expo will have more than 400 exhibition stalls, scientific sessions, free AYUSH clinics, live Yoga demonstrations, Ayurvedic food festival and cooking classes. Shri Naik launched the Expo brochure.

RGCB director professor M Radhakrishna Pillai said the proposed Centre for Excellence was a "small effort in facilitating the rediscovery of Indian traditional and holistic medicine."

Among the objectives of the Centre of Excellence will be the analysis of Ayurvedic therapeutics for treatment response and their effect on patho-physiological processes and developing uniform protocols, compositions and components.

The herbal products will be characterised using advanced technologies such as genetic bar coding, genetic fingerprinting and mass spectroscopy.

The project will also include a research centre to study medicinal plant conservation, metabolic engineering to improve active plant components and a discovery programme looking for therapeutically significant molecules and compounds.

Leading bio-medical companies such as central public sector enterprise ,HLL Lifecare Limited and other Ayurveda-based companies and organisations are expected to be partners in the project.

Mr A Jayakumar, secretary general, Vijnana Bharati delivered the introductory address at the function. Dr S Saji Kumar, managing director, Dhathri Ayurveda, made a presentation on the Expo.

Dr M Ayyappan, the chairman and managing director of HLL Lifecare Ltd; Dr J Hareendran Nair, managing director, Pankajakasthuri; Dr Anita Jacob, director, Department of ISM, Government of Kerala, Dr Raghunathan Nair of Ayurveda College Teachers' Organisation and Dr S Sunil Kumar of the WAF spoke on the occasion.