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Modi's France Visit: DBT gets french support to establish marine biology institute

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The vast sea that surrounds India is known to be a treasure chest of rich natural resources and marine life and if explored further, could offer immense benefits to makind. Now the new Marine Biology Institute, to be set up in five years, will be focussed on doing basic research with multidisciplinary approach. It is expected to collaboratively address the most important topics in marine biology and marine biotechnology. The French contribution comes after negotiations by the team led by prime minister, Mr Narendra Modi.

A memorandum of understanding was signed on 10 April 2015 by the DBT secretary, Dr K VijayRaghavan in the presence of the Prime Ministers of India and France during the latter's visit to France to establish the framework of future co-operation between the parties including scientific research and development, educational and training, technical and logistical aspects, and legal and financial implications.

An environmental expert based in New Delhi termed it as a major success for the Indian biotechnology sector. "So far the marine biology had been out of place in the biotech landscape but now the collaboration with its research outcomes could prepare the ground of future entreprenuers to look at it as an opportunity area," he mentioned.

As per a release from DBT, the French contribution to the collaboration will be the expertise of CNRS and UPMC in developing high standard stations in their country which will help in the design, construction and maintenance of the Marine Biology Institute. The Indian contribution will be the interest and proficiency in cell and molecularbiology and biotechnology. It will also provide Indian researchers access to the French marine stations with extraordinary technical capabilities.

The co-operation is expected to strengthen Indo-French ties in frontier marine science and technology research through the establishment of collaborative research programmes, training of highly qualified scientists to provide top-level researchers and seniors staff scientists in future to the Marine Biology Institute. Besides, it will establish efficient research infrastructures, facilities and technologies in India and give access to use of facilities in France, said the DBT statement on the collaboration.

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India's several marine zones offer immense resources which can be tapped for biology and biotechnology research. Applications of molecules and bio-materials discovered from marine sources are also numerous. But most of the resources remain poorly charted and relatively untouched. The country can boast of a handful of talented biologists, who can rapidly chart our marine and island diversity, make discoveries and apply them to human and animal welfare. They can be potential leaders in this venture.

The charting of our Island diversity will soon be accomplished in collaboration with ISRO and the deep sea exportation will be done in collaboration with the Earth Sciences Ministry. India will develop its own marine stations while learning from this collaborative hub. The smaller stations will be set up in chosen locations from the Andamans to Kutch and Lakshadweep escalating the development of the country's own programs. The Institute for frontier marine science and technology research is to be set up in five years.