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India, Japan collaborate in key research areas of life sciences

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The department of science and technology (DST) alongwith department of biotechnology (DBT), ministry of science and technology and RIKEN, Japan's largest research organization have signed collaborative agreements to launch joint research programs in the fields of biology, life sciences and material sciences. These include genome-related research including systems Biology, computational science including development of bioinformatics tools, detection tools (e.g. spectroscopy) for security and other areas of mutual interest.

The Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) were signed by Prof Ryoji Noyori, president of RIKEN and Dr T Ramasami, secretary, DST and Dr K VijayRaghavan, secretary, DST. This will formally launch the RIKEN- DBT&DST Joint Research activities.

The cooperation will facilitate exchange and foster collaborations between Japan and India, in these fields. The laboratory on materials sciences would be a collaboration between Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research, the Indian Institute of Science (IISc)and RIKEN and will be funded by the DST. The laboratory on neurosciences and developmental biology is collaboration between the National Centre for Biological Science (NCBS/TIFR), the Institute for Stem Biology and Regenerative Medicine (INSTEM) and RIKEN Center for Cell and Developmental Biology, and will be funded by the DBT.

Speaking on the occasion Dr K Vijay Raghwan, secretary, DBT said this MoU will usher in a new era of cooperation in the area of innovations and techniques for the agricultural and pharmacological industries in India.

"For us at DBT, this MoU will usher in a new era of cooperation in the area of innovations and techniques for the agricultural and pharmacological industries in India, added Dr Vijay Ragwan later.

Dr T Ramasami, secretary, DST hoped recognizing the importance of science and technology and the high potential of further cooperation in various areas of research between the DST and RIKEN will further the scope of new inventions.

In a public lecture at the National Institute of Immunology to celebrate the signing of the MoU, Professor Ryoji Noyori highlighted the importance of scientific collaborations in reaching the benefits of science to the people at large.

Elaborating on his own research on asymmetric catalysis and how he applied it on catalytic hydrogenation, Professor Noyori emphasised that while serendipity is important in scientific discoveries, the young should know that chance only favours the prepared mind.