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DoP on talks with foreign universities for collaboration in R&D

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Gireesh Babu, Mumbai

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In an effort to accelerate the pharmaceutical research and development activities in the country, the Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP) is working towards research partnership with several foreign universities in basic drug research on common ailments.

The department has already initiated talks with the US-based Harvard University and some of the reputed academic institutions in United Kingdom for collaboration in the pharmaceutical research field, said Ashok Kumar, secretary, DoP. The terms of partnership depends upon the area where both the partners have mutual interest and the model of collaboration will also be decided once the talks are in matured stage.

“We are exploring options including joint collaboration with foreign universities in various fronts based on the interest both the parties share with. For instance, there are opportunities to work on the diseases prevalent both in India and the western countries, like tuberculosis or multi drug resistant TB and HIV/AIDS,” said Kumar.

The talks with the Harvard University on research collaboration were initiated last year. The collaboration is most likely to be between the foreign institution and an Indian counterpart or the government-run research organisations, according to DoP sources. Collaboration with a foreign university would mutually accelerate the studies and search for effective remedies to address diseases like TB and HIV/AIDS.

The initiative comes as part of DoP's series of projects designed to prepare India as an end to end drug discovery destination in next 10 years, through the India Pharma Vision 2020. The department is implementing a multifaceted project to develop skilled human resource, world class R&D infrastructure, harmonisation of regulatory arrangements to bring in international standards on regulatory front and public-private partnership programmes to achieve the goal.

Of late, the department has announced setting up of a Rs 10000-crore venture capital fund to finance new drug discovery projects in the country, which will start with raising the fund upto Rs 3000 crore by the financial year 2011-12, and would be gradually increased to Rs 10000 crore by 2015, according to reports. The financial support is expected to bring in more scientists, firms and institutions to take part in active drug discovery and development programmes, while many of them are reluctant to enter into the field due to lack of adequate funding.