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JNTBGRI set to become part of CSIR



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Giant water lily exhibited at the Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute at Palode, near Thiruvananthapuram.—
Photo: S. Mahinsha

The decks are being cleared for the take over of the Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute (JNTBGRI), one of the premier scientific research institutions in Kerala, by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

The Union Department of Science and Technology is steering the efforts to transfer the institute from the State government to the CSIR. This follows the initial attempt to hand over the JNTBGRI to the Union Department of Biotechnology (DBT). In May last year, the DBT had sanctioned Rs.6.71 crore for eight research programmes, prior to the take over.

Officials said the DBT proposal had since been put on hold, because the takeover would have been possible only after three years, on completion of the research projects. Meanwhile, the idea of transferring the JNTBGRI to the CSIR instead of the DBT was discussed at a meeting attended by Union Minister for Science and Technology Dr. Harshvardhan at the National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (NIIST) here last year.

Later, at talks between officials from the JNTBGRI and CSIR, it was suggested that the institute work in collaboration with NIIST and the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) on Ayurveda and medicinal plants in Kerala. The establishment of a business development unit at the institute and the launch of diploma courses in exotic ornamental plants and medicinal herbs for revenue generation and skill development were also proposed.

A high-level team led by Director General, CSIR, Girish Sahni and comprising senior officials from the CSIR, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, Jamia Hamdard University, New Delhi, and CSIR- Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants, Lucknow, visited the JNTBGRI campus at Palode in February and discussed the formalities of the takeover.

“The committee assessed the achievements of the institute and the quality of work by the scientists. We expect a favourable response any time now,” Dr. Latha told *The Hindu*. “The takeover will enable us to tap funds for the maintenance and development of the world class conservatory garden, home to 50,000 accessions of about 4,000 plant species. It will also help us to strengthen our research and development activities,” she said.

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- ***Institute to become 39th constituent laboratory of CSIR***
 - ***Takeover to strengthen conservation efforts, R&D activities***
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